

Monday, May 13, 2024 at 12:19:24 Eastern Daylight Time

**Subject:** Public Records Request  
**Date:** Saturday, May 11, 2024 at 11:29:28 AM Eastern Daylight Time  
**From:** Main, Sharon H  
**To:** AO Records  
**Attachments:** image001.png, Agenda & Minutes referencing SVPP.pdf, Signature Verification Pilot Program email to BOE.pdf, Numbered Memo 2024-04 Signature Verification Pilot.pdf

EXTERNAL SENDER

Attn. Elizabeth Haddix,

I received your records request on April 5<sup>th</sup> but to date we have not received the signature verification equipment or software to conduct the Signature Verification Pilot Program. At this point, I am sending the agendas and minutes and emails where I updated my board about the program. See attached files.



Sharon H. Main | Elections Director  
**Rowan County Board of Elections**  
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**BOARD AGENDA  
January 16, 2024**

**CALL TO ORDER 12:30 p.m.**

**IN PERSON ATTENDEES PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD: 15 Minutes (3 minutes per person)**

**See tabs in notebook:**

- 1. Approve minutes of 1-02-2024**
- 2. List of recommended Early Voting appointments from party chairs.**
- 3. Approval of amended list of appointed Chief Judges and Judges for Election Day.**
- 4. Buffer Zones for Early Voting sites.**
- 5. Resolution for director compensation.**

**No Tab:**

- 1. Request motion to follow Rowan County's inclement weather closings for government offices.**
- 2. Update on Signature Verification Pilot Program.**
- 3. Update on L&A Testing start date.**

**Upcoming Dates:**

**Tentative board meeting dates and times – see attached (behind agenda)**

**Absentee Ballots start mailing out on January 19<sup>th</sup>.**

**State Board Winter Conference – Monday and Tuesday, February 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>**

**Early Voting starts February 15<sup>th</sup> and ends March 2<sup>nd</sup>.**

**State Board Summer Conference – August 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup>**

**Next board meeting – Tuesday, January 30, 2024 at 12:30 p.m.**

**ADJOURN**

# MINUTES OF THE ROWAN COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS

January 16, 2024

16

## **Meeting Called to Order**

A meeting of the Rowan County Board of Elections was called to order on January 16, 2024 at 12:30 p.m. with Chair, John T. Hudson presiding.

Board Members:            Chair, John T. Hudson            Secretary, Catreliia S. Hunter  
   Loutricia W. Cain            Dwight D. Collins            Kenneth L. Stutts  
   *All Members attended in-person.*

Staff Members in attendance: Sharon H. Main, Director

## **Public Comments:**

John T. Hudson called for public comments. Each person is allowed three (3) minutes to speak. No comments were made.

## **Action Items:**

### **Approval of Minutes:**

Review and approval of the January 2, 2024 minutes.

*Dwight D. Collins made a motion to approve the January 2, 2024 minutes.  
Loutricia W. Cain seconded. Motion passed unanimously.*

### **List of recommended Early Voting appointments from party chairs:**

The list of recommended Early Voting appointments from the party chairs received by the board members was reviewed.

*Catreliia S. Hunter made a motion to approve list of Early Voting appointments from party chairs.  
Dwight D. Collins seconded. Motion passed unanimously.*

### **Approval of amended list of appointed Chief Judges and Judges for Election Day:**

The amended list of appointed Chief Judges and Judges for Election Day received by the board members was reviewed.

*Kenneth L. Stutts made a motion to approve amended list of appointed Chief Judges and Judges for Election Day  
Dwight D. Collins seconded. Motion passed unanimously.*

### **Buffer Zones for Early Voting sites:**

Early Voting sites have areas designated areas for tents, tables, etc. Sharon Main provided a site map for all 3 sites to show the 50-foot buffer zone area. She will do a listing for Election Day of the 50-foot buffer area for all 41 precincts. It must be posted to the website by Feb. 4. Kenneth L. Stutts requested the word "should" be changed to "must" in the buffer zone notice presented so it's a definite and not a suggestion.

### **Resolution for director compensation:**

The resolution for director compensation was reviewed.

*Dwight D. Collins made a motion to approve resolution for director compensation  
Kenneth L. Stutts seconded. Motion passed unanimously.*

**Request motion to follow Rowan County’s inclement weather closings for government offices:**

Rowan County’s inclement weather policy was discussed. Dwight D. Collins stated we should talk to the State Board of Elections about getting direction from them regarding closing early during voting. Discussion held.

*Dwight D. Collins made a motion to follow Rowan County’s inclement weather closing policy for government offices subject to directives from the State Board of Elections.*

*Loutricia W. Cain seconded. Motion passed unanimously.*

**Update of Signature Verification Pilot Program**

Sharon Main shared there is no software vendor for this program yet. She attended a Zoom meeting for expectations from the counties chosen to participate. This pilot program will happen after the election. There was discussion if these software vendors go through the same scrutiny as the other voting machines and software. Sharon Main will let the Board know any answers she can find out regarding this question.

**Update on L&A testing start date:**

Sharon Main stated that L&A testing hasn’t started yet due to coding not being complete. It will hopefully be starting later this week. The starting date will be sent to everyone and posted on the website when it’s finalized.

**Upcoming dates:**

Absentee Ballots start mailing out on January 19<sup>th</sup>.

State Board Winter Conference-Monday and Tuesday, February 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>.

Early Voting starts February 15<sup>th</sup> and ends March 2<sup>nd</sup>.

State Board Summer Conference-August 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>

Next Board Meeting scheduled for Tuesday, January 30, 2024 at 12:30 p.m.

Sharon Main shared information about a man coming into county offices and videotaping. He goes by the name NC Audit and has been to several Rowan County offices. Chains and signs have been put up to keep the public out of our workspace. Someone from the county will be coming out to determine if we can close off the area up front to create a defined public area. Discussion held.

**Board adjourned at 12:48 p.m.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Catrelia S. Hunter, Secretary

I attest these minutes to be true and correct: Recorded: Melinda Hartman, Clerk to the Board.

**BOARD AGENDA  
February 6, 2024**

**CALL TO ORDER 12:30 p.m.**

**IN PERSON ATTENDEES PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD: 15 Minutes (3 minutes per person)**

**See tabs in notebook:**

- 1. Approve minutes of 1-16-2024**
- 2. Update on Election Day inclement weather**
- 3. Plan for designated public area in front office and resolution for limited-public forum.**

**No Tab:**

- 1. Update on Signature Verification Pilot Program.**
- 2. Approve and Count Absentee Ballots**

<b>Civilian:</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Military:</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Overseas:</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Total:</b>	<b>12</b>

**Total ballots in tabulator: 12**

**Upcoming Dates:**

**Tentative board meeting dates and times – See attached (behind agenda)**

**Early Voting starts February 15<sup>th</sup> and ends March 2<sup>nd</sup>.**

**Election Day – Tuesday, March 5<sup>th</sup>.**

**State Board Summer Conference – August 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup>**

**Next board meeting – Tuesday, February 13, 2024 at 12:30 p.m.**

**ADJOURN**

# MINUTES OF THE ROWAN COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS

February 6, 2024

17

## Meeting Called to Order

A meeting of the Rowan County Board of Elections was called to order on February 6, 2024 at 12:33 p.m. with Chair, John T. Hudson presiding.

Board Members:            Chair, John T. Hudson            Secretary, Catreliia S. Hunter  
                                 Loutricia W. Cain                Dwight D. Collins                Kenneth L. Stutts  
                                 *Members attended in person. Loutricia W. Cain and Kenneth L. Stutts were absent.*

Staff Members in attendance: Sharon H. Main, Director

## Public Comments:

John T. Hudson called for public comments. Each person is allowed three (3) minutes to speak.

Pam Bloom questioned the agenda item regarding the resolution for limited-public forum.

