

1. FARGO CITY AUDITOR CALL RECORDED MAY 6TH 2022

2. Phone ringing
- 3.
4. Receptionist - Cass county finance
- 5.
6. Marvin - umm I was looking for the auditor
- 7.
8. Receptionist - umm okay
- 9.
10. Marvin - umm my name is marvin marvin lepp, i'm the secretary of state candidate and I have questions on how approval ranked voting worked, umm so i was hoping to speak to somebody about that
- 11.
12. Receptionist - okay and candidate for where
- 13.
14. Marvin - for secretary of state
- 15.
16. Receptionist - okaaay
- 17.
18. Marvin - for North Dakota
- 19.
20. Receptionist - uhh i wonder if you have to call into bismarck for that
- 21.
22. Marvin - no because it's a Fargo only thing
- 23.
24. Receptionist - okay, hold on one moment please.
- 25.
26. Pause
- 27.
28. Receptionist - you are just wondering about what to do
- 29.
30. Marvin - i'm wonder how your guy's, how the city of Fargo's approval ranked voting works and according to the fargo website i'm supposed to call your guy's auditor's office so that is why I was calling
- 31.
32. Receptionist - okay
- 33.
34. Placed on hold
- 35.
36. Receptionist - okay so you need to contact the city auditor
- 37.
38. Marvin - okay do you have that number handy
- 39.

40. Receptionist - 701-241-1300
- 41.
42. Marvin - 1300 thank you very much
- 43.
44. Receptionist - yup you're welcome bye
- 45.
46. Marvine - bye
- 47.
48. Phone hangs up (time stamp 2:12)
- 49.
50. Marvin to passenger - they didn't want to have anything to do with that did they
- 51.
52. Passenger - nope
- 53.
54. Marvin - like o shii
- 55.
56. Phone answers 2:41 automated system
- 57.
58. Automated system prompts - you have reached the city of fargo's auditors office. Our hours are monday through friday 7:45 am to 4:30 pm. Please listen to the following options. To pay your utility bill please have your nine digit account ready and press one. To pay a parking ticket please have your violation number ready and press two. To speak with a customer service representative or leave us a message press three.
- 59.
60. Beep
- 61.
62. Ringing
- 63.
64. Auditors office (barely audible)
- 65.
66. Marvin - Hi can you hear me?
- 67.
68. Receptionist - yes
- 69.
70. Marvin - Umm my name is Marvin Lepp. I had question regarding umm, im secretary of state candidate.. I had questions of the auditor as to how your guys' ballots are running with the approval ranked voting.
- 71.
72. Receptionist - uhh let me check, hold on just a second
- 73.
74. Placed on hold (time stamp 3:39)
- 75.
76. Marvin to passenger - that would drive me nuts
- 77.

78. Receptionist - okay let me transfer steve hold on just a moment
- 79.
80. Marvin - okay thank you
- 81.
82. receptionist - yup
- 83.
84. Ringing (4:07)
- 85.
86. Steve - city auditors this is steve
- 87.
88. Marvin - Hi steve my name is marvin lepp, how are you today
- 89.
90. Steve - I am good
- 91.
92. Marvin - good, umm i'm one of the secretary of state candidates on the republican party and i had some questions how approved ranked voting worked for Fargo since your the only city in co in the state that does it. Umm with with the primary with having umm multiple candidates for secretary of state did you guys have to do different ballots or how is that set up to run
- 93.
94. Steve - when they get to the two city races the mayor and the commissioners the instructions on the ballot say vote for all the candidates you approve of
- 95.
96. Marvin - well and and i i understand that part of it but like did you guys have to get different software for it to tabulate and calculate that or how do you guys come to your final formula
- 97.
98. Steve - well there is no formula it just adds up all the votes
- 99.
100. Marvin - okay
- 101.
102. Steve - it's not ranked it's not ranked choice
- 103.
104. Marvin - okay so they go through they and it only works for those two sections
- 105.
106. Steve - yes
- 107.
108. Marvin - okay it it sorry it came up last night I was speaking with Michael Howe umm the other the other candidate running and he goes you know thats a really good question he goes i would like to know to because he goes i didn't even think about that. Like we didn't know if you guys had to do a different ballot or if it was just those two particular sections because it is it is such a weird thing to see multiple candidates for one race for statewide or legislative offices umm he was curious how all that worked when it came into the system as well and thats why i'm calling

- 109.
110. Steve - yeah so the people pushed that made sure that umm that there would be no need for umm for new software or reprogramming or anything like that so it just literally counts all of the marks
111. Marvin - okay so
- 112.
113. Steve - you know typically you know if you had two commissioners spots it would say vote for two but when you get to the park board it says vote for three or you get to the school board it says vote for five right
- 114.
115. Marvin - well like mayor you guys have
- 116.
117. Steve - so
- 118.
119. Marvin - nine candidates running eight candidates something like that so
- 120.
121. Steve - yeah six seven something like that for mayor and and like fourteen or fifteen for city commission umm so it thats why it says vote for all that you approve of you could you could vote for all of them or you could vote for one or you could vote for none you know
- 122.
123. Marvin - yeah it just seems seems a little weird if you know what i mean (6:46)
- 124.
125. Steve - oh i do
- 126.
127. Marvin - like i've done a lot of reading on it including the company that was involved and they got a pretty healthy donation after the fact but its like thats it it just strikes me as unusual that fargo was the first one in the entire country that adopted this practice and i understand you guys have gone through a couple different elections cycles with it but you know with the position that I am running for and its come up, its came up as recently as last night because uhh jeffrey powell the democratic candidate thinks that it should be a statewide formula but im not a 100% sold on it as it sits right now you know theres what five five cities in the entire country right now using this method and we're one of them so i figured i would call and ask
- 128.
129. Steve - yeah yeah i think you know they they went through the process to change the home rule charter so they added a section in the home rule charter that talked about how we were going to vote and you know the people approved it so i mean its its.. I think the juries out to see what will happen i know exactly what it stops is vote splitting you know so if you have three republican candidates you know you can only choose two you know for commission or for the mayor you know if you want to vote for a conservative you only have a couple of choices but if you you know but it stops the vote splitting for you know it i i i know exactly what i'm saying so
- 130.

