

March 22, 2011

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Disability Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes, March 22, 2011

The Disability Advisory Committee had a virtual meeting to discuss the proposed voter accessibility grant application due on April 1, 2011 titled: New Approach for Reaching Voters with Disabilities.

Persons contacted were:

Kristina Swanson, Cowlitz County Auditor
Carolyn Myers, Elections Supervisor
Maurine Coon, LCOD/LCCB, AARP
Audrey Jolley, Disability Resources
Sunnie Smith, Emergency Shelter
Karla Black, Disability Resources
Anita Hopkins, CAP
Judy Chamberlin, Disability Resources
Pam Howe, Lifeworks
Linda Wilson, DAV Transportation
Heather Ferguson, Emergency Shelter
Della Mowell, VFW 3017
Phyllis Martin, Citizen
Lenette Connolly, Goodwill
Lisa Garcia, LCC Student
Diane Tischer, Wahkiakum County Auditor
David O'Brien, Skamania County Elections Manager

Each committee member was contacted and/or given a copy or summary of the grant application for review. Each member had the opportunity to discuss the grant application and ask questions, provide suggestions and comments, or concur with the grant application as written.

The grant application asks for funding for a one-year Special Project to test a more positive approach for reaching voters with disabilities.

Data shows that 55% of people 65 and over have some type of disability that impacts their daily activity. People with disabilities often are unaware of their disability or do not readily admit to having a disability. This is particularly true for older people. Therefore, the direct approach of seeking voters with disabilities may not be the most effective.

This Special Project would test an indirect and more positive approach to identifying people who may need help with voting. The test approach would be to honor, recognize, and celebrate voters who have been voting in Cowlitz County for 50 years or more. As part of the celebration, we would invite family and friends, many of who would be people that are elderly and/or have a disability. A voter outreach staff member would discuss the importance of voting and positive difference these voters have made over their 50 years of voting. A member of our Disability Advisory Committee would be invited to participate in the celebration and give a testimonial on their voting experience and the aids available to help voters reach that 50 year voting mark. A member from the Agency on Aging and Disabilities, a community partner, would congratulate and address the group. We would demonstrate the eSlate, have brochures available that showcase our accessibility enhancements, and provide other information about upcoming elections. We would make it a meaningful event for the honorees and an educational event for all attendees.

The goals of the project are to:

- encourage elderly voters and voters with disabilities to register to vote if they have not already done so, and to vote;
- provide information on the accessibility enhancements made to help voters with disabilities vote privately and independently and other available resources,
- give voters a chance to vote a demonstration ballot on the eSlate and help make them more comfortable with the functions and controls;
- encourage elderly voters and voters with disabilities to join our Disability Advisory Committee so they can assist other voters who may need help,
 - cultivate and/or continue relationships with the activity directors of retirement/senior/nursing homes, Senior Centers, VFW, and other groups where senior and disabled voters reside or gather
- determine the success of this test approach and offer the test results to other counties.

The Disability Advisory Committee members were very excited to hear the approach to implementing a recommendation from the Disability Advisory Committee – to find a more positive way to reach voters with disabilities. The Committee members were optimistic that this approach will help us reach members of the community who would be more receptive to using our accessibility enhancements.

Several members stated they would be happy to participate in honoring the voters, and would be willing to give a testimonial and share their experiences with voting on the eSlate, the ease of use, and how voting on the eSlate can help voters vote privately and independently.

One member remarked that this approach would give us the opportunity to cast a broader net in an upbeat way, to not only find persons with disabilities, but also find voters who likely would benefit from these accessibility enhancements in the future. A member suggested that her organization and group of retired volunteers would be

happy to participate and assist at the events. The VFW expressed keen interest in the idea and asked to have an event at their location.

Another member noted that some current Cowlitz County residents may have voted for 50 years but not all in Cowlitz County, and wondered if these voters could be included in the celebrations. The members agreed we should include these voters in the celebrations whenever possible.

The Disability Advisory Committee members unanimously and wholeheartedly support the grant proposal and look forward to trying this more positive approach of reaching voters who may benefit from our accessibility improvements now or in the future.

Sharon Weinhold
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