## Action Items:

### **Approval of Minutes:**

Review and approval of the January 16, 2024 minutes.

*Dwight D. Collins made a motion to approve the January 16, 2024 minutes.  
Catreliia S. Hunter seconded. Motion passed unanimously.*

### **Update on Election Day inclement weather plan:**

Sharon Main gave the members information from the state on the Election Day inclement weather plan. Discussion held.

### **Plan for designated public area in front office and resolution for limited-public forum:**

Sharon Main presented information about a group of citizens who were going to county offices to film, but who had no official business at those particular offices. Discussion was held regarding citizens first amendment rights. Dwight D. Collins stated that they have the right to film anywhere in the office that is available for the public, such as the entrance and board room for meetings, but not by desks and not where private information is exchanged. The resolution drafted by Sharon could possibly be revised but was not voted on at this time. She will get recommendations from legal counsel on the county and state level as to what steps to take further.

### **Update on Signature Verification Pilot Program:**

No vendor has been selected at this time. Discussion was held about the security of the equipment.

<b>Approve and Count Absentee Ballots:</b>	Civilian	11
	Military	0
	Overseas:	<u>1</u>
	Total	12

DS200 was opened and count was confirmed at zero (0). Zero tape was signed by all board members.

*Catreliia S. Hunter made a motion to approve and count the twelve (12) absentee ballots that were accepted.  
Dwight D. Collins seconded. Motion passed unanimously.*

**Upcoming dates:**

Next Board Meeting scheduled for Tuesday, February 13, 2024 at 12:30 p.m.

**Board adjourned at 1:03 p.m.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Catrelia S. Hunter, Secretary

I attest these minutes to be true and correct: Recorded: Melinda Hartman, Clerk to the Board.

**Rowan County Board of Elections  
BOARD AGENDA  
February 20, 2024**

**Call to Order 12:30 p.m.**

**In Person Attendees Public Comment Period:**

15 Minutes (3 minutes per person)

**See tabs in notebook:**

1. Approve minutes of 2-6-2024 and 2-13-2024
2. Update on Signature Verification Pilot Program – informational only
3. State-wide and County Observer Lists – informational only
4. Buffer Zones for Election Day Precincts – informational only

**No Tab:**

1. Approve and Count Absentee Ballots

Beginning total ballots in tabulator 12

Civilian:	28
Military:	1
Overseas:	<u>3</u>
Total:	32

Affidavit Review Pending 1 Civilian

Total ballots in tabulator: 45 (if affidavit review is approved)

**Upcoming Dates:**

Tentative board meeting dates and times – See attached (behind agenda)

Early Voting starts February 15<sup>th</sup> and ends March 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Election Day – Tuesday, March 5<sup>th</sup>.

State Board Summer Conference – August 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup>

Next board meeting – Tuesday, February 27, 2024 at 12:30 p.m.

**Adjourn**

MINUTES OF THE ROWAN COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS

February 20, 2024

**Meeting Called to Order**

A meeting of the Rowan County Board of Elections was called to order on February 20, 2024 at 12:30 p.m. with Chair, John T. Hudson presiding.

Board Members: Chair, John T. Hudson Secretary, Catreliia S. Hunter  
Loutricia W. Cain Dwight D. Collins Kenneth L. Stutts  
*Members attended in person. Loutricia W. Cain were absent.*

Staff Members in attendance: Sharon H. Main, Director

**Public Comments:**

John T. Hudson called for public comments. Each person is allowed three (3) minutes to speak.

**Action Items:**

**Approval of Minutes:**

Review and approval of the February 6, 2024 and February 13, 2024 minutes.

*Kenneth L. Stutts made a motion to approve the February 6, 2024 and February 13, 2024 minutes. Dwight D. Collins seconded. Motion passed unanimously.*

**Update on Signature Verification Pilot Program:**

Sharon Main reported the State Board has answered all the questions on the bidding process for vendors and that bids will be opened on February 27. She stated they plan to choose a vendor February 28<sup>th</sup>.

**State-wide and County Observer Lists:**

Sharon Main provided updated State-wide and county Observer Lists. Discussion held.

**Buffer Zones for Election Day Precincts:**

Sharon Main shared the buffer zones for Election Day precincts. Discussion held regarding churches with restricted status. Churches serve as polling places in rural communities and have the option to complete the paperwork to become a restricted polling place which prevents electioneering and political signs placed on the property. Currently six (6) churches are restricted polling places.

**Approve and Count Absentee Ballots:**

Sharon Main reported that 1,606 people have voted during early voting as of 12:30 pm today. This is about 500 more than the 2020 primary.

She also stated one (1) ballot received has an affidavit review pending status due to having ID Exception Form the board will have to approve before it can be accepted today. The board reviewed and accepted it. It was added to the civilian count.

Civilian:	29
Military:	1
Overseas:	3
Total	33

DS200 was opened and count was confirmed at twelve (12).

The Board reviewed and by unanimous action approved the absentee ballots and they were scanned into the tabulator.

The DS200 count now stands at forty-five (45).

**Upcoming dates:**

Next Board Meeting scheduled for Tuesday, February 27, 2024 at 12:30 p.m.

**Board adjourned at 12:47 p.m.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Catrelia S. Hunter, Secretary

I attest these minutes to be true and correct: Recorded: Melinda Hartman, Clerk to the Board.

**Rowan County Board of Elections  
BOARD AGENDA  
March 4, 2024**

**Call to Order 5:00 p.m.**

**In Person Attendees Public Comment Period:** 15 Minutes (3 minutes per person)

**See tabs in notebook:**

1. Approve minutes of 2-27-2024
2. Final List of Election Day Workers

**No Tab:**

1. Update on Signature Verification Pilot Program

2. Approve and Count Absentee Ballots

Beginning total ballots in tabulator 108

Civilian:	115
Military:	1
<u>Overseas:</u>	<u>2</u>
Total:	118

Affidavit Review Pending 32 Civilian

Total ballots in tabulator: 258 (if all affidavit reviews are approved)

Absentee anomalies requiring board approval 7. If approved will be counted at next board meeting.

**Upcoming Dates:**

Tentative board meeting dates and times – See attached (behind agenda)

Election Day – Tuesday, March 5<sup>th</sup>.

State Board Summer Conference – August 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup>

Next board meeting – Tuesday, March 5, 2024 at 2:00 p.m.

**Adjourn**

# MINUTES OF THE ROWAN COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS

March 4, 2024

21

## Meeting Called to Order

A meeting of the Rowan County Board of Elections was called to order on March 4, 2024 at 5:01 p.m. with Chair, John T. Hudson presiding.

Board Members:            Chair, John T. Hudson            Secretary, Catrelia S. Hunter  
                                 Loutricia W. Cain                 Dwight D. Collins                 Kenneth L. Stutts  
                                 *Members attended in person.*

Staff Members in attendance: Sharon H. Main, Director

## Public Comments:

John T. Hudson called for public comments. Each person is allowed three (3) minutes to speak. No public comments were made.

## Action Items:

### **Approval of Minutes:**

Review and approval of the February 27, 2024 minutes. John T. Hudson made amendment to change “the doors being unlocked on Saturday” to read “the doors being unlocked by county on Saturday”.

*Dwight D. Collins made a motion to approve the February 27, 2024 amended minutes.  
Kenneth L. Stutts seconded. Motion passed unanimously.*

### **Final list of Election Day Workers:**

Sharon Main presented the final list for board approval.

*Kenneth L. Stutts made a motion to approve the updated list of Election Day Chief Judges and Judges.  
Dwight D. Collins seconded. Motion passed unanimously.*

### **Update on Signature Verification Program:**

Sharon Main stated the state has not yet selected a vendor.

