

February 13, 2012

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Disability Advisory Committee, Meeting Minutes, February 8, 2012

The Disability Advisory Committee had a virtual meeting to provide an update of the Special Election, report on our new grants, and provide feedback and plans for our events to honor seniors who have voted 50 years and to give them information on our accessibility enhancements.

Persons contacted were:

Kristina Swanson, Cowlitz County Auditor  
Amee Paxton, Chief Deputy Auditor  
Carolyn Myers, Elections Supervisor  
Sharon Weinhold, Voter Outreach Coordinator  
Sunnie Smith, DisAbility Resources  
Audrey Jolley, DisAbility Resources  
Maurine Coon, LCOD/LCCB  
Bernie Altman, NAMI  
Judy Chamberlin, DisAbility Resources  
Karla Black, DisAbility Resources  
Linda Wilson, DAV Transportation  
Anita Hopkins, CAP  
Doug Hooper, SWAAD  
Mary McCarthy, AARP  
Judith Ribelin, AARP  
Lisa Garcia, LCC Student

Members were given the information to be discussed and invited to provide feedback and/or recommendations.

### **Status of Special Election.**

Ballots were mailed on January 27 for the February 14, 2012 Special Election. This is a partial election, with fewer than 15,000 participants. Eligible voters reside in the City of Castle Rock and the Castle Rock, Kalama or Woodland School Districts. Historically, the ballot return rate for similar Special Elections is 45%. As of Tuesday, February 7, 4025 ballots (27.4%) have been returned. Almost 70% of those ballots were returned through the accessible ballot boxes. The eSlate is available to voters who may need help in voting privately and independently. The eSlate is available 20 days before each election at the Elections Department and at other locations upon request. Committee members are encouraged to invite people who could benefit from using the eSlate to test it and use it to vote their ballot.

### **Voting Accessibility Grant.**

The Secretary of State approved Cowlitz County's request for grant funding to purchase a public address (PA) system. The system will give voters with hearing impairments the opportunity to more fully participate in Disability Advisory Committee meetings, demonstrations of our accessibility equipment, educational meetings regarding elections, and events that provide elections, accessibility or voting information. The funding is available through December 31, 2012.

Seniors and persons with disabilities often have difficulty hearing or understanding presentations and conversations in a larger room. With this equipment, persons with hearing impairments will be able to better hear and participate in the conversation. The new equipment will include 2 wireless handheld microphones with receivers, a single channel microphone amp or small mixer, 2 powered speakers, 2 speaker stands and the necessary cabling. A Committee member asked if the PA system includes "loops" that can be worn by hard of hearing and/or deaf people. These "loops" fit around their necks. We are exploring the "loops" to see whether they should be part of our system.

### **Events to Honor and Provide Information to Seniors Who Are Long Time Voters.**

Two events have been held to date. The first was at the Silver Lake Grange on October 24, and the second at the Kelso Senior Center on December 14. Forty six (46) people attended the Silver Lake event and fifty six (56) people attended the Senior Center event. Invitees included voters in the precincts close to the event location.

An event is scheduled for March 5 at the Canterbury Inn, and will be open to the residents (and their guests) of Canterbury Park, Canterbury Inn, Canterbury Gardens and Delaware Plaza. As recommended by the committee, we are trying to schedule an event at the Monticello Park (tentatively April 9 or 10) and at the Ryderwood Community Center later in April. We are exploring the possibility of having events at the Kalama Community Building, and the Rose Valley and Pleasant Hill Granges.

Each event is a little different, depending on the location, size of the room and preferences of the location host. A Cowlitz County Commissioner has served as the Master of Ceremonies for each event. The program highlights are a presentation by Cowlitz County Auditor Kristina Swanson on the history of voting and voting equipment, and the opportunity for the voters to share their voting experiences. The Elections Department imparts information on the eSlate

and other voter accessibility enhancements. The seniors also gain information about the Statewide Health Insurance Benefits Advisors Program and services available to seniors in Cowlitz County.

Committee members are encouraged to attend any of these events, and are invited to offer suggestions about the events and potential event locations. The response on the events was very positive and several members indicated interest in participating.

Sharon Weinhold  
Cowlitz County Elections