

March 21, 2019

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Accessible Communities Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

The Accessible Communities Advisory Committee (ACAC) met on Thursday, March 21, 2019, 1:30-2:30pm at the Cowlitz County Event Center. Time was available after the meeting for networking and testing the new accessible voting unit.

Meeting participants were:

Tiffany Ames, Life Works/The ARC of Cowlitz County
Linda Brigham, Steve Chapman, Lower Columbia College
Kathleen Chilson, AAADSW/Deaf Community
Eric Christensen, Youth and Family Link
Rachel Facer-Stone, Cowlitz County Elections
Don DeFord, Clear Ballot/ClearAccess
Carolyn Fundingsland, Cowlitz County Auditor
Jeremy Heffernan, Cowlitz County Elections Manager
Tim Krueger, GRBHO Ombuds MH
Brian Loos, City of Longview/Longview Accessibility Advisory Committee
Susan Marion, Housing Opportunities of SW Washington
Michael Munger Jr., People First
Susan O'Connor, Wahkiakum County Auditor's Office
Nikki Palm, Community Member
Steven Rife, People First
Allan Rudberg, Housing Opportunities of SW Washington
Susan Schwartz, Community Member
Ray Van Tongeren, Community Member
Benton Waterous, Workforce SW Washington
Sharon Weinhold, Elections Outreach
Carla Jo Whitson, Brain Injury Alliance of Washington

At the meeting, participants:

- 1- Reviewed the DRAFT 2019 Accessible Communities Advisory Committee Plan to Increase Access for Persons with Disabilities to Voting and Community Services.
- 2- Viewed/heard a presentation on the new accessible voting unit, ClearAccess.
- 3- Received an update of the accessible storefront project.
- 4- Received committee updates on the actions in process to address the accessibility issues identified at the Town Hall and Leadership Breakfast.

Meeting participants were welcomed and thanked for their attendance. Introductions were made around the room.

A DRAFT 2019 Accessible Communities Advisory Committee Plan was briefly reviewed. The plan includes the purpose of the ACAC, activities the committee will work toward during the year, membership policy, and meeting dates. Attendees were encouraged to provide any comments or changes on the plan before it is finalized.

Jeremy and Don demonstrated the many enhanced features of the new accessible voting unit, ClearAccess. The unit, which uses off-the-shelf equipment (computer and printer), makes voting very accessible to those who have visual, hearing, physical and/or developmental challenges. It can read the ballot at various speeds and show the ballot with different backgrounds and colors. The unit makes it clear that the voter can vote all or only a few races, and changes can be made prior to finalizing and printing the ballot. Once the ballot is printed, it looks the same and is included with all other ballots. During an Election, the unit will be available to anyone who would benefit from using it, including those who register on Election Day. When mandated, the system can be programmed to read other languages. A half dozen people took the time after the meeting to test the unit and vote a ballot.

The ACAC received grant funding from the Washington State Governor's Committee on Disability Issues and Employment for new storefronts on the second floor of the County Administration Building, for the Auditor's, Assessor's, and Treasurer's offices. The old doors were awkward and heavy, which made it difficult for the elderly and people with disabilities to enter the offices to do their business. The new storefronts were completed in February 2019. The new doors with automatic door openers improve safety and help all people gain easy entry to these offices so they can conduct their business. Thank you to the Governor's Committee for the funding to allow the new storefronts to be installed.

The Governor's Committee hosted a Town Hall meeting and Leadership Breakfast in November 2018. The meeting and breakfast were well attended. Three issues were identified for action and work groups were formed to address those issues. The three workgroups were given an opportunity to give an update on what they are doing.

The issues:

- 1- Given the need to improve disability networking, what would the first steps be in building a community education and resource system?
- 2- Building upon the need to decrease the service gaps, how might a volunteer program be developed and coordinated?
- 3- To improve the safety of pedestrians, how could the timing on crosswalk signals be changed to provide additional time for a safe crossing?

The committees for the first and second issues have met several times, and have met with each other. The committees found that there are many resource listings available in the community; almost every agency has one. A major difficulty is that they are hard to keep current; programs and people change constantly. The committees focused on Washington 211; many SW WA agencies are already included in 211. It has a call center with area specialists. It is accessible online, by phone or app. 211 is looking to get 24/7 phone support. They have major listings for food, housing, energy, health, and family. There is a data/reporting mechanism to see what else is needed, and they are willing to add other areas. They update the listings every year, and organizations can make changes themselves or ask 211 to make changes whenever a change is needed. The committee is encouraging and willing to help agencies not currently included in 211 to get included. The committee also is asking agencies to use 211. Anyone who wants additional information or materials can contact the committee.

The committee for the second issue is exploring ways to include volunteer opportunities in the listings. The email list for the agencies included in 211 could be used to get the

word out about adding their volunteer opportunities. A marketing campaign is being considered.

The committee for the third issue is making progress in making street crossing more accessible. The City of Longview Accessibility Advisory Committee has accumulated data on curb cuts (or lack thereof) and created a model to prioritize the order they should be addressed. The committee is in the process of identifying crosswalks where signals should be addressed. Key city personnel are engaged in addressing the issue.

Participants asked questions and met with committee members after the meeting.

Upcoming Events:

- Annual Link Science Night, March 21, 6-8pm, Youth and Family Link
- Networking and Career Fair, May 1, Lower Columbia College
- Special Needs Easter Egg Hunt, April 20, Hosted by Highlands Neighborhood Association at the Community Center and Archie Anderson Park
- Cowlitz Gamers Expo, March 30, 10-5pm, Events Center
- Autism Walk for Hope, April 20, 10am, Kelso High School Track
- Community Resource Providers, May 9, 9am HOSWWA, Presentation by 211