### **Approve and Count Absentee Ballots:**

Beginning total ballots in the tabulator: 108

Sharon Main stated thirty two (32) ballots received have an affidavit review pending status due to having ID Exception Forms the board will have to approve before they can be accepted today.

Civilian:	115
Military:	1
<u>Overseas:</u>	<u>2</u>
Total	118

Absentee anomalies requiring board approval are seven (7). Board reviewed absentee information. Discussion held regarding ballot CIV-143. Photocopy is overly dark and grainy.

***Dwight D. Collins made a motion to accept ballot CIV-143. Catrelia S. Hunter seconded. Loutricia W. Cain and Kenneth L. Stutts not in favor. Motion passed by majority.***

Discussion held on remaining six anomaly ballots. They were accepted and will be counted at the next board meeting.

DS200 was opened and count was confirmed at one hundred eight (108).

***Dwight D. Collins made a motion to approve and count the one hundred eighteen (118) absentee ballots that were accepted and the thirty two (32) absentee ballots with affidavit review pending status. Catrelia S. Hunter seconded. Motion passed unanimously.***

The DS200 count now stands at two hundred fifty eight (258).

**Upcoming dates:**

Next Board Meeting scheduled for Tuesday, March 5, 2024 at 2:00 p.m.

**Board adjourned at 5:45 p.m.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Catrelia S. Hunter, Secretary

I attest these minutes to be true and correct: Recorded: Melinda Hartman, Clerk to the Board.

**BOARD AGENDA  
April 16, 2024**

**CALL TO ORDER 12:30 p.m.**

**IN PERSON ATTENDEES PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD: 15 Minutes (3 minutes per person)**

**See tabs in notebook:**

1. Approve minutes of 3-15-2024
2. Proposed Early Voting Plans for the 2024 General Election

**No Tab:**

1. Update on Signature Verification Pilot Program.
2. Approve and Count Absentee Ballots

Civilian:	4
Military:	0
Overseas:	<u>4</u>
Total:	

Affidavit Review: 4

**Upcoming Dates:**

Tentative board meeting dates and times – See attached (behind agenda)

Early Voting starts April 25<sup>th</sup> and ends May 11<sup>th</sup>.

Election Day – Tuesday, May 14<sup>th</sup>.

State Board Summer Conference – August 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup>

Next board meeting – Tuesday, April 23, 2024 at 12:30 p.m.

**ADJOURN**

# MINUTES OF THE ROWAN COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS

April 16, 2024

25

## Meeting Called to Order

A meeting of the Rowan County Board of Elections was called to order on April 16, 2024 at 12:29 p.m. with Chair, John T. Hudson presiding.

Board Members:           Chair, John T. Hudson           Secretary, Catreliia S. Hunter  
                                  Loutricia W. Cain               Dwight D. Collins               Kenneth L. Stutts  
                                  *Members attended in person. Loutricia W. Cain joined via phone.*

Staff Members in attendance: Sharon H. Main, Director

## Public Comments:

John T. Hudson, Chair thanked everyone in attendance. He recalled the board reaching a unanimous decision for the one-stop plans except for two occasions where the State Board had to decide and is hopeful for a unanimous decision today. John T. Hudson, Chair called for public comments. Each person is allowed three (3) minutes to speak.

Geoffrey Hoy: Chair of Democrat Party. In favor of 17 days of voting. Stated as many days and sites as possible should be open. He thanked the staff and board for providing many opportunities to vote.

Ruby Ford: In favor of 17 days of voting. Stated citizens need more voting time and days and to try and get more people out to vote.

Andy Craighill-Middleton: In favor of 17 days of voting. Spoke about this election being very important and families needing extra opportunities to be able to go vote.

Teresa Rowell: In favor of 17 days of voting. Spoke about the mail not always being dependable for the sending and returning of absentee ballots. Therefore, more days of early voting are needed.

John Daugherty: In favor of 17 days of voting. Stated voting is a basic right and we need to lift voter turnout and not suppress it.

Patricia Webb Sledge: In favor of 17 days of voting. She thanked staff and board members for all they do. Stated that the municipal turnout was low, but this election should bring more people out to vote.

Eva Knight: In favor of 17 days of voting. Stated young people working during the week need Saturday and Sunday voting.

Andrew Basinger: In favor of 17 days of voting. Spoke about not having time to vote during the week due to working out of town.

Mary Walker: In favor of 17 days of voting. Thanked the board and staff for their work.

Elaine Hewitt: In favor of less than 17 days of voting. Shared that past data from early voting shows voter participation has gone down since the introduction of early voting. Endorses Plan A as it's the least required by law. Wants rested staff and poll workers.

Kathy Vestal: In favor of 17 days of voting. Thanked the board for their work. Stated she worked early voting and she doesn't see the shortage in early voting workers that has been described to her.

Kim Porter: In favor of 17 days of voting. Stated budget and religious ideology were reasons people didn't support the full 17 days of early voting.

Pam Bloom: In favor of 17 days of voting. Stated she was happy to see so many people here exercising their democracy in a non-partisan fashion.

Mike Frazier: In favor of less than 17 days of voting. Spoke about being the election integrity chairperson for the Republican Party and he schedules poll observers. Stated 15 days is plenty and 14 would be better.

Lynn Illig: In favor of 17 days of voting. She is a poll worker and thinks there should be as many days as possible for voting.

### **Action Items:**

#### **Approval of Minutes:**

Review of the March 15, 2024 minutes.

*Kenneth L. Stutts made a motion to approve the March 15, 2024 minutes. Catrelia S. Hunter seconded. Motion passed unanimously.*

#### **Proposed Early Voting Plans for the 2024 General Election:**

Discussion held. Three (3) Plans have been submitted:

##### ***Plan A*** 14 days Includes (2) Saturdays

Beginning Thursday, October 17<sup>th</sup> and ending Saturday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>

Monday through Friday - 8:00 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, October 19<sup>th</sup>, and November 2<sup>nd</sup> - 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

##### ***Plan B*** 15 days Includes (2) Saturdays and (1) Sunday

Beginning Thursday, October 17<sup>th</sup> and ending Saturday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>

Monday through Friday - 8:00 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, October 19<sup>th</sup>, and November 2<sup>nd</sup> - 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Sunday, October 20<sup>th</sup> - 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

##### ***Plan C*** 17 days Includes (3) Saturdays and (2) Sundays

Beginning Thursday, October 17<sup>th</sup> and ending Saturday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>

Monday through Friday - 8:00 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, October 19<sup>th</sup>, October 26<sup>th</sup>, and November 2<sup>nd</sup> - 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Sunday, October 20<sup>th</sup>, and October 27<sup>th</sup> - 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Dwight D. Collins supports Plan C stating that this is a big election and he wants to put the resources out there to accommodate the number of people voting and to give the staff the rest they need. Catrelia S. Hunter advocates for Plan C to give voters as many opportunities to vote as it should be as accessible as possible to everyone possible. Kenneth L. Stutts thanked community members for showing up and embracing democracy. He acknowledged that not everyone's work schedules are the same and that people need every opportunity to vote. He advocates for Plan C. LouTricia W. Cain supports Plan C.

*Catrelia S. Hunter made motion to adopt Plan C with 17 days including 3 Saturdays and 1 Sunday.*

*Dwight D. Collins seconded. Motion passed unanimously. (Loutricia W. Cain voted in favor via phone.)*

#### **Update on Signature Verification Pilot Program:**

Sharon Main shared that the State Board is currently in negotiations with a vendor. There are three more stages to the procurement process and she hopes to know more soon.

**Approve and Count Absentee Ballots:**

Civilian:	4
Military:	0
Overseas:	4
Total:	8

Affidavit Review: 4

DS200 was opened and count was confirmed at zero (0). Zero tape was signed by all board members.

