

May 30, 2013

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Disability Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes, May 30, 2013

The Disability Advisory Committee (DAC) met on May 30, 2013 at the Cowlitz County Administration Building, General Meeting Room. The meeting agenda is attached.

Attendees were:

Kris Swanson, Cowlitz County Auditor
Amy Hair, Cowlitz County Chief Deputy Auditor
Carolyn Myers, Cowlitz County Elections Supervisor
Bernie Altman, AARP and NAMI
Doug Hooper, Southwest Agency on Aging and Disabilities
Anita Hopkins, Lower Columbia CAP
Audrey Jolley, WA American Council of the Blind
Tim Krueger, SW WA Behavioral Health Regional Support Network Ombudsman
Sunnie Smith, Parent Child Assistance Program/previously Disability Resources
Sharon Weinhold, Disability Outreach Coordinator

Special Guests:

Amy Asher, Cowlitz Wahkiakum Council of Governments, Transportation Planner
Sandy Baxter, Thurston County Elections
Regina Beer, Cowlitz County Elections
Sarah Clark, CAP /AmeriCorps
Jeanne Courtney
Doug D'Ambrogi, Crawford House
Jeremy Heffernan, Cowlitz County Elections
Janice Higby
Susan King, Skamania County DAC
Cristina Labra, WA Secretary of State, Minority Language Education Coordinator
Tina McCully, Catholic Community Services/Volunteer Chore Services
Della Mowell, Cowlitz County Veterans Service Office
Carol Peters, Thurston County Auditor
Marjorie Pitcher
Susan Schwartz
Lynnette Thornton, Thurston County
Lynne Watanabe, Thurston County
Brad Windler, Cowlitz Transportation Authority - RiverCities Transit

Welcome and Introductions. The Committee members welcomed our speaker, Brad Windler, Mobility Supervisor, Cowlitz Transportation Authority - RiverCities Transit, and guests. Everyone introduced themselves and identified the organization they were representing.

Presentation/Discussion.

Transportation is a barrier to voting for some seniors and persons with disabilities. Brad was invited to discuss: transit service changes under consideration or underway, how the system changes link to the overall transit system, e.g., interface with other transit providers that service Cowlitz County and neighboring counties, and plans to serve the aging population and persons with disabilities.

Brad referenced the 2004 increase in sales tax from .1 cent to .3 cent (3 cents on every \$10) for transit and the 2008 Transit Enhancement Plan. He said there were major changes to the Cowlitz County transit system in 2012. There was a complete management change and the system was renamed from Community Urban Bus Services (CUBS) to RiverCities Transit System. These were the first major changes since the early 1990's. As a result, the Cowlitz transportation system is behind other systems. Investments are being made for improvements. The system is being rebranded. The buses were repainted and 5 new buses are on order. A new website is being developed.

Paratransit services are offered in accordance with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for those who live within ¼ mile from the fixed route system and are functionally unable to use the fixed route system. To qualify, individuals must submit an application and be certified as being unable to use the regular services. In the past, applicants were approved pretty much without question. The fees to use the paratransit services are \$.60/ride, \$1.20/day and \$5/month. The statewide average cost of a paratransit ride is \$35; the cost in Cowlitz County is about \$18. The cost for a fixed route ride is \$4. A new application form has been developed for use. It is more rigorous, 9 pages long. An interview and professional verification are now part of the application process. The form can be downloaded from the agency website or a hard copy can be sent. Assistance is available to help complete the form

Fixed route services will be changed in the fall to reduce overlap and reflect the addition of buses. Service will increase to every 30 minutes on several routes during the peak times. Also, the stop time at the transit center will be reduced from 10 minutes to 5. The new buses will be kneeling buses with flush windows. An express route was added in April that travels from Herron Point to the Kelso Mall, stopping only at the Civic Center and the Train Station in Kelso.

An "intelligent transportation system" has been purchased and will be added to the buses. It has 4 features to assist people who are visual or hearing impaired or others who are unfamiliar with the area. 1- It will announce the stops; 2- When the bus stops at a bus stop, it will announce the route # and name of the route; 3- The website will include real time information about the routes and arrival times, and show the buses moving along the routes; 4- The route information and location of the buses will be available on a smart phone app. The new system also will improve ADA compliance, allow more efficient bus scheduling and enhance data gathering, analysis and reporting capabilities.

