



COLLIN COUNTY

Administrative Services
2300 Bloomdale Road
Suite 4192
McKinney, Texas 75071
www.collincountytx.gov

TO: Commissioners Court
FROM: Yoon Kim, County Administrator; Russell Schaffner, Deputy County Administrator
DATE: August 27, 2024
RE: Ballot on Demand (BOD) Transition and Elections Facility Development

During the FY 25 Budget hearing on August 19, 2024, Commissioners Court discussed election security and the potential change to hand marking ballots during elections. Through Court Order #2024-807-08-19, Commissioners Court directed staff to gather information and develop options, including a timeline, regarding a new elections facility and the transition to a hand marked paper ballot voting method. This memo outlines options for hand marked ballot voting method implementation as soon as practicable.

Hand Marked Paper Ballot Voting Method

Collin County currently utilizes the ES&S ExpressVote BMD (ballot marking device) for voters to make their selections on a digital screen and have it printed on the ballot. The voter then inserts the printed ballot into the DS200 tabulator and the tabulator reads the bar code. To change to a hand marked paper ballot voting method, a voter's sequentially numbered ballot would be printed at each polling location after they check in, hand marked by the voter, and then inserted into the DS200 tabulator. Our current ES&S DS200 tabulator can be reconfigured to read hand marked ballots and will require little adjustment to make that change.

ES&S has two options to implement BOD with the County's current equipment.

BODs Connected to Poll Books

Connect a BOD printer to each laptop poll book, and print the voter's ballot at check in. This would require 500 BOD printers, carts, and UPS battery backups for the BOD printers and poll books at an estimated cost of \$3,175,000. Additional drayage costs would need to be budgeted at \$101,000 per election, and printer cartridges would cost \$76,000. More research is necessary to understand whether this option is allowed under current law.

BOD Print Centers

This option mirrors Denton County's process and would implement BOD printing stations in each polling place. After a voter is checked in, the voter will proceed to a printing station to have their individual ballot printed. Each polling location will have a minimum of two (2) print stations. This would require 300 BOD printers, carts, laptops computers, scanners, and UPS battery backups for

the BOD printers and poll book at an estimated cost of \$2,436,000. Additional drayage costs would need to be budgeted at \$60,600 per election, and printer cartridges are \$45,600.

With both of these options, the cost for ballot stock and privacy booths are the same, \$144,000 and \$525,000, respectively. The voting booths for the existing ExpressVote machines cannot be retrofitted for a hand marked paper ballot, and the County would need to purchase 1,500 new voting booths. Cardboard voting booths are an option, but then it would require the purchase or rental of hundreds of tables and chairs.

See pictures below of our current BMD device and voting booth compared to other voting booth options:



This is what our current voting booths look like with the BMD screen removed. These booths cannot be retrofitted to accommodate hand marking ballots.



Cardboard voting booths will require hundreds of tables and chairs. For the 2024 election, there are 117 polling locations. Polling locations have between 10 and 30 polling stations. As a preliminary estimate, the County would need to purchase (and store) or rent enough tables and chairs for 1,500 polling stations. The estimated cost to purchase tables and chairs is estimated at \$150,000.



Individual tables with voting booths will be most feasible, especially in smaller polling locations.

Machine and Equipment Storage Space

The current Elections Department facility is at capacity. The change to pre-numbered ballots and the retention requirements of those ballots consumed any storage available at election. The BOD transition options outlined above would require 2,000 to 5,000 additional square feet of space, primarily for storage. Until the existing ExpressVote machines can be either sold or disposed of through the required statutory process, space will be at a premium, and the County will need to identify additional climate controlled storage space. It should be noted that ES&S is expected to release its next generation of BMDs in 2025, which will complicate the County's ability to sell back the BMDs to ES&S.

HAVA Compliance

The Help America Vote Act (HAVA), PL 107-252, requires polling locations to be accessible for individuals with disabilities. BOD systems alone are not HAVA compliant; therefore, one or more ExpressVote machines would need to be staged at each polling location to ensure compliance with federal law.

