

May 15, 2009

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Disability Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes, May 11, 2009

The Disability Advisory Committee met on Monday, May 11, 2009 at the Cowlitz County Administration Building. The meeting agenda is attached.

Attendees were:

Kristina Swanson, Cowlitz County Auditor
Maurine Coon, LCOD/LCCB, AARP
Sunnie Smith, Mgr Adult Home
Karla Black, Disability Resources
Judy Chamberlin, Disability Resources
Bernie Altman, AARP, SW Regional Support Network
Linda Wilson, DAV Transportation
Anita Hopkins, CAP
Heather Ferguson, Emergency Shelter
Sharon Weinhold, Voter Outreach Coordinator
David Lord, Disability Rights Washington, Special Guest

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

Audrey Jolley, Disability Resources
Geri Rister, ARC of Cowlitz Valley
Linda Jaques, Longview Organization for the Blind
Linda Ross, VFW 3017
Diane Tischer, Wahkiakum County Auditor
Carolyn Myers, Elections Supervisor

Since there were several new attendees, everyone introduced themselves. We had changed the meeting time to see if we could get more participation. Based on the attendance, we plan to meet later in the day to allow more people to attend.

For the benefit of the new members, the group discussed the accessibility improvements Cowlitz County has made since our first meeting in July 2006. We reviewed how the improvements were received by members of the disability community and the results of the improvements. We were pleased to report through our visits immediately before the General Election to senior living, retirement, assisted living, and nursing homes, we registered 16 new voters, changed address information for 28 voters, and had 42 people vote on the AutoMARK. In addition, 70% of all ballots returned for the General Election came through our accessible curbside ballot boxes. We mentioned our online audio ballot and CDs prepared by Central Washington University and discussed ways to improve our marketing of these products. We reviewed our Weekly/Monthly mailers and the positive response we have been getting from the recipient organizations that work

with persons with disabilities. Overall, the group thought our efforts have been very productive.

We discussed several of our recent/upcoming events and invited Disability Advisory Committee members to participate in the event by helping get the word out on our accessibility improvements and demonstrating the AutoMARK. We looked at the short, fun demonstration ballot for the AutoMARK. Events include presentations to the civics classes at the community college, support of high school student body elections, and booths at the International Festival (June 6) and Cowlitz County Fair (July 29 – August 1, 2009). Several of the new members offered suggestions on how we could get the word out in their organizations. Others identified organizations we should contact, such as the Retired Teachers Association, Teamsters, in-home care providers, Catholic Community Services, and SW Agency on Aging and Disabilities.

All members, including the new members, received the grant application prior to the meeting for their review. They were all given the opportunity to comment on the grant application at the meeting or by email or phone before or after the meeting. Some of the comments from the members are below.

“Cowlitz County and the Disability Advisory Committee have done a lot for us. I learn so much at these meetings and pass the information on to others. We need to keep focused on educating and reaching persons with disabilities.”

“We need the grant. We can’t drop these efforts. We must continue and expand on them.”

“It’s important to get into other disabilities. The State benefits tremendously from Cowlitz County doing education and outreach. Cowlitz County has a higher percentage of persons with disabilities than the State.”

“Based on my experience, people with disabilities don’t always like to admit they need help. It’s important to reach their children, grandchildren, and friends so they can steer persons with disabilities to the help they need. The more people we can tell about our accessibility enhancements, the more successful we will be in reaching the right people. Approval of the grant will help us accomplish this.”

“We’ve come a long way in improving accessibility and reaching persons with disabilities. It would be a shame if we couldn’t continue our work and take the next steps. We need an outreach coordinator and the grant funds to do this.”

“The downturn in the economy and impact on Cowlitz County make this grant very important. We will not be able to continue and expand our efforts without it.”

Overall, the Disability Advisory Committee members unanimously support the grant request. It is their opinion that it is imperative that we get the grant money so we can continue and expand our education and outreach to persons with disabilities.

Sharon Weinhold
Cowlitz County Elections