

December 15, 2011

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Disability Advisory Committee, Meeting Minutes, December 15, 2011

The Disability Advisory Committee had a virtual meeting to discuss our proposed Voter Accessibility Grant Application for the December 16, 2011 grant cycle.

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, AARP
Judy Chamberlin, DisAbility Resources
Karla Black, DisAbility Resources
Linda Wilson, DAV Transportation
Anita Hopkins, CAP
Doug Hooper, SWAAD
Lisa Garcia, LCC Student

Each member was given a copy or summary of the Voter Accessibility Grant Application. The members had an opportunity to review/discuss the application and provide suggestions, comments, or concurrence with the application as written.

Voting Accessibility Grant Application, Capital Improvements.

The Disability Advisory Committee members are extremely supportive of this grant application. It is their opinion that, with this equipment, voters with hearing impairments will be able to better hear and participate in educational events and discussions related to elections, accessibility and voting.

The need for this equipment has been apparent for some time. Seniors and persons with disabilities often have difficulty hearing or understanding presentations and conversations in a larger room. This difficulty was recently raised again at an educational event and celebration for seniors who have voted 50 years or more. Many of the seniors in the audience had difficulty hearing the presentations and conversations. With this

public address equipment, voters and others will be able to better hear and participate in the discussions.

We would like to purchase a portable light weight public address system. The system would include two handheld wireless microphones, single channel microphone amp with receiver or mixer, two powered speakers, two speaker stands and all of the necessary cabling, e.g., microphone receiver to amp/mixer, mixer to speakers, a 50 foot grounded AC extension cord and a six-way power strip. This public address system will be used at our Disability Advisory Committee meetings and other events where a multiple of seniors or persons with disabilities are attending. The cost of this equipment for a room of 50 to 100 people is about \$3,500.

A Disability Advisory Committee member who is hearing impaired is very pleased with this grant request. She admits she has had difficulty understanding the conversations at our Disability Advisory Committee meetings and looks forward to hearing better with the new equipment. She said so many people have hearing impairments, and the equipment will help a lot of other people understand the discussions and allow them to be able to fully participate in the conversations. Another Committee member who wears a hearing aid echoed her enthusiasm for the initiative to purchase this equipment.

A new Committee member was pleased to hear the equipment will be portable and light weight, and is relatively inexpensive. He said he has noticed that speaker volume has been an issue at several events he has participated in with us. Setting up equipment like this at those events should take care of this problem and possibly encourage more people to attend.

At a recent senior educational outreach event, a woman with a hearing impairment became so frustrated that she couldn't hear the presentation that she stood up, excused herself, and left. Elections Supervisor, Carolyn Myers, witnessed this event. She encouraged the woman to stay and asked the keynote speaker to speak up but these attempts failed. "There wasn't anything else that we could do for her at the time to accommodate her. It's disappointing and feels like we failed the very people that we are trying to reach out to," said Myers.

Other members agreed that it is very important to be able to reach and accommodate all people at our events. This equipment will help us accomplish that goal.

Sharon Weinhold
Cowlitz County Elections