131. Marvin - yeah
- 132.
133. Steve - so anyway
- 134.
135. Marvin -no no and i follow you and i know of the republican candidate but for like me and for what i've been talking to i feel that our office the secretary of states office should be more non-partician than its currently represented because
- 136.
137. Steve - sure
- 138.
139. Marvin - at the end of the day that office is representing the entire states and thats why i want to be educated on this as well umm because it is such a new system that a lot of people have asked me and i've spoke with people of fargo and they've express concerns and as a candidate i would not be doing my due diligence to call and ask questions
- 140.
141. Steve - yeah no i i understand
- 142.
143. Marvin - so
- 144.
145. Steve - i just i wish i wish i knew what the effect is going to be but i dont
- 146.
147. Marvin - yeah it's just
- 148.
149. Steve - yeah know
- 150.
151. Marvin - i'm sure you guys feel a lot of pressure kinda of being a guinea pig on this project too (laugh)
- 152.
153. Steve- you know we really dont have to do much other than making sure the ballot language is what what the home rule charter says it's supposed to be so you know cuz the county runs the election
- 154.
155. Marvin - yeah and they referred me to you guys
- 156.
157. Steve - laughs
- 158.
159. Marvin - yeah everyone kinda went he went that way and im like okay well ill call them next because yeah
- 160.
161. Steve - well you said (9:48) the the democratic ah candidate feels like it should be something statewide and it almost feels like its kind of like one of our candidates for mayor wanted to push having absentee voting yeah know
- 162.

163. Marvin - yeah
- 164.
165. (10:10) Steve - we're not set up for that we're just not set up ive run my absentee precinct many times and you know the may.. All of 2020 that election cycle just about killed me i mean holy crap
- 166.
167. Marvin - well and all the finger pointing that came back to you guys was it was like i saw it I mean you had to be blind not to see the amount of pressure even if you looked at the executive orders that they based it on that 2020-13 just because 33 of the 53 counties were set up by mail wide voting for mail voting they shut down all the polls for the primary which i can't even imagine what your guys days looked like
- 168.
169. Steve - right yeah well we had 30,000 absentee ballots and and you know and the 30,000 absentee ballots in may when it was 100% umm absentee voting and then in the fall because so many people checked send me the ballot there you know again they checked that check mark all elections right
- 170.
171. Marvin - yup
- 172.
173. Steve - and so they got their ballot automatically so we had another 30,000 that voted absentee in the fall you know but but then we also had 80 what we had 86,000 total in the county so you know we had a lot of people that voted in person too but
- 174.
175. Marvin - well and i mean
- 176.
177. Steve - but
- 178.
179. Marvin - just looking at how high the numbers were county by county like 88% ah eligible voters voting 92% eligible voters voting the turn out for the the general election was massive so like the the in person and the absentee thats that takes a toll on a guys office
- 180.
181. Steve - yeah
- 182.
183. Marvin - ah i definitely can feel for you on it
- 184.
185. (12:15) Steve - I mean and most most of the work is on mike well was on mike's office but umm most of the work is done with by the county auditor's office before the elections but counting the ballots you can do you can do about 10,000 in a day and anything more than that you know you have to go into multiple days so you know we started on both case ah counting early umm seems like in the general we started in sep in a on saturday and then ah counted monday took sunday offend counted monday and finished on tuesday so an-anyway
- 186.

187. Marvin - was it like the same like that with the primary to where you guys were cracking and counting early
- 188.
189. Steve - yeah well i think in the primary the Governor said we could start you know the because he kind of waved the like you can only start like three days before i'm not exactly sure what the rule is but but anyway we started on thursday umm but then that was the only thing that we were doing so you know we werent doing any in person so that was a little different because we the we brought all the ballots to a hotel convention center room you know and then we we just spread it out differently kinda and then secured the ballots when we didn't finish you know all that kind of stuff were as for the general election everything was kept at the court house
- 190.
191. Marvin - k
- 192.
193. Steve - so at the end of the night we just brought it all back to the you know to the vault and locked it all up so
- 194.
195. Marvin - umm i have one final question for you since you guys have already been going kinda through this test umm when i was talking with the secretary of states office back in 2020 already uhh one of the election guys umm brought up that by 2024 they want us to be voting by phone uh i find that
- 196.
197. (14:07) Steve - by phone!?
- 198.
199. Marvin - by phone which is all rage in washington right now and i find that very alarming umm cuz im
- 200.
201. Steve - the most secure thing that can have is some kind of paper ballot because you can always track it back
- 202.
203. Marvin - exactly
- 204.
205. Steve - now we're we're doing vote centers here and i don't know what other counties are doing but their awesome you come in and the software now you you know you put in your precinct and it pulls your ballot and you you mark it but on the on the screen right but then it prints out a paper ballot that you run through the machine you do not ever want to get away from paper ballots (14:47)
- 206.
207. Marvin - awesome
- 208.
209. Steve - if
- 210.
211. Marvin - i'm glad you agree with me on that
- 212.