Total ballots in tabulator: 8

*Kenneth L. Stutts made a motion to approve and count the four (4) absentee ballots that were accepted and the four (4) absentee ballots with affidavit review pending status.  
Dwight D. Collins seconded. Motion passed unanimously.*

**Upcoming Dates:**

Early Voting starts April 25<sup>th</sup> and ends May 11<sup>th</sup>.

Election Day – Tuesday, May 14<sup>th</sup>.

Next Board Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 23, 2024 at 12:30 p.m.

**Board adjourned at 1:08 p.m..**

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Catrelia S. Hunter, Secretary

I attest these minutes to be true and correct: Recorded: Melinda Hartman, Clerk to the Board.

**BOARD AGENDA  
April 23, 2024**

**CALL TO ORDER 12:30 p.m.**

**IN PERSON ATTENDEES PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD: 15 Minutes (3 minutes per person)**

**See tabs in notebook:**

1. Approve minutes of 4-16-2024
2. Early Voting workers list

**No Tab:**

1. Update on Signature Verification Pilot Program.
2. Approve and Count Absentee Ballots

Civilian:	2
Military:	0
Overseas:	0
Total:	<u>2</u>

Affidavit Review: 0

Total ballots in tabulator: 10

**Upcoming Dates:**

Tentative board meeting dates and times – See attached (behind agenda)

Early Voting starts April 25<sup>th</sup> and ends May 11<sup>th</sup>.

Election Day – Tuesday, May 14<sup>th</sup>.

State Board Summer Conference – August 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup>

Next board meeting – Tuesday, April 30, 2024 at 12:30 p.m.

**ADJOURN**

# MINUTES OF THE ROWAN COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS

April 23, 2024

26

## Meeting Called to Order

A meeting of the Rowan County Board of Elections was called to order on April 23, 2024 at 12:30 p.m. with Chair, John T. Hudson presiding.

Board Members:           Chair, John T. Hudson           Secretary, Catrelia S. Hunter  
                                  Loutricia W. Cain               Dwight D. Collins               Kenneth L. Stutts  
                                  *Members attended in person. Loutricia W. Cain was absent.*

Staff Members in attendance: Sharon H. Main, Director

## Public Comments:

John T. Hudson, Chair called for public comments. Each person is allowed three (3) minutes to speak. No public comments were made.

## Action Items:

### **Approval of Minutes:**

Review of the April 16, 2024 minutes.

*Catrelia S. Hunter made a motion to approve the April 16, 2024 minutes.  
Kenneth L. Stutts seconded. Motion passed unanimously.*

### **Early Voting Workers List:**

Sharon Main presented the Early Voting Worker List. Office staff will be rotating shifts during early voting also.

*Dwight D. Collins made a motion to approve the early voter working list.  
Kenneth L. Stutts seconded. Motion passed unanimously.*

## **Update on Signature Verification Pilot Program:**

Sharon Main shared the state has selected a vendor for the Signature Verification Pilot Program, and we should know more soon. They are finalizing details and hope to ship equipment and materials out soon.

### **Approve and Count Absentee Ballots:**

DS200 was opened and count was confirmed at eight (8).

Civilian:	2
Military:	0
Overseas:	0
Total:	2

Total ballots in tabulator: 10

*Catrelia S. Hunter made a motion to approve and count the two (2) absentee ballots that were accepted.  
Kenneth L. Stutts seconded. Motion passed unanimously.*

Sharon Main stated the mock election was completed successfully. House Bill 31 will be before the legislature short session. If it passes, the filing dates for Rowan-Salisbury School Board will move to July 5<sup>th</sup> - July 19<sup>th</sup>. Currently, we have the latest school board filing dates of July 19<sup>th</sup> - August 16<sup>th</sup> which gives us a narrow timeframe to code, proof, and print ballots before General Election deadlines. This would be a permanent change.

**Upcoming Dates:**

Early Voting starts April 25<sup>th</sup> and ends May 11<sup>th</sup>.

Election Day – Tuesday, May 14<sup>th</sup>.

Next Board Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 30, 2024 at 12:30 p.m.

**Board adjourned at 12:37 p.m.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Catrelia S. Hunter, Secretary

I attest these minutes to be true and correct: Recorded: Melinda Hartman, Clerk to the Board.

**BOARD AGENDA  
May 7, 2024**

**CALL TO ORDER 12:30 p.m.**

**IN PERSON ATTENDEES PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD: 15 Minutes (3 minutes per person)**

**See tabs in notebook:**

1. Approve minutes of 4-30-2024
2. Update on Signature Verification Pilot Program

**No Tab:**

1. Approve and Count Absentee Ballots
2. Beginning total ballots in tabulator 22

Civilian:	2
Military:	0
Overseas:	<u>0</u>
Total:	2

Affidavit Review: 2

Total ballots in tabulator: 26 (if all affidavit reviews are approved)

**Upcoming Dates:**

Tentative board meeting dates and times – See attached (behind agenda)

Early Voting starts April 25<sup>th</sup> and ends May 11<sup>th</sup>.

Election Day – Tuesday, May 14<sup>th</sup>.

State Board Summer Conference – August 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup>

Next board meeting – Monday, May 13, 2024 at 5:00 p.m.

**ADJOURN**

# MINUTES OF THE ROWAN COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS

May 7, 2024

28

## Meeting Called to Order

A meeting of the Rowan County Board of Elections was called to order on May 7, 2024 at 12:31 p.m. with Chair, John T. Hudson presiding.

Board Members:            Chair, John T. Hudson            Secretary, Catreliia S. Hunter  
                                 Loutricia W. Cain                    Dwight D. Collins                    Kenneth L. Stutts  
*Members attended in person. Loutricia W. Cain and Dwight D. Collins were absent.  
Tony Yon stood in as Republican party representative.*

Staff Members in attendance: Sharon H. Main, Director

## Public Comments:

John T. Hudson, Chair called for public comments. Each person is allowed three (3) minutes to speak. No comments were made.

## Action Items:

### **Approval of Minutes:**

Review of the April 30, 2024 minutes.

*Catreliia S. Hunter made a motion to approve the April 30, 2024 minutes.  
Kenneth L. Stutts seconded. Motion passed unanimously.*

## **Update on Signature Verification Pilot Program:**

Sharon Main presented information from the state on the signature verification pilot program. There are 2 tiers of review with the program. Tier 1 will be done in our office and if a signature requires further review, Tier 2 will be done by the board. Information has been sent to the board to review. We haven't received any equipment yet.

### **Approve and Count Absentee Ballots:**

DS200 was opened and count was confirmed at twenty two (22).

Civilian:	2
Military:	0
Overseas:	0
Total:	2

Affidavit Review:   2  

Total ballots in tabulator:  26 

*Catreliia S. Hunter made a motion to approve and count the two (2) absentee ballots and two (2) ballots with affidavit review pending status that were accepted.  
Kenneth L. Stutts seconded. Motion passed unanimously.*

Sharon Main also shared she is getting quotes for a transfer switch which would allow the office to hook into a generator during an emergency situation. Doors to the Early voting site are not on automatic system anymore. They are hard locked now.

**Upcoming Dates:**

Election Day – Tuesday, May 14<sup>th</sup>.

Next Board Meeting is scheduled for Monday, May 13, 2024 at 5:00 p.m.

**Board adjourned at 12:39 p.m.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Catrelia S. Hunter, Secretary

I attest these minutes to be true and correct: Recorded: Melinda Hartman, Clerk to the Board.



