

VAAC meeting

March 20, 2017, 2:00 pm

Thurston County Courthouse, Room 152

Attendance: Jonathan Whitby, Denise Colley, Berl Colley, Patty McDonald, Toby Olson (Governor's Office), Marlene White (OSOS)

Auditor Staff: Mary Hall, Diana Benson, Tillie Naputi-Pullar, Valerie Walston, Lynnette Thornton, and Toby Guevin

Announcements

Wesley is back on the VAAC, not present today.

Toby Olson, Office of the Governor is here today to talk about expanding our VAAC.

Old Business

AutoMARK Usage

February Special (26)

Presidential Primary (27)

August Primary (18)

November General (30)

Historically there has been no turnout at the Olympia Senior Center and senior housing. Tillie noted the same turnout over the years no matter what we have done. Mary noted we have larger participation relative to other counties due to our roadshow.

Future of E1C

Mary added that E1C can be good for the disability community and asked if we would be better off pushing E1C instead of the roadshow. Valerie noted a voter comment about voter difficulties clicking E1C buttons, but Denise didn't remember having issue; she would like to try again. For the Primary Election, we will use E1C and a portable printer in addition to the AutoMARK. Denise thought it would be useful for someone from the Auditor's Office to attend a Capital City Council of the Blind meeting to talk about E1C before the election, since most of the members don't know about it. The group agreed to demo E1C to Denise and use her laptop with JAWS software at the July 21 Capital City Council of the Blind meeting. **Tillie** and **Lynnette** will get everything setup for this meeting.

Denise also recommended talking with and demoing E1C to the low vision group at Panorama before an election. Denise noted they will meet tomorrow and talk about AutoMARK and E1C, but that the group doesn't meet in July or August. **Valerie** will coordinate with Denise.

Events

People First: Lynnette attended this event, calling it a very rewarding experience. During the AutoMARK demo, the crowd learned they didn't have to vote all races and were excited about this. Patty asked about demoing a test election on E1C; Mary explained we have asked and they have not been able to accommodate the request.

Get out the Disability Vote Week: Marlene reported that Pierce County had one event with low participation (33%). The OSOS is considering changing the date not to coincide with the General Election. Marlene will forward feedback to Mary.

Aging AutoMARK

Noting the aging technology of the AutoMARK, Patty asked if there is anything newer. Mary noted that E1C is the newer technology, and ES&S has similar technology. The group agreed to add questions pertaining to disability and accessibility to the E1C survey.

Website

Mary mentioned that our Business Application Administrator (Carrie) is updating the website for accessibility at the suggestion of Disability Rights Washington.

At the group's suggestion, the Auditor's Office had voter registration efforts and a ballot drop box at the jail during the General Election.

New Business

Expanded Scope of VAAC to ACAC

Toby Olson from the Governor's Office explained a possible expansion in the scope of the VAAC. Toby noted the legal requirement for the Auditor's Office to keep the AutoMARK.

New legislation a few years ago increases funds for countywide Accessibility Community Advisory Committees (ACAC). The ACAC's scope is beyond just voting and covers all accessibility issues in the county. To begin, the BOCC must send a letter, signed by the BOCC and County Auditor, to the Governor's Office, and the ACAC will have access to funds immediately. State law requires a county VAAC; ACAC is voluntary and funded, covering costs for meetings and local accessibility projects.

Only five counties in Washington (Pierce, Spokane, Jefferson, Cowlitz and Wahkiakum) have created an ACAC; Clallam just moved to an ACAC. Yakima and Okanogan Counties are considering it. It is not hard to get funding. Toby believes there is no downside unless the members only want to advise on voting.

Governance is up to the committee; membership recruitment can come from existing organizations, appointed by BoCC. The Cowlitz County committee is large due to advertising and reaching out to the community. Jefferson County combined the VAAC (calling it DASH) to become a hybrid, active organization. With only two members, Pierce County is having trouble, but they are growing and moving in the right direction.

Feedback:

Marlene has a contact at Cowlitz County if we proceed with the ACAC. She suggested reaching out to People First of Thurston County. Denise says there's not much coordination of disability groups in the county, and research suggests there isn't a lot of activity. Patty wants to develop project ideas, then reach out to appropriate people and places. Marlene expressed an interest in building ramps for homes, but Berl suggested the ACAC target audience of the ACAC should be community-wide and not individual families.

Toby suggested partnering with Master Builders for individual services; nothing in statute says we can't target individual families. Jefferson County projects include Braille brochures for restaurants, a film festival, and beach wheelchairs kept at parks near beaches. Pierce County has no projects yet. Spokane

County is working on a large volunteer project doing ADA assessments all over the county. Patty noted a need for more sidewalks on streets and in parks. Denise noted accessibility problems in roundabouts; Berl suggested an audio component to make them more accessible. Denise said there were community forums in Tumwater to discuss these kinds of community assets, but that turnout was poor; moving to an ACAC, however, could have a greater impact.

Toby noted there is nothing in statute to govern how often they meet or whether the BOCC sends a letter or resolution to the Governor's Office.

The ACAC can still address accessibility in voting in their scope.

All VAAC members and Mary are in favor of further research of possibly creating an ACAC with other departments and divisions.

Mary will talk with BoCC and their role, since the Auditor's Office cannot shoulder the full ACAC responsibility.

Denise recommends talking with other groups about what other counties are doing and put information together for presentation to the BoCC to get their buy in.

Toby suggested projects such as partnerships with chambers and small businesses to improve access to business; encouraging downtown businesses to pursue a barrier removal tax credit; improving the ADA tax credit; installing ramps; and providing menus in braille and audio.

2017 VAAC Plan

Approved by VAAC members

711 Washington Relay

Thurston County has removed the county TTY. The Auditor's Office and the County now uses 711 – Washington relay.

Audio Voters' Pamphlet

Mary noted the audio voters' pamphlet is not being accessed or used, and traffic is usually staff proofing. Berl suggested marketing to low vision groups and nursing and retirement centers. The group agreed to do a big push this year, and if there's not an uptick in traffic to cease the audio voters' pamphlet.

Meeting adjourned at 3:20