

January 10, 2008

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Disability Advisory Committee, Meeting Minutes, January 10, 2008

The Disability Advisory Committee had a virtual meeting to discuss the two proposed Voting Accessibility Grant Applications. This discussion follows initial discussions that took place at the October 25, 2007 meeting of the Disability Advisory Committee.

Participants were:

Kristina Swanson, Cowlitz County Auditor
Amee Paxton, Chief Deputy Auditor
Caroline Myers, Elections Supervisor
Sharon Weinhold, Voter Outreach Coordinator
Sunnie Smith, DisAbility Resources
Audrey Jolley, DisAbility Resources
Maurine Coon, LCOD/LCCB
Judy Chamberlin, DisAbility Resources
Karla Black, DisAbility Resources
Mike Freeman, National Federation of the Blind
Geri Rister, the ARC
Mary Putka, League of Women Voters

The members were sent the Voting Accessibility Grant Applications in advance and were prepared to discuss them.

Voting Accessibility Grant Application, Ballot Box Accessibility.

The disability advisory committee members continued to be very enthusiastic about this grant application and think it will make a significant improvement to the accessibility of the ballot box from the sidewalk side. They pointed out that persons with disabilities and seniors use the sidewalk near the ballot box at the Civic Center, and it would be very easy for them to return their ballot with this improvement. In fact, several members of the committee said they would use the ballot box and listed several names of people they knew who would likely use it. Members from the ARC and League of Women Voters indicated strong support for the grant application, and said they would do all they could to get the word out about the accessibility improvements. They were pleased that the AARP Board of Directors and disability Resources of SW Washington were willing to partner with the elections office and help get the word out about the recent accessibility improvements implemented within Cowlitz County. The committee members recommended this Voting Accessibility Grant Application be submitted as our first priority.

Voting Accessibility Grant Application, Automatic Door Opener.

The disability advisory committee members are very interested in seeing an automatic door opener installed at the entrance of the Elections Processing Center. Several members stated they experienced the difficulties of opening the current door, and think an automatic door opener would be an excellent improvement. One member stated it would make persons with disabilities and seniors feel more welcome at the Elections Processing Center. Many seniors still personally return their ballots to the ballot box at the Elections Processing Center. The committee members are very hopeful that this Voting Accessibility Grant Application will be approved.

In conclusion, one member summed up the discussion by stating, “These are more than great ideas; they are NEEDS. The funding could not be used for anything better. It is clear the committee members strongly support these grant applications and look forward to receiving the funding for these very needed accessibility enhancements.”

Sharon Weinhold
Cowlitz County Elections