213. Steve - yeah anything anything that's electronic or whatever like that i mean youre just i mean you just who knows whats happening in the cyber world right

214.

215. Marvin - well and

216.

217. Steve - so

218.

219. Marvin - their reasoning was to be able to vote for your precinct no matter where you were at in the state and for me like i don't know about you but wife's called me from her phone number to tell me my extended warranty is about to expire and it wasn't her if you know what i mean so like

220.

221. Steve - yeah

222.

223. Marvin - hearing that they want to go to mobile voting is terrifying to me and and

224.

225. Steve - yeah

226.

227. Marvin - I I love tech I like technology it's amazing umm I have so back ground in it so to hear that they wanted to push for that and the fact that it's such a rage in DC right now it bother's me

228.

229. Steve - It's scary, that that alone is scary

230.

231. Marvin - yeah and so i appreciate your time i know you're coming to the end of the day umm is there a direct line if I ever have more questions that I can contact you at if I have more questions or just call through here and ask for you

232.

233. Steve - no Yes direct is ah 701-241-1301 241-1301

234.

235. Marvin - alright thank you very much you guys have a wonderful weekend im actually going to be out there umm tomorrow and tonight so i'm kind of excited to see spend some time in fargo its been a while

236.

237. Steve - yeah

238.

239. Marvin - so you have

240.

241. Steve - well good luck

242.

243. Marvin - great night sir thank you

244.

245. Steve - alright thank you bye

246.

247. Marvin - bye
- 248.
249. END PHONE CALL 16:20
- 250. CASS COUNTY AUDITOR RECORDED MAY 9TH 2022**
- 251.
252. Receptionist - Afternoon cass county finance
- 253.
254. Marvin - Hi umm could i speak to umm somebody with the election department please
- 255.
256. Receptionist - okay what the what kind of help do you need with that
- 257.
258. Marvin - umm my name is marvin lepp i'm one of the secretary of state candidates on the republican primary and i just had a couple questions and i'm hoping somebody could answer for me
- 259.
260. Receptionist - Okay yeah i think deann would be the best one for you umm let me see if she is in okay yes she is in her office i can i'll transfer you over to her okay
- 261.
262. Marvin - perfect thank you
- 263.
264. Receptionist - okay hold on
- 265.
266. HOLD MUSIC
267. RINGING
- 268.
269. Deann - Cass county this is deann
- 270.
271. Marvin - hi deann umm my name is marvin lepp im one of the secretary of state candidates on the republican primary. I just had umm a few questions for you if that's okay
- 272.
273. Deann - yeah
- 274.
275. Marvin - umm i the reason im calling is ive ive seen you guys are kind of ramping up for ah absentee ballots stuff like that umm and i was just curious like how that whole process goes for you guys because you're such a large county umm do you know kinda like what your average is going to be and and the only reason i ask is i know one of the mayor candidates was really kind of pushing for it in Fargo and it made all sorts of news and after 2020 and the chaos that was attached to that i just figured i would call
- 276.
277. Deann - yeah umm you know it it is they are much more labor intensive umm than obviously those who vote either at their early voting or at the poles umm cuz there have a whole umm separate board we have to deal with applications """" sending out the

ballots umm we do have a system in place to where it is manageable "" may have to add umm you know staff on at certain times umm and a lot of times like in 2020 when it got to be where you know became apparent that it was all vote by mail umm we just knew that there was no way just our staff could handle it umm it is so we brought in some of our past emp past election workers you know people people who have worked the elections before cuz theyre familiar with the requirements you know as far as you know who can and cant vote and and and that type of thing umm and they're familiar with the the you know ballot styles umm so it wasn't quite as much umm training involved as someone coming in brand new whos never been exposed to you know this end of it umm cuz it is quite the process umm but basically when the applications come in umm we process them umm we get the ballot ready to go out we always have umm so if say jerry were to process a stack of application and pull the ballots for those applications then someone else typically would verify those and then do the stuffing and get them ready to mail so we always have two eyes or you know two sets of eyes umm on a ballot before it ever leaves the office umm theres to much to many different numbers involved especially on a primary

278.

279. Marvin - yeah

280.

281. Deann - cuz you've got the city's and the schools so youve got a lot more splits umm

282.

283. Marvin - then you got the Fargo dealing with that approval voting for city commission and mayor and i bet you that takes it's toll too

284.

285. Deann - umm and that hasn't been horrible umm because luckily you know our equipment that we have does the tabulation for that you you know it has that capability and that was one of the things when they were researching going to that that umm you know they needed to considers is that you still have to administer your elections umm you know we need to make sure that our equipment is is able to handle that

286.

287. Marvin - did you have to do like any different programming or software with that or is it just set to tabulate

288.

289. Deann - you know it's the same it's the same software its the same umm you know same company that has always done our programming it's just a matter of how they program it to tabulate on vote

290.

291. Marvin - k

292.

293. Deann - however many as you want versus umm you know vote for two or vote for four or

294.

