

February 21, 2013

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Disability Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes, February 21, 2013

The Disability Advisory Committee (DAC) met on February 21, 2013 at the Cowlitz County Administration Building, Conference Room B. The meeting agenda is attached.

Attendees were:

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

Special Guests:

Mariann Zumbuhl, Lewis County Elections Supervisor
Heather L. Boyer, Lewis County Elections

Welcome/Introductions. The Committee members welcomed our guests from Lewis County Elections. Everyone introduced themselves and said a few words about the organization they were representing.

Ideas for New Accessibility Grant Cycle, 2013.

Funds amounting to \$100,000 are available for the 2013 Help America Vote Act (HAVA) Grant Cycle. The funding is available for 1) Establishing a Disability Advisory Committee, and 2) Correcting access barriers identified during the 2012 Primary and General Elections by Disability Rights Washington or the OSOS Elections Division. The grant cycle will end on June 30, 2013; grant awards will be issued beginning March 1st until funds are depleted.

Carolyn presented to the committee a proposal for the grant cycle that will correct an access barrier and improve the signage and directional system inside and outside the Cowlitz County Administration Building and make the building more welcoming to visitors, particularly those with disabilities. Visitors currently have a difficult time navigating the building, and often have to ask for directions. The building has four entrances, only one of which is truly accessible. The accessible entrance is not well marked and does not look like an accessible entrance from the street. If a visitor with a disability chooses the wrong entrance, their only option is to back track to their vehicle and try to find the accessible entrance or walk up or down a steep hill to the accessible entrance.

Carolyn showed samples of outdoor and indoor signs that are easy to read and facilitate navigation to the proper entrance or office. The outdoor signs or “directories” would be placed at each entrance so they are visible from the vehicle. Considerable discussion followed on what should be included on the signs. For example, should the sign use directions, e.g., “east”, “west”, etc., or should the signs show the address of where the sign is located? Audrey is visually impaired and uses the Para Transit bus service when visiting the Administration Building to vote, attend committee meetings or conduct other business. The driver will ask which entrance she would like to be dropped off and picked up. Audrey said she cannot describe the location of the accessible entrance and often gets dropped off at another entrance or the driver who comes to pick her up waits at another entrance. Members said the accessible symbol (wheel chair) should be included on the sign to make it clear which entrance is accessible. The indoor signs should show the visitor where he/she is, the location of the business offices, and the way to the accessible bathrooms and elevator.

A member asked if braille would be on the signs. Audrey said many blind people do not use braille, but audio on the elevator would be very helpful. The audio could state the floor and direction to the offices on that floor, e.g., “First floor, Elections Department to the left, Building and Planning Department straight ahead, etc.” Members suggested a floor plan be included on the Cowlitz County website.

Committee members were very enthusiastic about the proposal and agreed the “wayfinding” signage and directional system will be a vast improvement and help meet the needs of persons with disabilities and other visitors to the Administration Building. The signs will make the building seem more welcoming and easier for people to visit the Elections Department or conduct other business. The members unanimously agreed the grant proposal should be submitted. If the grant funding is approved, Carolyn plans to work with the Secretary of State’s design specialist and committee members to develop clear and consistent signage.

2012 Elections.

2012 was a busy year for elections. 2013 will likely have only two elections, the Primary and General Election. During 2012, about 70% of all ballots were returned through the accessible ballot boxes. It appears that ballot box usage may level off at about 70%.

During 2012, 4-5 voters used the eSlate in each of the Primary and General Election. We offered, but did not get much response to take the eSlate to nursing homes or assisted living facilities. The ballots for both the Primary and General Election were long, with many propositions and candidates. For the homes and facilities that responded, we found most residents found it easier and preferred to walk through the ballot with someone, vote in the normal manner and put the ballot in a ballot box rather than vote on the eSlate.

The Elections Department prepared an audio voters’ pamphlet for the General Election. Audrey stated she used the Audio Voters’ Pamphlet and found it to be very helpful. She said it was clear and understandable. She suggested the pamphlet would be easier to use if the user could go directly the section(s) where they wanted additional information, e.g., to propositions, county offices or state offices, instead of going through the entire

pamphlet to find the section. This is a great suggestion and we will keep it in mind when we prepare the next Audio Voters' Pamphlet.

Summary of 2012 Activities.

The members discussed the activities the committee participated in during 2012.

- The committee met 2 times in 2012, in February and August. The meetings were aligned to elections, giving committee members an opportunity to vote on the eSlate.
- The committee participated in the Senior Connections Fair in May. Tom Allman from the Secretary of State's Office joined us for most of the day. The Fair was held at the Mall, there were many vendors and turnout was high. This was a wonderful opportunity to meet seniors and persons with disabilities, provide information on our accessibility improvements and demonstrate the eSlate.
- The Elections Department hosted eight "Seniors Events" from October 2011 through July 2012 to honor seniors who have voted for 50 years or more. A Cowlitz County Commissioner and Kris Swanson participated in every event. Partners included the Southwest Agency on Aging and Disabilities, Lower Columbia CAP, and AARP. The events were held throughout the county at Granges, Senior Centers, Community Centers and assisted living facilities. Over 400 seniors participated in the events, learned about our accessibility improvements and the eSlate, heard about other resources available to seniors, shared their voting stories and had an enjoyable experience.
- The Elections Department had a booth at the Cowlitz County Fair. The booth had many activities including voter registration, an opportunity to test the eSlate and vote a sample ballot, and a chance to hear about the accessibility improvements in Cowlitz County.
- Several Cowlitz County assisted living/"congregated living" facilities were given the opportunity to participate in a pilot DVD Video Voters' Guide Pilot Project. The facilities received a free DVD that provided information about the federal and statewide candidates and propositions on the 2012 General Election ballot. The goal was to help voters understand the issues and learn more about the candidates prior to voting.

Activity Plan for 2013. Committee members reviewed a DRAFT 2013 Disability Advisory Committee Plan to Increase Accessibility to Voting and Voting Materials for Persons with Disabilities. Members expressed the committee should continue to participate in the Senior Connections Fair, which will be on May 1, 2013 and the Cowlitz County Fair, which is scheduled for July 25-28, 2013. Anita suggested to increase DAC membership, we might want to include an event notice in the Daily News announcing our DAC meetings. Everyone agreed and this will be added to the DRAFT plan. After further discussion a motion was made by Doug and seconded by Anita that the 2013 plan be approved. The members unanimously approved the plan. The approved 2013 Disability Advisory Committee Plan to Increase Accessibility to Voting and Voting Materials for Persons with Disabilities is attached.

Proposed Legislation. Members reviewed proposed legislation, particularly HB 1290, which requires a ballot drop box be placed at colleges, school district headquarters, and each high school. This would require 12 ballot drop boxes in Cowlitz County. We currently have 6 and we would have to move them or add 12 more. Members expressed

concern with this legislation since our current ballot box locations are well known and highly used.

The members asked the Lewis County Elections Department visitors about their Disability Advisory Committee. They said they have a Disability Advisory Committee that has met several times. The members thanked the visitors for attending our committee meeting and invited them to return.

Sharon Weinhold
Cowlitz County Elections
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