A goal is to increase ridership. One effort is to adjust the stop times at the high schools to school start and end times. Another is to provide blanket access for staff and students at LCC. Starting service ½ hour earlier, at 6:30AM, will serve people going to work better.

The buses will connect to the Train Station, Columbia County Rider, Wahkiakum on the Move, and Lower Columbia CAP buses.

Brad brought information -- the new paratransit service application form, new transit routes, transit plan, and comment/input form -- and offered them to the attendees. He invited questions.

Question: Will assistance to complete the paratransit application be provided for seniors or persons with disabilities who do not drive and may need help completing the form?

Answer: People can call the Transit Center and someone will walk them through the form or Brad will go to the person's house to assist.

Question: Will training be available to organization staffs who serve seniors and persons with disabilities so they can help people complete the form?

Answer: We would welcome the opportunity to train people at agencies.

Question: Will buses continue to stop at Fred Meyer?

Answer: No. Traffic at Fred Meyer causes delays. The bus will stop on the street by Fred Meyer.

Question: Does the new plan include Sunday service? Evening service?

Answer: Not at this time. Though, it may be considered in the future.

Brad said there is an ongoing Public Outreach Process with meetings on the 2nd Wednesday of every month. He encourages input either at the meeting or the comment/input form.

The attendees expressed their appreciation for a very informative and interesting presentation.

New Signage. Carolyn reported on the status of the way finding signage that was discussed at the February DAC meeting. The request for grant funding (\$38K) was submitted in the last grant cycle. The Secretary of State's Office may be willing to pay a portion of the cost, possibly up to a third (first floor), but it is unlikely they will agree to fund the entire cost of the signage. The request is still on the table, but it is a longshot to get full approval.

Legislative Changes Related to Elections. Sharon addressed several changes to Elections that occurred during the 2013 legislative cycle. First, a change was made on the races that appear in the Primary. Nonpartisan elections only have a primary if three or more candidates file. Partisan elections always have a Primary. Second, Judicial and Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction races will no longer be decided in the Primary. Third, a specific statement regarding the Public Disclosure commission must be printed either on the ballot or on both the ballot envelope and elsewhere in the ballot package. The statement must also be printed in the state voters' pamphlet. The goal is to make voters aware of people and organizations that donated to state and local candidates and

ballot measure campaigns. The Secretary of State's Office provided an alternative graphic that can be used.

Elections Update. Sharon provided an update on the Primary and General Election. Filing week was May 13-17. For Cowlitz County, fifty-seven offices were open for filing. Candidates filed for 52 of the 57 open offices. A 3-day filing period was held for the 5 positions still open on May 22-24. Races that will appear on the Primary ballot include the Port of Woodland, Commissioner District 2 Position and Longview School District, Director Positions 1 & 2. Also appearing will be a proposition to fund the Castle Rock library. The Primary is on August 6; the General Election is on November 5.

Other Opportunities/Discussion. Attendees were given an opportunity to highlight new ideas or upcoming events in their areas. Tim Krueger provided a brief update on the new SW Washington Behavioral Health Region Support Network that includes Clark, Cowlitz and Skamania Counties. Amy Asher announced the selection of Scott Patterson, a former Clark County transit agency executive, as the new Director of the Cowlitz Wahkiakum Council of Governments. Della Mowell said work is ongoing for the Veterans Stand Down and she was looking forward to working with RiverCities Transit to help transport veterans. Doug Hooper invited attendees to check out the new SW Agency on Aging and Disabilities website, www.helpingelders.com. Thurston County representatives are researching elections systems and asked committee members for their impression on the eSlate. Audrey and Sunnie, who tested the eSlate for Cowlitz County, gave their assessment. Susan King gave her assessment from the perspective of Skamania County.

Presentation. Kris Swanson thanked Anita Hopkins, who is retiring from her position at CAP, for her excellent participation and support to the Disability Advisory Committee since 2009. She always had excellent ideas to share and was a partner in our eight Voter Recognition Ceremonies, where we recognized voters who voted 50 years or more. We will miss her wise counsel and participation, and wish her a long and happy retirement. We hope to see her around town and maybe at a future DAC meeting.

Sharon Weinhold
Cowlitz County Elections
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