295. Marvin - yeah

- 296.
297. Deann - what have yous so umm luckily they have umm experts that have know what their doing and umm you know so they can they know exactly what umm what to do on their end so that the tabulation is correct (5:45) and thats one of the things too that we always you know watch for when we do our testing umm as well as is is that it is tabulating correctly
- 298.
299. Marvin - okay no no thats cool like thanks thanks thats pretty awesome umm that primary how bad was that to do i cant even imagine
- 300.
301. Deann - laughing
- 302.
303. Marvin - you had going
- 304.
305. Deann - laughing
- 306.
307. Marvin - like like how many ballots can you process a day that's just nuts (6:15)
- 308.
309. Deann - no and fortunately umm you know we do have a few days umm to process applications and that was part of umm the governor's executive order you know was because you know normally we only have the one day to process or you know our elections judges which represent each party umm to you know basically open umm and verify signatures and then open all those absentee ballots and and umm tabulate them and so it was
- 310.
311. Marvin - so sooo with tabulate tabulating when you say process you guys were actually counting them at that point
- 312.
313. Deann - right basically the way our absentee board works is very similar to umm you know really when you know when voters are are submitting them to the polls umm they're they're scanned into a machine it's just a bigger umm higher speed scanner
- 314.
315. Marvin - k
- 316.
317. Deann - that is used so umm we typically break them up into districts umm and so either two or four umm judges depending on you know how many we are expecting back umm will sit down and pair off so that a democratic judge and a republican judge working together they compare the signatures umm check them off in the poll book if you know we did receive their ballot back and then theyll open those you when they have a good stack check and they'll open those separate the secrecy envelope from the outside envelope so you eliminate the possibility of them being able to tie a vote to a voter and then once they have all those envelopes open then they take the ballots out of the secrecy folders umm they'll initial those and then they" run them through umm the high speed scanner or central count scanner

- 318.
319. Marvin - so about how many do you think you guys were doing a day during that because i mean you had what
- 320.
321. Deann - laughing
- 322.
323. Marvin - 36,000 ballots or something like that it was crazy
- 324.
325. Deann - it was it was crazy and we added umm you know most most elections we add you know maybe two or three staff umm in a general election you say a presidential general we may add three or four tops umm to help us process you know absent and file and mail and that type of thing we had over 12 umm in the office here and we were utilizing every conference room that we could lock (9:26) and secure umm
- 326.
327. Marvin - and that was during the general election
- 328.
329. Deann - that was during that was just for the primary
- 330.
331. Marvin - oh like
- 332.
333. Deann - yeah
- 334.
335. Marvin - i was curious how you guys were handling that just because of like the whole social distancing stuff and everything that washout there
- 336.
337. Deann - yeah
- 338.
339. Marvin - you almost need like a giant area to do that in
- 340.
341. Deann - yeah no and and it was nice you know here because we had several conference rooms (9:52) that they could work in you know and so we could divide we didnt have to have everybody working in one say one area necessarily umm we could have for in this in this room working you know so we were able to do the social distancing umm you know we made the gloves and the and the umm masks and everything available so that the staff that worked here umm you know on a temporary bases
- 342.
343. Marvin - do you remember umm do you remember how early you guys started counting
- 344.
345. Deann - i believe we started processing absentees for the june election we started processing i want to say the thursday or friday before the election (10:48) cuz i think we spent about three or four days umm as a board umm doing nothing but processing and there too we were umm we rented pretty much that whole block umm in the woodland

south complex at the umm Ramada you that whole conference area because then we could have them split up you know social distance umm because it was a huge thing at time

346.

347. Marvin - yeah i

348.

349. Deann - you know

350.

351. Marvin - absolutely i can't even imagine but and and thats why i was like i with this mayor candidate pushing for for umm absentee ballot or mail in ballot or whatever like umm that's gotta be a huge toll and now we don't have an order saying that where you guys can do that umm that counting early and like i can't even imagine what your staff did when they heard that i can i can just see the visible

352.

353. Deann - laughing

354.

355. Marvin - cringe on peoples face you know

356.

357. Deann - well we had several meetings with you know with the city of fargo umm kind of giving them our our stand point umm in that this is some of the cost obviously is going to have to be absorbed by the city umm you know we weren't going to they wanted us to send out the absentee applications we said absolutely not you know umm its a cost that we dont you know we haven't budgeted for and i'm not going to do it for one city and not do it for all

358.

359. Marvin - yeah

360.

361. Deann - i don't fell that you know that umm that's fair so we updated our joint powers agreement just within the last year with uh all the cities and school districts to kind of help umm you know those kind of things out if theres those uhh special requests umm you know that particular candidate is convinced based on the 2020 primary that their turn out was just so much better when they did vote by mail and i really you know i have mixed feelings i don't know that thats a fair judge of voter turn out i think 2020 was a year unlike any other we're just never going to see that again

362.

363. Marvin - god i hope not (laughs)

364.

365. Deann - you know and and so was it due to covid was it due to interest in the city of fargo race was it you know i think a lot of it was people you know everybody got applications in the mail they knew that that was their only opportunity to vote umm but are they going to take the initiative other years so it will be interesting to see what our turn out is like uhh you know we have i know aarp must have sent out applications to all of their members umm because thats the one thing we've been getting back just a ton of you know absentee umm