Purchasing Act Compliance

Staff has determined that some of the BOD equipment is proprietary to ES&S as it integrates into the existing ES&S system, which may result in a contract amendment or sole source authorization. Staff anticipates that other components (polling booths, etc.) would need to be purchased separately through a process that complies with the Purchasing Act.

Equipment Lease versus Purchase

Staff has analyzed the option to lease ES&S BOD equipment. The only equipment to be leased may be the \$665 printer. Staff will continue evaluating options to lease equipment including privacy booths.

Funding

BOD Equipment Estimated Costs

	Equipment	Privacy booths	Drayage	Printer cartridges	Ballot stock	Total
<i>BOD to poll books</i>	\$3,175,000	\$525,000	\$101,000	\$76,000	\$144,000	\$4,021,000
<i>BOD print centers</i>	\$2,436,000	\$525,000	\$60,600	\$45,600	\$144,000	\$3,211,200

Four possible funding options are available to the Commissioners Court to fund the equipment necessary for hand marked paper ballot voting. First, the Commissioners Court could use general fund monies to fund the equipment. This strategy would come out of the maintenance and operations (M&O) tax rate and affect the general fund budget. Using general fund monies would require a significant budget adjustment to be made to purchase the BOD equipment for November 2025 Constitutional Election.

Funding Mechanisms for BOD Equipment				
	General fund	Tax notes	Certificates of Obligation (CO)	General Obligation Bonds
Debt service	M&O Tax Rate	I&S Tax Rate	I&S Tax Rate	I&S Tax Rate
BOD Equipment	YES	YES	YES	YES

The Commissioners Court could issue tax notes and fund the equipment and would be funded by the I&S tax rate. The Court could also issue certificates of obligation (COs) and cover equipment costs. These options could help us obtain the BOD printers and equipment necessary for the November 2025 Constitutional Election. Finally, the Court could call an election for general obligation bonds, but the equipment could not be implemented until the 2026 election. If passed by Collin County voters, the debt would be serviced out of the I&S tax rate and would not affect the general fund. Any funds would need to be made available during the FY 2026 budget cycle.

Again, depending on the funding source, the timeline for BOD implementation may include the November 2025 constitutional election if certain contingencies are met. An election in 2026 would be a more conservative timeline for implementation. Staff will continue to identify and analyze funding sources for equipment and their respective impact on implementation.

Election Facility

The Elections Department’s lease on their current building ends in November 2025. The Elections Department leases 24,712 square feet and pays \$313,596 annually. The County has spent \$1,245,000 on space improvements and maintenance. Construction Services has determined that the elections facility is not adequate to handle the requirements of the Elections Department. The facility will not

accommodate future growth and will be challenged to handle the transition from ballot marking devices (BMD) to BOD.

The Facilities Department completed a space study for the Elections Department covering the next twenty (20) years, during which voter registration is expected to double. The study found that the Elections Department requires 51,000 square feet to operate effectively. Since the space study was conducted anticipating the continued use of BMDs, the space study would need to be reevaluated if Commissioners Court chooses to change to BODs.

Four options are available for a new elections facility.

Option 1 – New construction

Construct a 51,000 square foot facility on the County’s existing McKinney campus. Cost is estimated at \$26,728,000. The facility would include 28,500 square feet of shell and office space, as well as 22,500 square feet of warehouse space. Estimated project duration is three (3) years.

Siting the election facility is important because of the high traffic during elections, need for parking, and adequate security. Construction Services has identified two possible locations on the map below. Site 1 is adjacent to the future courthouse parking garage. Site 2 is adjacent to the flood plain and would require more study before it could be determined to be a viable location.



Option 2 – Lease space

Lease 51,000 square feet of space off-campus in McKinney or Allen. Lease expenses would increase to \$670,000 to \$1,071,000 annually and would impact the general fund. The build out of the lease space is anticipated to cost \$10,976,175. Estimated project duration is two (2) years.