## Numbered Memo 2024-04

**TO:** Boards of Elections for Bertie, Cherokee, Durham, Halifax, Henderson, Jones, Montgomery, Pamlico, Rowan, and Wilkes Counties

**FROM:** Karen Brinson Bell, Executive Director<sup>1</sup>

**RE:** Absentee Ballot Signature Verification Pilot Program

**DATE:** May 1, 2024

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This memo explains how selected county boards will carry out an absentee ballot signature verification pilot program for the 2024 primary election as required by Session Law 2023-140 (Senate Bill 747). The pilot program is being conducted for evaluation purposes only and will not affect whether any absentee ballot is counted for the election.<sup>2</sup>

### 1. Overview

The pilot program consists of selected county boards of elections using automated signature verification software to compare the signatures of voters on all executed absentee-by-mail ballots received by the county board in the 2024 primary. County boards shall accept signatures that are determined to be a match by the software. For signatures that are not identified as a match by the software, county boards of elections will conduct a manual review of those signatures to help evaluate the accuracy of the automated software review. County boards will then compile data from the pilot and forward it to the State Board for analysis, and the State Board will report the results of the analysis to the General Assembly.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This memo is issued under the authority delegated by the State Board to the executive director pursuant to G.S. § 163-22(p).

<sup>2</sup> Session Law 2023-140, Section 48(c).

<sup>3</sup> Session Law 2023-140 provides the requirement to conduct a pilot program:

SECTION 48(a) The State Board of Elections shall select 10 counties in the State in which to conduct a pilot program during the primary held in 2024 for signature verification on executed mail-in absentee ballots. In selecting the 10 counties for the pilot, the State Board of Elections shall seek diversity of population size, regional location, and demographic composition. The pilot program shall consist of county boards

## 2. Sources of Clipped Signature Images

County boards will begin by comparing the voter's signature on file in VoterView in SEIMS with the voter's signature on the absentee envelope. The clipped signature in VoterView will generally be the voter's most recent signature. This signature is frequently captured using a means of signing other than pen to paper. Sources of clipped signatures in VoterView include:

- **Voter registration forms and updates from registration activity.** These signatures may be scanned images from paper forms or digital images from registration activity through DMV. Most voter registration signatures come from DMV, where signatures are captured using a stylus on an electronic signature pad in a DMV office. Signatures received from DMV are typically 200 dpi (dots per inch), and therefore may appear slightly pixelated and bolder. They may also be missing part of the image due to signing on a signature pad.
- **Absentee request forms.** The signature may be a scanned image from a paper form or, if the request was made through the State Board's online absentee request portal, the signature was provided electronically using a mouse or a finger on a touchscreen. Visually impaired voters are permitted to type their signature.
- **Paper or electronic pollbooks and provisional applications.** These signatures are scanned images from paper forms.
- **Other sources.** Other sources of signatures include National Change of Address (NCOA), confirmation, and verification cards returned by voters with updates.

## 3. Steps for Signature Comparison

There are two tiers of review in the process of comparing the voter's signature on the absentee envelope with the voter's signature on file:

1. Tier 1 (automated comparison)
2. Tier 2 (manual comparison)

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of elections using signature verification software to check the signatures of voters noted on all executed mail-in absentee ballots received by the county boards of elections in the 2024 primary. The State Board of Elections shall select the signature verification software and ensure that the software is available for all 10 counties to use in the 2024 primary. The State Board shall assist the selected county boards of elections in implementing the signature verification software, including assisting the selected county boards of elections in any training needed on how the software is to be used for signature matching on executed mail-in absentee ballots.

### Tier 1 Review

Tier 1 review is carried out by automated signature verification software, which will have a match sensitivity set by the State Board for all counties participating. If the software determines the voter's signature on the absentee envelope is a match for the voter's signature on file, no further review shall occur. The software vendor and the State Board will provide training and other resources to the county boards about how to use the software.

### Tier 2 Review

If the software is unable to determine that the signatures match, the signature on the absentee envelope will proceed to Tier 2 review. In this step, the county board will conduct a manual review to compare the two signatures and, if needed, review other signatures and information in the voter's registration record. The county board will then vote on whether the signature on the absentee envelope is sufficiently similar to the signature(s) on file and may be approved. This process occurs in an open meeting.

## 4. County Board Meetings

The county board of elections shall schedule an open meeting to review signatures identified for Tier 2 review. All deliberations must be conducted in an open meeting. At least three board members (a quorum) must attend the meeting.<sup>4</sup> A majority of the board members present at the meeting must vote for an action for it to pass. It is a best practice for board members from both parties to be present at the meeting.

Staff must research and compile materials, including all of the voter's previous signatures on file in SEIMS, ahead of time to streamline the county board's review. As a reminder, county board members are not permitted to access SEIMS.<sup>5</sup>

In the meeting, county board members will simultaneously compare the voter's signature on the absentee envelope with the voter's signature in VoterView. This may be accomplished by preparing individual packets or displaying the signatures on one or more terminals. Regardless of the means of signature comparison that is used, county boards must ensure that members of the public in attendance at the meeting are not permitted to make any copy, tracing, photograph, or recording of the voter's signatures.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> G.S. § 163-31(d).

<sup>5</sup> See page 3 of [Numbered Memo 2020-17](#).

<sup>6</sup> G.S. 163-82.10(a2): "The signature of the voter, either on the paper application or an electronically captured image of it, whether held by the State Board or a county board of elections, may be viewed by

All decisions by the county board shall be documented in a spreadsheet. The State Board will provide a sample spreadsheet for use by the county boards.

## 5. Public Records Requests for Signatures

North Carolina law prohibits any person other than an authorized election official from copying or tracing a voter's signature.<sup>7</sup> Voter signatures may be viewed in the county board office. If a member of the public requests access to voter signatures, the county board shall allow the signatures to be viewed in the office, but staff must supervise to ensure that the signatures are not recorded, copied, or traced. As indicated in [Numbered Memo 2022-01](#), scheduling access to view public records may depend on the availability of staff to supervise the review. The county board need not allow review of signatures during, or immediately before or after a board meeting, if it does not have sufficient staff to do so.

It is a crime for someone who is not authorized by law to retain a voter's signature from a submitted voter registration form.<sup>8</sup>

## 6. Analysis of Signatures

As mentioned, during Tier 2 review the county board will simultaneously compare the voter's signature on the absentee envelope with the voter's signatures in VoterView. The county board may also use the voter's signature on the copy of their photo ID submitted with the absentee envelope, if an ID was submitted and the ID has a signature. A signature on a photo ID exemption form may not be used since it was signed and submitted simultaneous with the absentee envelope under review.

When comparing signatures, it is important to keep in mind that everyone writes differently, and no one signs their name exactly the same way twice. A voter's signature on the absentee envelope should not be rejected just because it does not look *exactly* the same as the signature in the voter's SEIMS profile.

Signature comparison begins with the presumption that the signature on the absentee envelope is the voter's signature. Again, an exact match is not necessary for the county board to confirm that

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the public but may not be copied or traced except by election officials for election administration purposes. Any such copy or tracing is not a public record.”

<sup>7</sup> G.S. 163-82.10(a2).

<sup>8</sup> G.S. § 163-274(16) makes it a Class 2 misdemeanor for any person who is not an elections official or who is not otherwise authorized by law to retain a voter's signature from any form described in G.S. 163-82.3 after submission of the form to the county board of elections or elections official.

the signature on the absentee envelope is a valid signature, since a human voter cannot be expected to make a precisely matching signature each time they sign something. Similar characteristics between a signature being compared and any signature in the voter's record are sufficient to determine that a signature is valid.

When evaluating signatures, the county board should review using broad characteristics to evaluate an entire signature as a unit, and if needed to confirm a match, they should also focus on specific letters within a signature. For examples and detailed guidance on how to consider broad and narrow characteristics, see the appendix at the end of this memo.

The county board shall conduct the following analysis when deciding whether signatures are consistent with each other:

### 5.1 Evaluate the signature's broad characteristics

Broad characteristics include:

1. The type of writing (e.g., cursive vs. print)
2. The amount of care put into the writing (e.g., quick and sweeping vs. slow and detailed)
3. Overall spacing
4. Overall size and proportions
5. Position of the signature (e.g., slanted vs. straight)
6. Spelling and punctuation

If the broad characteristics of the signature on the absentee envelope are consistent with the broad characteristics of the voter's signature on file, the county board shall accept the signature.