- 366.
367. Marvin - that's kind of
- 368.
369. Deann - applications from aarp
- 370.
371. Marvin - that's kind of weird that that they thats kind of weird that they can send that stuff out
- 372.
373. Deann - yeah just about anybody really i mean any any candidate any umm you know political party because they are not really pushing for necessarily for umm like aarps umm mailer i don't know if it's pushing anything other than you know exercise your right to vote
- 374.
375. Marvin - yeah no and
- 376.
377. Deann - that kind of thing which i think everyone is getting involved in these days
- 378.
379. Marvin - yeah like we're hosting a huge event out in
- 380.
381. Deann - umm
- 382.
383. Marvin - killdeer here next week a get out and vote event where i've invited candidates from across the state just to come out and meet each other and meet people and like like people want to be involved and
- 384.
385. Deann - yeah
- 386.
387. Marvin - that's kind of cool
- 388.
389. Deann - which is good its nice because you know when i first started fifteen years ago umm we used to joi my my umm i don't know if you ever had the opportunity to meet mike montplesior umm our former finance director county auditor umm but he he used to always joke with me when i first started that it was like planning thirty-eight weddings all for the same day and i said you know the only problem is i said but it sucks when you plan all these parties and nobody shows up (laughs)
- 390.
391. Marvin - yeah absolutely yeah and i saw i saw mike retired last year like he must of just been at the point where he was ready to spend some time with family and grandkids or whatever but
- 392.
393. Deann - Yeah he a unfortunately had experienced some loss in his family too and and so that made a big difference so
- 394.
395. Marvin - oh boy that that's unfortunate to hear

396.
397. Deann - Yeah so i think he realized it was time to enjoy the fruits of labor he'd been here for a long time and so
398.
399. Marvin - yeah
400.
401. Deann - umm but sure different without that wealth of knowledge it around here during an election so
402.
403. Marvin - well i don't i don't think that I have any other questions at the moment if I have anything that comes up is there a direct line i can get a hold of you at or just call the
404.
405. Deann - Yup
406.
407. Marvin - auditor's office
408.
409. Deann - yup you can call me directly 241-5631
410.
411. Marvin - awesome and again thank you so much
412.
413. Deann - and its deann
414.
415. Marvin - yup thank you so much for your time
416.
417. Deann - no problem not a problem
418.
419. Marvin - alright have a good day
420.
421. Deann - have a good day
422.
423. Marvin - mm bye
424.
425. Deann - bye
426.
427. END AUDIO

**428. FOLLOW UP CALL WITH CASS COUNTY AUDITORS (Deann) 10:26 minutes
MAY 17TH, 2022**

- 429.
430. Ringing
- 431.
432. Deann - cass county finance this is deann how may i help you
- 433.
434. Marvin - hey deann it's marvin lepp again how are you
- 435.
436. Deann - i'm fine what can i do for you
- 437.
438. Marvin - umm just a couple quick questions umm i was thinking about our conversation that we had had the other day about the primary umm and you had said that you guys had to the ramadaumm and you were securing the ballots at the end of the night were what did you guys do for securing those just out of curiosity
- 439.
440. Deann - the the doors were locked umm the election board and there and all of the ballots everything is locked inside umm the cages overnight
- 441.
442. Marvin - okay
- 443.
444. Deann - the pvc cages umm locked with both padlocks and umm large plastic seals numbered seals
- 445.
446. Marvin - okay no thats
- 447.
448. Deann - so at night they record you know the seal numbers that they put on them and then they've got to record those then when they take them off the next day to assure that they're the same ones
- 449.
450. Marvin - umm
- 451.
452. Deann - everything is locked in the equipment and the equipment is locked in the room
- 453.
454. Marvin - okay umm and then were they doing the same with like the ballot machines too since you guys were counting
- 455.
456. Deann - well and they're the'yre tabulated as people vote but no results are run until election night after polls close but yeah so we just basically they just umm at the end of the night they'll just turn them off and then turn them back on to continue voting in the next day and those are alsoyou know theyre theyre program card and the umm results card which are one and the same are sealed with a numbered seal in the machine
- 457.

458. Marvin - okay no and i
- 459.
460. Deann - the machine is locked and then the machines get rolled into the pvc cages and again those are locked and sealed
- 461.
462. Marvin - okay no and i mean it just kind of a weird situation to hear that they were using a hotel umm did they umm how did you guys get the ballots over there then did you do like armored truck or was it just in the back of somebodys car
- 463.
464. Deann - well we use a moving company
- 465.
466. Marvin - used a moving company k
- 467.
468. Deann - yeah we use a moving company we use the same moving company weve used for years ad again all of that stuff is padalocked and sealed we record the seal numbers before they ever leave our custody (2:45 time stamp)
- 469.
470. Marvin - okay
- 471.
472. Deann - umm and then the election workers when they remove that seal then they record so that we know that nobodies you know tampered with the door to the cage umm but everything is you know typically stored in a in a locked room umm you know we make arrangements with whether it be you know the umm the community corner in west acres and umm you know that room is secure umm locks everynight you know whatever so
- 473.
474. Marvin - no and
- 475.
476. Deann - we try to make sure
- 477.
478. Marvin - yeah no it was just it was just kind of a weird situation i guess ive never heard of a hotel being used like that before i was surprised
- 479.
480. Deann - ohh
- 481.
482. Marvin - you guys didnt use like the alera center or something like that where the city has some some stake in it umm so the machines if you were if you were rolling those into the cages at the end of the night they must have like a battery back up in em
- 483.
484. Deann - no we unplug them we shut them off we turn them off they go completely off they're unplugged and rolled into the cage
- 485.
486. Marvin - oh and everything stores on that on those cards
- 487.

