

By EARL WATT

- Daily Leader

Only one vote separated Cliff Abbott and Nick Hatcher for the third and final seat on the USD No. 480 School Board after all the votes were counted Tuesday.

But there were still votes that have not been counted, and according to Seward County Deputy Clerk Crystal Clemens, those votes may or may not be accepted during Friday's 9 a.m. canvassing session.

"There are about 55 provisional ballots," she said. "Everything else has been counted."

Abbott had a one-vote advantage over Hatcher, but the 55 provisionals could easily extend Abbott's lead or reverse the outcome.

The most common provisional ballots are made when a voter has either moved within Seward County and did not re-register, did not have a valid registration on file, or the voter changed their name and did not re-register under the new name.

"By law, we cannot turn them away," Clemens said. "When they vote, they fill out a voter registration card, we put the reason why their vote is provisional on an envelope, the voter marks the ballot, puts it in the envelope and seals envelope. We take voter registration card and verify the reason for the provisional ballot. We remove the voter registration card so canvassers do not know who's ballot is who's. If they decide to count it we open the envelopes. Those that are not counted remain sealed."

Will provisional votes switch the outcome?

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Seward County adopted the Kansas Election Standards which helps guide the canvassers on which provisional ballots to accept and which ones to deny based on law and previous court cases.

“Our canvassers follow that as much as possible,” Clemens said.

The canvassing board is made up of the Seward County commissioners, but they may appoint a representative if they cannot attend the meeting which is scheduled for 9 a.m. Friday.