Option 3 – Reuse healthcare building

The current healthcare building is 50,000 square feet. The cost to remodel the facility is estimated at \$10,947,195. The work could not begin until after Collin County Health Care Services moves out of the location and into the new healthcare building on the main campus in 2026. Estimated project duration is two (2) years. Ingress and egress, parking, security, and drainage are concerns with this location.

After Collin County Health Care Services moves to the new Healthcare building on the main campus in 2026, the current healthcare building could be razed and a new elections building constructed there. The cost would be higher than Option 1.

Option 4 – Purchase building and remodel

Purchase a building (including the current facility) and remodel it to meet the needs of the department. The cost of the renovation is estimated to be \$10,976,175. The cost to purchase a building is estimated at \$13,000,000 to \$16,000,000. The overall cost of purchasing an existing building and remodeling is from \$24,000,000 to \$27,000,000. Estimated project duration is two (2) years.

Funding

Election Facility Estimated Costs

	Option 1 - New facility	Option 2 - Lease space	Option 3 - Reuse healthcare building	Option 4 - Purchase building and remodel
<i>Election facility</i>	\$26,728,000	\$10,976,175	\$10,947,195	\$27,000,000

Four possible funding options are available to the Commissioners Court to fund an election facility. First, the Commissioners Court could use general fund monies accumulated over the next several years to fund the capital costs. This pay-as-you-go funding strategy would require Commissioners Court to dedicate either an amount of the tax rate or a dollar amount for a certain period of time. This strategy would be funded through the maintenance and operations (M&O) tax rate and affect the general fund budget.

Funding Mechanisms by Election Facility Option				
	General fund	Tax notes	Certificates of Obligation (CO)	General Obligation Bonds
Debt service	M&O Tax Rate	I&S Tax Rate	I&S Tax Rate	I&S Tax Rate
Option 1 - New facility	YES	NO	YES	YES
Option 2 - Lease space	YES	Remodel Only	Remodel only	Remodel only
Option 3 - Reuse healthcare building	YES	YES	YES	YES
Option 4 - Purchase building and remodel	YES	NO	YES	YES

The Commissioners Court could issue tax notes and fund the project, except for the cost of leasing the space for Option 2. The funds to cover debt service for tax notes would come out of the Interest and Sinking (I&S) tax rate (except Options 1 and 4, debt service for those options would come out of the M&O rate). The Court could also issue certificates of obligation (COs) and cover all capital, except for the cost of the lease. This strategy's debt service would be funded from the I&S tax rate and would not affect the general fund budget. Finally, the Court could call an election for general obligation bonds. If passed by Collin County voters, the debt would be serviced out of the I&S tax rate and would not affect the general fund.

If an election is called for general obligation bonds, the November 2025 constitutional election would be the earliest timing, unless the county is willing to cover the incremental cost of a countywide election for the May election (estimated to be \$1,500,000).

Since Commissioners Court has approved the FY 2025 budget, any funding or debt service for this project would have to be budgeted during the FY 2026 budget cycle and be available on October 1, 2026. Staff estimates that the I&S rate would have the capacity to absorb the annual debt service for the project in FY 2026.

Timeline

Depending on the option and funding mechanism(s) chosen, staff estimates a new facility could be operational sometime between 2027 and 2033. Unless the Court also approves a reimbursement resolution, if the Court decides to call an election for general obligation bonds, the earliest bonds could be sold would be in spring 2026. BOD implementation is estimated for 2026 if funding is available.

Estimated Timeline for Election Facility and BOD Equipment

	Duration	General fund*	Tax notes	Certificates of Obligation	General Obligation Bonds
<i>Option 1 - New facility</i>	3 years	2033	2029	2028	2029
<i>Option 2 - Lease space</i>	2 years	2030	2028	2028	2028
<i>Option 3 - Remodel healthcare building</i>	2 years <i>after 2026</i>	2030	2028	2028	2028
<i>Option 4 - Purchase building and remodel BOD Equipment</i>	2 years	2031	2028	2028	2028
	1 year	2026	2026	2026	2027

**If \$5,000,000 budgeted annually from the general fund*

Estimated Timeline for Election Facility and BOD Equipment