488. Deann - right
- 489.
490. Marvin - k
- 491.
492. Deann - yup everything is stored in the internal you know umm hardware and the
and the ahh umm thumb drive so
- 493.
494. Marvin - umm last quick couple questions here umm what did you guys end up with
the absentee ballots in the primary was it 30,000 you think
- 495.
496. Deann - mmmm let me pull it up because i'm not good at guessing
- 497.
498. Marvin - no that's fine
- 499.
500. Deann - uhh let's see 2020... okay yeah according to our official abstract umm there
was 30,069 ballots cast in the 2020 primary
- 501.
502. Marvin - umm and then how about the general cuz it sounds like you guys had a ton
of influx for the general too
- 503.
504. Deann - (laughs) yeah cuz most people umm you know on the application they can
select whether they want for the june the november or both or all statewides umm at
least then you could they've changed that in 2021 but let me see here (5:56) so the 2020
general uhhh let's see absentee ballots cast in the 2020 general was 31,927
- 505.
506. Marvin - and how many people overall for the county voted like in person cuz I know
umm attorney general steneham
- 507.
508. Deann - total ballots cast of the county with everything was 86,897
- 509.
510. Marvin - okay and that was the entire county
- 511.
512. Deann - right
- 513.
514. Marvin - k alright well i think that's it i've been thinking about our conversation the
other day and i'm like i'm just going to call and ask cuz
- 515.
516. Deann - yeah absolutely
- 517.
518. Marvin - i i i hadn't heard of something like that before and it was interesting to me so
i figured i would ask a few more questions so
- 519.
520. Deann - yeah umm you know it became became a little bit more difficult for us when
we couldn't use the schools

- 521.
522. Marvin - yeah
- 523.
524. Deann - and schools really don't make good polling locations especially elementary schools
- 525.
526. Marvin - yeah
- 527.
528. Deann - umm
- 529.
530. Marvin - and i understand
- 531.
532. Deann - you know
- 533.
534. Marvin - it's just just what
- 535.
536. Deann - no only the population that's there during the day but umm they don't build elementary schools with lots of parking because typically it's just teachers
- 537.
538. Marvin - yeah
- 539.
540. Deann - that need parking and so parking becomes and issue space becomes and issue umm you know in june it's not so bad because obviously they don't have school but then in november you've got to separate the two and that once for a fargo school district special election and umm it was kind of ah nightmare they ended up hiring umm you know members of the police force to provide security throughout the day and and it's like you know i'm not so sure i want to go down that road either umm but that is one of the things that we you know definitely were selecting you know using ah fellowship hall at a church or a gymnasium in a school or a hotel umm you know that we keep in mind things can be umm secured overnight
- 541.
542. Marvin - yeah
- 543.
544. Deann - cuz we always deliver even if we don't use that location for early voting we're delivering the equipment the day before and then we're not picking it up until the day after and so you've got to have a way to secure all of that stuff so we take that we take that pretty seriously just to make sure that we know that nothing has been tampered with
- 545.
546. Marvin - no and and the only reason i brought up june is because like everything was shut down there wasn't schools that were functioning
- 547.
548. Deann - soo
- 549.

550. Marvin - like i mean if you
551.
552. Deann - chaos
553.
554. Marvin - weren't and essential worker you weren't going to work if you know what i
mean
555.
556. Deann - well and and june was strictly vote by mail you know so security was easier
obviously cuz everything was self contained here at the court house (9:26) umm but it
was interesting so
557.
558. Marvin - what just one last question like how many ballots you think you processed a
day while you were doing that just a guess
559.
560. Deann - mmmmm you mean as far as when they started opening them and counting
them
561.
562. Marvin - yeah in june
563.
564. Deann - ummm you know they probably got close to umm i don't know maybe 7,000
8,000 each day counted to the the scanners
565.
566. Marvin - alright well that's what i needed to know
567.
568. Deann - alright
569.
570. Marvin - alright thank you
571.
572. Deann - you bet bye-bye
573.
574. Marvin - bye
575.
576. PHONE HANGS UP
577.
578. Marvin - she has a really hard time keeping her
579.
580. End recording
581.

**582. FOLLOW UP CALL WITH STEVE AT THE FARGO CITY AUDITOR'S OFFICE
(15:05) MAY 19TH, 2022**

583. Ringing
584.
585. Steve - city auditors this is steve
586.
587. Marvin - hey steve it's marvin lepp how are you doing
588.
589. Steve - i'm doing well
590.
591. Marvin - umm i don't know if you recall we spoke a couple fridays ago i was the i'm
the secretary of state candidate that called you asking about the approval voting
592.
593. Steve - oh yeah
594.
595. Marvin - yeah hey i had a couple follow up questions just because its kind of been
weighing on my mind umm you had said in june umm you guys had rented a hotel for
doing the counting for the absentee ballots
596.
597. Steve - umm in 2020
598.
599. Marvin - yes sir
600.
601. Steve - and and to be clear it's not me it was the county
602.
603. Marvin - yeah yeah yup yup i'm not saying it was you i understand the county's in
charge of everything umm
604.
605. Steve - right
606.
607. Marvin - at the end of the night umm just for my piece of mind what did they do with
the machines when they were all done did they leave them plugged in in the convention
center did they get locked up
608.
609. Steve - they were ah shut down and put in a secure room
610.
611. Marvin - into a secure room okay and then the same with the ballots of course
612.
613. Steve - yeah i don't recall yeah no there were ah (1:21) many trips brought back to
the court house
614.
615. Marvin - oh so they were bringing them back to the court house at night
616.
617. Steve - yeah right