### 5.2 Evaluate the signature's local characteristics

If the county board finds a combination of dissimilarities between the two signatures' broad characteristics, then the county board shall evaluate local characteristics, which include:

1. Internal spacing
2. The size or proportions of a letter or letter combination
3. Curves, loops, and cross-points
4. The presence or absence of pen lifts
5. Beginning and ending strokes

After evaluating the signatures' local characteristics, the county board must decide whether to accept the signature on the absentee envelope as genuine. A county board may not reject a voter's signature without first comparing it to all of the other voter's signatures on file in the voter's SEIMS record.

### 5.3 Explanations for discrepancies

If, after going through the above analysis, the county board finds a combination of differences between the signature on the absentee envelope and the signature or signatures in the voter's record, consider whether the differences can be reasonably explained. **If the county board can reasonably explain the differences, the signature must be accepted.** Looking at more than one signature from the voter's SEIMS record, if available, may be necessary because people develop certain signature habits over time. Identify these habitual marks and determine whether they exist in the signature on the absentee envelope.

The county board shall consider the following as possible explanations for discrepancies in signatures:

1. Evidence of trembling or shaking in a signature could be health-related or the result of aging.
2. The voter may have used a diminutive of their full legal name, including, but not limited to the use of initials, or the rearrangement of components of their full legal name, such as a reversal of first and last names, use of a middle name in place of a first name, or omitting a second last name.
3. The voter's signature style may have changed over time.
4. The voter's signature on the absentee envelope or registration form may have been written quickly.
5. A signature in the voter's record may have been written with a stylus pen or other electronic signature tool that may result in a thick or fuzzy quality.
6. The surface of the location where the signature was made may have been hard, soft, uneven, or unstable.
7. Factors applicable to a particular voter, such as the age of the voter, the age of the signature(s) contained in the voter's record, the possibility that the voter is disabled, and the quality of any digitized signature(s) contained in the voter's record.

**Only a signature possessing multiple, significant, and obvious differing characteristics with all signatures in the voter's registration record may be rejected. To reject a signature, the county board must find beyond a reasonable doubt that the voter's signature on the absentee envelope differs in multiple, significant, and obvious respects from all signatures in the voter's registration record, and that the differences cannot be reasonably explained.**

## 6. Reporting Requirements

The State Board will closely monitor the pilot program and will compile and analyze the results upon completion of the pilot.

County boards should keep careful records during the pilot and be prepared to report to the State Board their findings. Certain information is statutorily required to be reported by the county boards, including:

1. Whether the signature verification software was used for all returned mail-in absentee ballots.
2. How many executed mail-in absentee ballots were counted by the county board of elections in the 2024 primary.
3. How many executed mail-in absentee ballots were flagged by the signature verification software.<sup>9</sup>

The State Board will also survey the counties for certain additional information about the pilot, including:

1. Any research indicating signatures identified in Tier 1 review as not matching were a match and any available information about why the mismatch may have occurred.
2. Approximate staff time and county board time spent on the pilot.
3. Suggestions or changes for how to implement signature verification statewide for absentee ballots.
4. Suggestions on designing a process for how a voter can cure a deficiency related to signature verification of absentee ballots in the future.
5. Any other feedback the county board would like to share.

## Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

1. Will UOCAVA voters' ballots be included in the pilot?

Yes, if submitted by mail. Section 48(a) of Session Law 2023-140 requires that the signature verification software be used for "all executed mail-in absentee ballots received by the county boards of elections in the 2024 primary."

2. What happens if the voter printed their name rather than signed in cursive on the absentee envelope?

The signature on the absentee envelope must match at least one of the voter's signatures on file with the county board. If the signature on the absentee envelope is printed, but the signature on file with the county board is in cursive, the board will still need to compare those signatures according to the criteria in this memo. In other words, the difference in the type of writing (cursive vs. print) is a dissimilarity in a broad characteristic that should be considered in determining whether there is a match. But that factor *alone* should not determine a mismatch. The board will still need to consider whether there are other dissimilarities. Also, keep in mind that some voters, particularly younger voters, may use a printed name as their signature. In this

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<sup>9</sup> Session Law 2023-140, Section 48(b).

case, if the printed signature on the absentee envelope matches the printed signature on file with the county board, the signature on the absentee envelope should be approved.

3. What if the voter puts their initials instead of signing their full name?

The use of initials alone is not considered a mismatch. As discussed in Section 5.3, the county board must consider as a possible explanation for a discrepancy that a voter printed their initials rather than the voter's full name. This could include, for example, using a first initial instead of first name, or using initials entirely instead of the voter's full name. If this is the case, the county board must go through the process outlined in this memo to compare the two.

4. What if the voter has a disability that prevents them from signing their name, such as a blind voter who submits their absentee ballot through the State Board's online portal and uses a typed signature?

The county board may not reject a signature due to a voter's disability. As explained in Section 5.3 of this memo, the county board must consider any explanations for discrepancies between the signatures, including those caused by the voter's disability. If the voter has attested under penalty of perjury that they have a disability that prevents them from signing, the typed signature should be approved.

5. What about if the voter makes their mark instead of signing, or what if the assistant writes "Disabled - cannot sign"?

See the Appendix to this memo, starting on page 17.

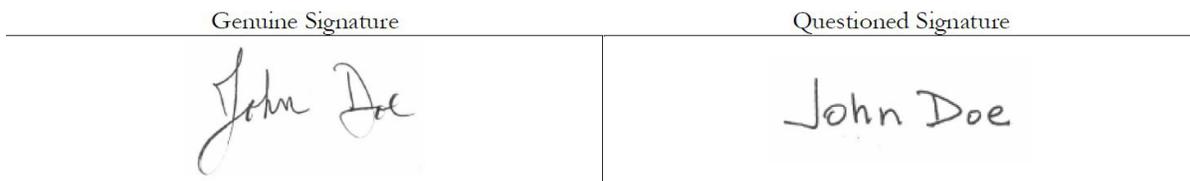
## Appendix<sup>10</sup>

**Note:** Each of the examples below are designed to show what certain differing characteristics look like. This is not to suggest that in each example below, the signature should be rejected. A *single* differing characteristic is not enough to reject a signature. Instead, to reject a signature, the county board must find beyond a reasonable doubt that the voter's signature on the absentee envelope differs in multiple, significant, and obvious respects from all signatures in the voter's registration record, and that the differences cannot be reasonably explained.

### BROAD CHARACTERISTICS

#### 1. TYPE OF WRITING

Next to spelling, the type of writing is the easiest characteristic to notice a difference in. Does the voter's record have only cursive handwriting, but the absentee envelope has print? This is an immediate indicator for further research and review.



#### 2. APPARENT SPEED OF WRITING

A person writing their own signature will perform the act fairly quickly. This is because the person has likely signed their name thousands of times, so the gesture is automatic and harmonious, requiring little thought or concentration.

If someone other than the voter took a long time to copy the voter's signature, the copied signature will not have a free and natural look to it. Instead, you should see more deliberate marks. If the forger attempted to create the signature quickly, then it should have various characteristic differences.

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<sup>10</sup> This appendix was adapted from the Arizona Secretary of State's [Signature Verification Guide](#), Feb. 26, 2024.

Keep in mind, however, that this situation may go in reverse. If the voter naturally has shaky or poor handwriting that is evident in the voter registration record signature, but the ballot's signature is suddenly of high quality, that could indicate a forgery.

Look to see whether the signature on the absentee envelope was made with the deliberateness as the signatures in the voter's record. Keep in mind that a reasonable explanation for a shaky signature is the voter's advanced age, decreased muscle strength, or the surface below the envelope.

