

October 26, 2009

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Disability Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes, October 20, 2009

The Disability Advisory Committee met on Tuesday, October 20, 2009 at the Cowlitz County Administration Building. The meeting agenda is attached.

Attendees were:

Carolyn Myers, Elections Supervisor
Maurine Coon, LCOD/LCCB, AARP
Audrey Jolley, Disability Resources
Sunnie Smith, Mgr Adult Home
Karla Black, Disability Resources
Linda Wilson, DAV Transportation
Anita Hopkins, Lower Columbia CAP
Pam Howe, Residential Resources
Sharon Weinhold, Voter Outreach Coordinator

Members that did not attend, but may have provided comments on the grant were:

Kristina Swanson, Cowlitz County Auditor
Linda Jaques, Longview Organization for the Blind
Bernie Altman, Mental Health Ombudsman
Linda Ross, VFW 3017
Judy Chamberlin, Disability Resources
Heather Ferguson, Emergency Shelter
Diane Tischer, Wahkiakum County Auditor

Because there were new attendees, everyone introduced themselves and said a few words about the organization they were representing.

Disability Advisory Committee members summarized for the new attendees the accessibility improvements Cowlitz County has made since our first meeting in July 2006. We also talked about our outreach efforts and results. Several additional outreach possibilities were mentioned. Sunnie and Anita suggested we consider attending the Community Services Coordinating Council meetings, which are held on the 3rd Thursday at 0930, in the Altrusa Room in the CAP building. Point of contact is Julie Douglas. Sunnie and Audrey suggested we check out the LCC Student Support Services, which supports students with disabilities. Director of Student Support Services is Jason Hoseney.

We talked about the 2009 General Election. The ballots were mailed on October 16. Most of the attendees had received their ballots and were ready to vote. A few attendees had not received their ballots, and we agreed to check on the status of their ballots.

The AutoMARK is ready for use. We have been trying to get the word out on the AutoMARK and have used various approaches. As new organizations are established and different people become interested in improving accessibility for voters with disabilities, we have been finding new avenues to get the word out about the AutoMARK and our accessibility improvements.

Sunnie asked how other counties are doing with marketing their AutoMARK. Per the Thurston County website, Thurston County has 12 AutoMARKS, and 48 ballots were voted on the AutoMARK for the 2008 General/Presidential election. That compares with our 42 ballots. Audrey volunteered to participate with us on visits to retirement and nursing homes, senior centers, etc., with the AutoMARK to encourage greater use.

Audrey asked about the Local Voters' Pamphlet CD. We did not prepare LVP CDs for this election, because of the limited interest in them in the past. Audrey was very disappointed. She said it was important to have CD's for visually impaired voters. She thought that commuters might be interested in having a CD as well. It was noted that Thurston County has an audio version of their Voters Pamphlet on their website, and it was suggested that it was an approach we might pursue. Audrey indicated that the audio may not be as clear and all visually impaired voters may not be sufficiently computer savvy to use that feature. Carolyn said we will prepare LVP CDs in the future. In addition, we will post a link to the audio version of the LVP online.

Sharon gave the attendees a rundown on the status of our revised grant request for Conference Room B. We requested funds to install a live feed video/audio system in the conference room to capture the election process, including ballot processing, ballot counting, and the work of the canvassing board in certifying elections. Four LCD flat panel TV's will be installed in key locations throughout the Administration Building so voters can view the process and ask questions. Carolyn added that the conference room itself will be more accessible for voters with disabilities. The revised grant request was approved by the Secretary of State's Office. We received two bids. The next steps are to present the bids and a recommendation for award to the Board of Commissioners, get their decision, and make an award.

Carolyn discussed another grant proposal that is in process. The Elections Department would like to update its tabulation technology and is looking at several options. Carolyn invited members of the Disability Advisory Committee to a demonstration on Friday, October 23. Audrey and Sunnie stated they would like to attend the demonstration.

Anita Hopkins discussed the SHIBA Program, which is a statewide network of trained volunteer advisors who offer free assistance to residents with questions about health insurance, health care access, and prescription drug plans. The local SHIBA advisor and volunteers, who are located at Lower Columbia CAP, are available on an appointment basis to meet with residents in person or by telephone and impartially discuss their questions and needs. Anita asked that we mention the program to people we run across

that might be interested and left some brochures. She will mention the AutoMARK to people she meets that could benefit from its use.

Pam Howe discussed the supported living program at Residential Resources. She specifically addressed whether there was potential for her clients using the AutoMARK. It was her opinion that the majority of her clients would not understand a ballot or vote.

Everyone was thanked for participating in the meeting and encouraged to vote.

Sharon Weinhold
Cowlitz County Elections
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