- 618.
619. Marvin - okay
- 620.
621. Steve - well at least that's what i remember seems like there was a lot of that activity umm but it's been a couple years ago and i'm getting old so
- 622.
623. Marvin - no no and i understand
- 624.
625. Steve - (laughs)
- 626.
627. Marvin - I get it that that whole scenario seemed odd to me that umm they chose to that the county chose to use a hotel versus the plethora of other buildings for counting you know
- 628.
629. Steve - they really didn't have a a lot of options that umm you know they to have that many people that we had you know umm uhh going through the ballots umm so they had they split it up into groups and the first group would umm compare the signatures and find them in the pollbooks and when they got that done they'd pass it over to a group that open the ballots and separated em and then from there then it went over to the counting group that you know counted them and umm marked what district and you know record all that stuff so
- 630.
631. Marvin - yeah but
- 632.
633. Steve - yeah really i mean if you have questions you should probably just call deann she was election coordinator back then and she might have better recollection all though right now i imagine shes up to her eyeballs in this years round
- 634.
635. Marvin - oh yeah i can't i can't imagine because what is it the aarp was sending out letters for people to get their absentee or mail in ballots
- 636.
637. Steve - well we had a we had a sitting commissioner that said we need to send out so we sent out the city sent out 56,000 ballot applications too so you know
- 638.
639. Marvin - fouey and then you have the mayor candidate that wanted it as well so
- 640.
641. Steve - yeah that's the commissioner that wanted the
- 642.
643. Marvin - oh okay
- 644.
645. Steve - to push for that same person
- 646.
647. Marvin - umm so you guys were transporting them back to the court house every night how were they doing that (3:25)

- 648.
649. Steve - well again that's i i im a little fuzzy on all the details umm i was not there to coordinate i was just there to help
- 650.
651. Marvin - yeah and i
- 652.
653. Steve - umm so they loaded them into peoples vehicles and you know hauled them down to the court house (3:44) at least that's that's my recollection of how they how they did you know and again i could be off
- 654.
655. Marvin - no and that's fine I just like i've been thinking about that conversation since we had it and it's like wow like that's that's pretty nuts umm
- 656.
657. Steve - well it was nuts uhh you know you can imagine 30,000 ballots being counted and umm and umm you know everything we were doing was new you know we're trying to figure out how best to do it so
- 658.
659. Marvin - yeah yeah yeah like unprecedented times and all that
- 660.
661. Steve - right right
- 662.
663. Marvin - how's everything going this year pretty good okay?
- 664.
665. Steve - well again umm the county does the you know the does the election runs the election so i haven't really heard from them umm you know so my part is getting the names on the ballots getting it if you know that stuff and i'm kind of just staying out of the way so
- 666.
667. Marvin - yeah yeah i'm sure well that's the only questions i really had so thank you very much umm
- 668.
669. Steve - yeah yeah again i would encourage you to call deann at the county and you know and if you have questions about what was done or why it was done she would be the best person to answer
- 670.
671. Marvin - alright well
- 672.
673. Steve - you you know montplesior is retired so so he's not there as a resource anymore umm so
- 674.
675. Marvin - but you said she was the one that is the election coordinator
- 676.
677. Steve - yeah she's been the counties election coordinator for you know a dozen years i suppose now

- 678.
679. Marvin - oh so she's been at it for a while umm
- 680.
681. Steve - yeah and there's some certification or something she and one person from al's office i think are the only two people in the state with that you know certified election coordinator certification so i mean she she does know her stuff and you know
- 682.
683. Marvin - yeah i think it's brian newby maybe one of the brians
- 684.
685. Steve - yeah i think that's the guy yeah
- 686.
687. Marvin - yeah alright well thank you very much
- 688.
689. Steve - how's your campaign going
- 690.
691. Marvin - oh it's so busy we're all over the state right now umm up to west hope this last sunday and uh out to killdeer this weekend umm finally got billboards up and running that was pretty awesome umm but yeah like
- 692.
693. Steve - and
- 694.
695. Marvin - were on the go
- 696.
697. Steve - it's you and one other one other guy on the republican side and then the democrat and the primary will narrow it down to one right is that right
- 698.
699. Marvin - correct yup umm
- 700.
701. Steve - and and then the real campai well the real campaign is to get through this part i guess but umm
- 702.
703. Marvin - yeah
- 704.
705. Steve - then the then the whomever remains standing goes on to November
- 706.
707. Marvin - yup so it will be me and michael howe umm he's out of casselton west fargo area uh
- 708.
709. Steve - okay
- 710.
711. Marvin - and then once we get past the primary it will be with uh jeffery powell he works out at mayville state uhh he's the democratic contender uh that's
- 712.
713. Steve - okay

- 714.
715. Marvin - that's the gentleman that wants approval voting across the state
- 716.
717. Steve - ugh okay (laughs)
- 718.
719. Marvin - yeah
- 720.
721. Steve - no i don't want to vote for him
- 722.
723. Marvin - right? Well you know and as we've been traveling the elections keep coming up like all the other stuff keeps coming up and you know you have one side where like the secretary of state's office is saying everything was run perfect and everything else but you you get out and talk to the people i mean there's so many questions that they just feel like they are being ignored on and you can't help but ignore what's being said and like when i go out that's one of my questions that I ask you know i ask for that show of hands who believes that we have issues whether nationally or locally and everytime i do it 90 percent of the rooms hands goes up and like
- 724.
725. Steve - i think that there were problems nationally i i do feel that our local you know umm again my only experience is dealing with cass county
- 726.
727. Marvin - yeah
- 728.
729. Steve - umm you know there's always there's the chance that somebody could be voting that shouldn't be but you know we always try to afford everybody the opportunity to vote umm but you know when they walk through the line and you say are you a us citizen are you over 18 you know have you lived in you know in your residence for 30 days and if they answer yes and their drivers license matches i mean you've kind of got to you know let them go through and ahh im going to put something on my ballot applications for next time that they umm under penalty of perjury you know i certify that i am and then have those three check lists cuz some of the people that are running for city commission and stuff i don't know have they lived here for you know and well and to be on the ballot they have to live here for six months but are they us citizens? I don't know that (9:03) you know but at least if they'd sign you know that under penalty of perjury that they are then at least i've got that you know
- 730.
731. Marvin - yeah and that gives you guys additional safe guards like
- 732.
733. Steve - right
- 734.
735. Marvin -like that's all there is to it but because i mean with how crazy everything's been like who knows everybody questions it
- 736.
737. Steve - everybody questions everything