Genuine Signature	Questioned Signature
	
	

### 3. OVERALL SPACING

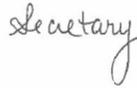
Writing a signature is a fixed and subconscious habit, so the signature's spacing should be reasonably similar. Determine whether the signature on the absentee envelope has odd or unnatural spacing that cannot be reasonably explained.

Genuine Signature	Questioned Signature
	
	

### 4. OVERALL SIZE AND PROPORTIONS

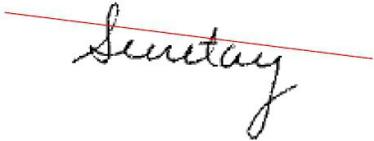
The signatures' size and proportions should also be reasonably similar. At your first impression, identify whether the signature on the absentee envelope is too large or small compared to the signatures in the voter's record. This comparison may be difficult to perform by looking only at one voter signature. You may need to conduct further research or review additional signatures.

The first example below has odd proportions because the letter's height compared to the name's length is very different than the genuine signature. The remaining two examples have unreasonably different sizes.

Genuine Signature	Questioned Signature
	
	
	

### 5. SLANT OF WRITING

Differences in a signature's slant may also raise questions about a match. The first slant to be aware of is the signature's position relative to the signature line. People tend to hold the pen and paper the same way each time they write, which causes their writing to slant in the same direction each time. You may also find that individual letters in the signature slant in the opposite direction. This type of deviation will usually accompany a difference in the signature's overall spacing. See the third example below. Look to see whether the entire signature slants or leans in a different direction than the signatures in the voter's record. A writer's slant is one of the most consistent parts of their signature.

Genuine Signature	Questioned Signature
	
	
	

## 6. SPELLING

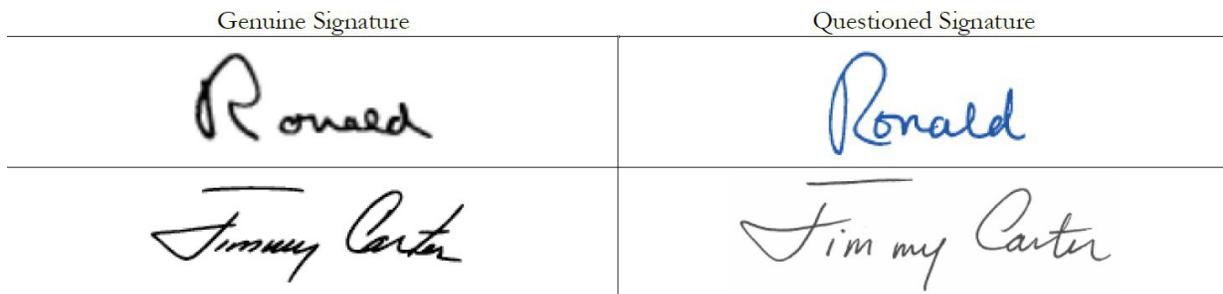
If the name is misspelled, you should seriously question the signature, unless there is some reasonable explanation—for example, it looks like the name is misspelled when, in fact, perhaps an atypical writing tool like a stylus was used and it did not create letters with the clarity that is typical in a voter’s signature. Bear in mind that a voter may use a common nickname or initials (for instance, a voter may sign as “Bobby” instead of “Robert”) so long as the characteristics of the signature remain the same.



## LOCAL CHARACTERISTICS

### 1. INTERNAL SPACING

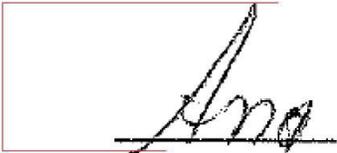
As mentioned before, the spacing and the relationship between successive letters should be reasonably similar. In the examples below, you will notice that the “R” in Ronald is much closer in the questioned signature than in the genuine one, and the questioned “Jimmy” has a great deal of space in between certain letters.



### 2. SIZE OR PROPORTIONS OF A LETTER OR LETTER COMBINATION

Letter sizes and proportions should be reasonably similar. Review whether letters are the same size and whether letter height, when compared to the name’s length, leads to suspicious proportions.

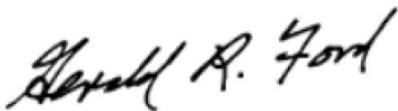
Below, the first questioned signature has unreasonable proportion in “Madison.” The remaining two signatures have noticeably different sizes in certain letters.

Genuine Signature	Questioned Signature
	
	
	

### 3. CURVES, LOOPS, AND CROSS-POINTS

Like size, these characteristics may be difficult to identify if you are comparing the signature on the absentee envelope to only one signature in the voter’s record. Some writers tend to have very loopy signatures while others have sharp, angular writing. Characteristics like loops and curves tend to be consistent across a person’s handwriting, but keep in mind that cross-points can be reasonably impacted by simple factors like the type of pen the person used, which may be a reasonable explanation for such differences.

Find whether there are any noticeably different marks like in the examples below.

Genuine Signature	Questioned Signature
	
	

### 4. THE PRESENCE OR ABSENCE OF PEN LIFTS

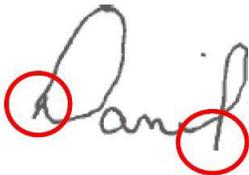
If someone is not familiar with a signature, they may have written in pieces or chunks. When this occurs, they will leave connection or hesitation marks that will not appear in the voter registration record signatures.

Look to see whether there are any strange connection points or hesitation marks like in the examples below.

Genuine Signature	Questioned Signature
	
	

### 5. BEGINNING AND ENDING STROKES

A genuine signature becomes automatic over time. This automatic nature leads to what appears to be “flying starts and finishes,” where the signature’s start and end points seem to vanish off the paper. Genuine writers tend to begin writing their signature before the pen even hits the page. A reason to question a signature is if there are larger ink dots or marks at the beginning or end of a signature.

Genuine Signature	Questioned Signature
	
	

## ELECTRONIC SIGNATURES

When reviewing signatures in the voter's file, it is very likely that you will encounter some signatures that were created and captured electronically. DMV offices use an electronic signature pad to record signatures. In addition, voters who request an absentee ballot online sign electronically using a mouse or a finger on a touchscreen. These signatures are included in the voter's record and are used as references when verifying their signature on the absentee envelope. Electronic signatures create some unique circumstances that you should consider when verifying a ballot affidavit signature.

When comparing an electronic signature to a handwritten signature, you should continue to consider the factors listed on the previous pages.

- This means you should begin your analysis by looking at each signature's broad characteristics and if those characteristics are not clearly consistent, you should continue your analysis by examining the local characteristics.
- Keep in mind that the local characteristics of an electronic signature may be difficult to determine. Since the technology for electronic signatures is not as precise as pen and paper, it may be difficult, for example, to spot the presence or absence of pen lifts or beginning and ending strokes as space may be limited. Regardless, you should still consider all the factors described in the previous pages of this memo when comparing these signatures and make a decision based on the totality of what you find.

If, after going through your analysis, you find a combination of differences between the signature on the ballot affidavit envelope and the signatures in the voter registration record, ask whether the differences can be reasonably explained.

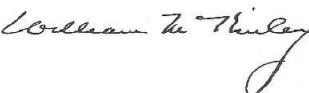
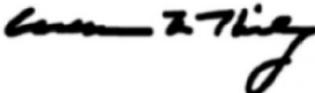
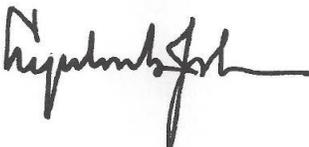
- You should consider that electronic signatures in particular may not be as precise as their handwritten counterparts and may even appear "blurry" or "messy" in comparison. It is possible that this may reasonably explain the difference between a handwritten and an electronic signature.
- **Remember:** You may need to look through the voter's entire signature history to determine if the current signature on the absentee envelope was written by the voter. If you find that the electronic signature found in the voter's history is difficult to read or match, it is possible there are other signatures on file that may be easier to read and distinguish. Before declining to accept a voter's signature on the ballot envelope, review these other signatures to determine if the inconsistency is with the ballot envelope signature or with the electronic signature in the voter registration record.