- 738.
739. Marvin - it's constant and and i'm sure you get phone calls from other people instead of just me on stuff like this too where it's like
- 740.
741. Steve - well and i im almost its kind of cool that we are the only state without voter registration but im almost thinking you know what let's have voter registration the you know whatever it is you know 60 days before if you haven't or you know 6 months or whatever it is if you haven't registered you're not voting you know
- 742.
743. Marvin - yeah and i mean that was one of the first approaches i looked at when i was looking at all this was voter registration because theres so many states that do it but you have that unique id number but like
- 744.
745. Steve - right
- 746.
747. Marvin - my concern comes in is if the system's hacked
- 748.
749. Steve - mmm
- 750.
751. Marvin - all that information is out there how people were voting howhow things were going down now with this current atmosphere of of people upset with the thought of umm the social credit score you think of the implications that would tie to that as well you know
- 752.
753. Steve - right
- 754.
755. Marvin - if weren't a good little citizen so like i im not opposed to a registration set up but right now it's only as good as the people holding the keys and the fact the the systems can be breached is an issue with me
- 756.
757. Steve - sure
- 758.
759. Marvin - and i i come with a little bit of tech background so like i've looked at all that stuff before i even started speaking about it because that was my 30 second answer you know on the back of your driver's license is barcoded already you scan the license you scan the ballot it's uniquely attached to you so that you can go and look at your ballot later i mean
- 760.
761. Steve - right
- 762.
763. Marvin - and and that i think would give a lot of people peace of mind but again having that data out there could have detrimental umm effects if it would would get breached and
- 764.

765. Steve - right
- 766.
767. Marvin - and and so that that's where I am and like i i would love to see a system like that where we have that security that peace of mind but it would it's going to take a lot a lot of coding and it's going to take a lot of work to make sure that it is unhackable
- 768.
769. Steve - right
- 770.
771. Marvin - so
- 772.
773. Steve - and i've heard a lotta you know a lotta talk about you know well voting into into like a tablet or something and thats all you have well and i think no matter what you have to have that paper as a back up
- 774.
775. Marvin - yeah absolutely you have to have that paper trail
- 776.
777. Steve - yeah and it's a i mean im excited for this year to see you know cuz cuz this year everybody's going to be voting on a on a machine that you know so it will prevent cross overs cuz you pick which party you want to vote for and then you go down and you vote and then you get to review your ballot and then finally you hit print and then it comes out on the piece of paper you know so i mean thats thats going to be very very nice you know to to stop the cross over you know and and then still you still got that paper ballot that got run through the machine not that thing marking your machine is not voting so
- 778.
779. Marvin - yeah an i thought in the past like if you cross party lines for doing your primary voting like i thought in sixteen or eighteen i remember people being upset because they didn't want to vote for somebody on the primary so they pickedlike an independent or something along those lines and it was spoiling their ballot and they had to vote again so i thought we already had
- 780.
781. Steve - right
- 782.
783. Marvin - that system kind of in place
- 784.
785. Steve - umm
- 786.
787. Marvin - but that was when they had that equipment
- 788.
789. Steve - yeah yeah with the ballot that they had they you know it had both it had all the parties listed so you know you weren't you weren't choosing one party or the other so
- 790.
791. Marvin - ah

- 792.
793. Steve - you know and i dont i guess i understand why we're doing a primary why were just voting on one ticket but umm you know otherwise i don't see really what difference it would make if you did you know and well in this race i want to vote for this person or whatever but
- 794.
795. Marvin - yeah no and i i feel you
- 796.
797. Steve - it is a system we have
- 798.
799. Marvin - well and there's so many so many districts across the state were we have 6 legislators r or six candidates that running for legislature wheather its house or senate because you have endorsed candidates running against unendorsed candidates and umm like it its pretty nuts umm it seems like it's everywherein the state where it's a fight for those republican seats and it's going to go into the primary
- 800.
801. Steve - it is yeah its kind of crazy
- 802.
803. Marvin - and even like city county commission who would have ever expected what 14-15 candidates for for fargo county commission er city commission you know
- 804.
805. Steve - yeah (laughs)
- 806.
807. Marvin - like
- 808.
809. Steve - and you would think out of 15 there would be tow that are worth voting for but (laughs)
- 810.
811. Marvin - well and like bismarck i think it 8 or 9 candidates for the school board running this year and like that's a pretty intense fight there too everybody's
- 812.
813. Steve - well
- 814.
815. Marvin - everybody's up in arms
- 816.
817. Steve - yeah theres a lot of that going on
- 818.
819. Marvin - alright well i'm not going to take any moe of your day here i'm just heading into work so thought
- 820.
821. Steve - alright
- 822.
823. Marvin - thank you so much
- 824.

825. Steve - keep fighting the keep fighting the good fight
826.
827. Marvin - alright thank you
828.
829. Steve - thank you
830.
831. Marvin - you have a good day bye
832.
833. Steve - yeah bye
834.
835. PHONE HANGS UP
a.