## 1. “MESSY” OR “BLURRY” ELECTRONIC SIGNATURES

Because the technology for capturing electronic signatures is not always as precise as a pen and paper signature, an electronic signature may appear “messy” or “blurry” in comparison. However, even a “messy” or “blurry” signature should be compared using the two-step process described above.

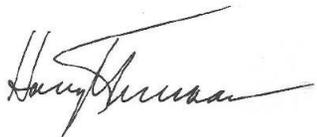
In the first example below, the electronic signature found in the voter registration record looks vague and imprecise compared to the handwritten signature found on the absentee envelope. However, the broad characteristics appear to be substantially similar. The type, speed, spacing, size, and position of each signature appear to be the same and any minor disparities can be explained by the fact that one signature was created using an electronic pad and the other was created using pen and paper.

In the second example, many of the broad characteristics are again substantially similar, although the electronic signature is not as precise as the handwritten signature. Regardless, these signatures can still be considered a match because the broad characteristics are substantially similar. If you decide an electronic signature is too “messy” or “blurry” compared to a handwritten signature to fairly compare, you should always look through the voter’s signature history to determine if there is a clearer signature on file.

Handwritten Signature	Electronic Signature
	
	

## 2. ELECTRONIC SIGNATURES THAT HAVE BEEN CUT OFF

In some instances, a person signing an electronic signature pad may have some of their signature cut off. This is likely because the voter’s pen stroke went outside the area that the electronic signature pad could capture. You should still compare the full electronic signature to the handwritten signature using the two-step process outlined in this memo. If you cannot verify the signatures using the two-step process, remember there may be more signatures in the voter’s signature history that you can use to compare.

Handwritten Signature	Electronic Signature
	
	

## SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

### 1. VOTERS WHO ARE UNABLE TO SIGN OR MAKE THEIR MARK DUE TO DISABILITY

Absentee envelopes contain a line for the voter to sign and a line for the voter assistant, if any, to sign. A voter assistant signature is required if the voter received assistance completing the envelope, marking the ballot, or mailing or returning their ballot. A voter assistant signature is also required if the voter is physically unable to sign or make their mark due to disability. In this case, the person assisting with the ballot should write in the voter’s signature line, “Disabled - cannot sign.”<sup>11</sup> If this is the case, no signature comparison will take place, because there is no voter signature to compare, and this will be noted accordingly in the county board’s spreadsheet.

### 2. BALLOTS WITH A MARK

A voter who is unable to sign their name may instead make their mark on the signature line. A mark is an “X,” like in the example below, or some other sign or marking made in lieu of a signature. If a ballot contains a mark, the voter’s mark must be compared to the voter’s signature or mark on file for the voter.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> See [Numbered Memo 2022-11](#), explaining how disabled voters must be able to receive assistance to cast an absentee ballot.

<sup>12</sup> The law providing for the signature verification pilot program requires the county boards to check all signatures on absentee ballots against the voter’s records. See Session Law 2023-140, sec. 48.

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Mark Example



### 3. SIGNATURES FROM VOTERS IN GROUP RESIDENTIAL FACILITIES

Pay close attention to pen strokes found on absentee envelopes from voters living in group residential facilities. The signatures of these voters are at a higher risk of having changed or deteriorated over time and may look less and less like the comparison signature found in the voter registration record. With this risk in mind, the following precautions should be taken when reviewing signatures from these voters.

- Look for a pattern of deterioration in the voter’s signature history. You may do this for any signature that you review, but for signatures from voters in group residential facilities, taking this extra step can be even more beneficial. If the signatures you review in the voter’s file reveal a pattern of deterioration, then this fact may reasonably explain the difference between the ballot’s signature and the signatures found in the voter registration record.
- Be mindful of the voter’s situation when reviewing signatures from group residential facility voters. Remember that if, after going through normal signature analysis, the differences between two signatures can be reasonably explained, you should accept a voter’s signature as valid.

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Accordingly, during the pilot program, if the voter makes their mark on the absentee envelope but the voter’s record contains only the voter’s signature, the signature will likely be found to mismatch. Other states, such as Arizona, account for this situation by requiring that an assistant sign the absentee envelope instead of verifying the voter’s mark when the voter is unable to sign due to disability. See Arizona Secretary of State’s [Signature Verification Guide](#), Feb. 26, 2024, at 15. This requirement also avoids the difficulty of trying to compare a commonplace mark such as an “X” between documents. Such an accommodation would be appropriate for the North Carolina General Assembly to consider when assessing the results of this pilot program.

## Main, Sharon H

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**From:** Main, Sharon H  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 1, 2024 10:45 AM  
**To:** Catrelia Hunter; Dwight "Dave" Collins (dljzae@gmail.com); John Hudson; Kenneth Stutts; Tricia Cain  
**Subject:** FW: Numbered Memo 2024-04 - Signature Verification Pilot Program  
**Attachments:** Numbered Memo 2024-04 Signature Verification Pilot.pdf

Hello Board members,

For those of you interested in the Signature Verification Pilot Program progress, I received information from the state this morning. See email below and attached memo. It sounds like we will have the equipment and software soon.

Enjoy this beautiful day,



**Sharon H. Main | Elections Director**  
**Rowan County Board of Elections**  
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Salisbury, NC 28147  
Phone: 704.216.8148  
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<https://rowancountync.gov/Elections>

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**From:** Cox, Paul <paul.cox@ncsbe.gov>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 1, 2024 7:24 AM  
**To:** Bertie <Bertie.boe@ncsbe.gov>; Cherokee <Cherokee.boe@ncsbe.gov>; Durham <Durham.boe@ncsbe.gov>; Halifax <Halifax.boe@ncsbe.gov>; Henderson <Henderson.boe@ncsbe.gov>; Jones <Jones.boe@ncsbe.gov>; Montgomery <Montgomery.boe@ncsbe.gov>; Pamlico <Pamlico.boe@ncsbe.gov>; Rowan <Rowan.boe@ncsbe.gov>; Wilkes <Wilkes.boe@ncsbe.gov>  
**Cc:** SBOE\_Grp - Legal <Legal@ncsbe.gov>; Bell, Karen B <Karen.Bell@ncsbe.gov>  
**Subject:** Numbered Memo 2024-04 - Signature Verification Pilot Program

Directors in Bertie, Cherokee, Durham, Halifax, Henderson, Jones, Montgomery, Pamlico, Rowan, and Wilkes Counties:

Please find attached and at [this link](#) a numbered memo with instructions for conducting signature review for absentee ballots from the March primary as part of the pilot program required by Session Law 2023-140.

As you know, the State Board is finalizing procurement of a signature verification system which will be delivered to each of your county board offices shortly after a contract is entered. Once that occurs, there

will be further instructions on installing and operating the software and hardware that comes with that system.

This memo does not address the technical aspects of operating that system. Instead, the memo addresses how the county board should conduct manual review of signatures when the software does not identify a match between the signature on the absentee ballot envelope and that voter's SEIMS profile.

Please share this memo with your board members. They can use this time, in advance of the technology being delivered and set up, to familiarize themselves with procedures and standards to use when manually reviewing signatures as part of the pilot.

We will be in touch as soon as we have finalized the procurement with further guidance on preparing to conduct the signature verification pilot program.

Best regards,

**Paul Cox**

General Counsel

NORTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF ELECTIONS

RALEIGH, NC 27611

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