

VAAC Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, March 4, 2015
Thurston County Courthouse Public Meeting Room

In attendance from the VAAC: Berl Colley; Gary Ernest

In attendance from the Auditor's Office: Mary Hall, Thurston County Auditor; Thomasina Cooper, Executive Assistant; Joyce Turner, Chief Deputy Auditor; Tillie Naputi-Pullar, Elections Manager; Lynnette Thornton, Elections Supervisor; Valerie Walston, Voter Outreach Coordinator; and Carrie Wack, Business Applications Administrator

The meeting was called to order at 3:10 p.m.

Announcements:

The voter outreach coordinator and executive assistant to the auditor were introduced to the VAAC members.

Approval of Minutes:

Gary Ernest made a motion, with Mary Hall seconding the motion, to approve the minutes from the May 5, 2014 VAAC meeting. The motion to approve the minutes passed unanimously.

Old Business:

AUTOMARK™ USAGE

The 2014 AutoMARK™ usage figures for the Primary, General and both Special Elections were presented to the VAAC members. AutoMark usage totaled 29 in the January election, 1 in the April election, 28 in August, and 31 in November. It was noted in the February 2015 Special Election that although no one used the AutoMARK™ during the roadshow to the Tenino and Yelm libraries, elections staff engaged a few voters regarding the AutoMARK™ and gave AutoMARK™ flyers to the libraries for display.

New Business:

Berl questioned whether we market AutoMARK™ information to the general public. Valerie and Lynnette noted that we issue a press release, social media posts, ballot inserts and voters' pamphlet, TCTV posts, all with information pertaining to the AutoMARK™. Berl added that they ran a week's worth of advertisements on Panorama City Television (PCTV).

Elections staff informed the VAAC members that there are 76 elected officers up for election in 2015, including Port commissioner, Superior Court judge, mayors, city and town council members, fire commissioners, and school district directors, throughout Thurston County this year.

Per a request from Lynnette, Berl mentioned that we could attend the April 21 (in advance of the April 28 election), July 20 (in advance of the August 4), and October 17 Capitol City Council of the Blind meetings. Berl will provide Elections with names and contact information of anyone needing to use the AutoMARK™.

Valerie inquired about leaving AutoMARK™ flyers with hearing and eyesight centers. Berl replied that we've had poor outreach to the deaf community.

Berl mentioned that Regal Theater (Lacey) and Century Theater (West Olympia) have descriptive video, which may afford us the opportunity to do some AutoMARK™ outreach; specifically, Berl suggested looking into pre-movie commercials to advertise the AutoMARK™ and placing posters where patrons pick up assisted-hearing headphones. Tillie added that we may inquire whether we can include a postcard or flyer to take with them.

Gary inquired about the status of having the Braille libraries send out information, by ZIP code, regarding accessible voting. Lynnette remarked that we had discussed having the OSOS look into this, and we may want to follow up with OSOS.

Berl asked how we can get fire districts and police departments involved. Valerie mentioned that those departments will often have information booths at community fairs, festivals, etc., and that we may reach out to them to distribute AutoMARK™ materials. Tillie added that we may want to schedule Mary and a VAAC member to talk at the various city/town council meetings; in addition to providing information, we may recruit additional VAAC members.

Berl inquired about outreach with Intercity Transit. Lynnette mentioned that we no longer take the AutoMARK™ to the facility in downtown Olympia due to poor turnout. Additionally, we have had articles in their Dash.

Joyce asked if we have partnered with Meals on Wheels or senior services. Carrie added that senior services has a newsletter, and Lynnette added that we've been in that newsletter as well as Merrill Gardens' and a few others.

Berl asked Mary whether she gets the opportunity to speak to service organizations such as women's groups, Lions Clubs, etc. Mary replied that her concentration has been outreach to schools, but she is interested in talking to those groups about the different ways to vote.

Carrie added that we may want to consider having an information booth at transition fairs for those with special needs who are turning 18.

Berl inquired about reaching out to students with disabilities at the local colleges. Lynnette remarked that we have tried that before, but we may certainly try again.

Tillie added that we've reached out to service organizations, but only in the capacity when we have major events, such as an election or redistricting. She suggested going out on an annual basis.

Joyce inquired about the local disabled veteran community. Tillie remarked that she is working to get Mary scheduled to speak to the local Chamorro veterans. Berl added that the blinded veterans' community in Thurston County is virtually non-existent. Valerie noted that as we reach out to various service organizations that we should include VFWs, American Legions, etc.

Gary asked whether we've ever done outreach at the Thurston County Fair. Tillie noted that with budget cuts we haven't been able to in a number of years, but that with a new auditor we should revisit participating in the Thurston County Fair, as well as other community organizations. Mary remarked that in advance of the 2016 presidential election, she plans to go to the County Commissioners to ask for an outreach budget.

Joyce noted that last year we changed AutoMARK™ roadshow locations; instead of visiting the senior center, we visited the Boardwalk Apartments. In looking at turnout, she questioned revising the roadshow locations. Tillie asked whether we should remove senior centers from the roadshow given low AutoMARK™ roadshow turnout. Carrie added that patrons at senior centers are relatively mobile. Additionally, Joyce remarked that potential AutoMARK™ voters wouldn't remember to bring their ballot materials to senior centers. Tillie suggested using senior centers not necessarily as AutoMARK™ roadshow locations but rather as places to do general voting information and outreach during non-election times.

Berl inquired whether Clarus Eye Center, Olympia Eye Clinic or Group Health would be willing to distribute information pertaining to the AutoMARK™.

Joyce inquired whether we've ever included hospitals in the AutoMARK™ roadshow. Carrie replied that we've only ever done so upon request. Mary remarked that E1C would be more appropriate for voters in hospitals since patients wouldn't likely have their ballot materials with them. Thomasina joked that our AutoMARK™ slogan could be "BYOB"; Valerie will follow up.

Tillie inquired about bringing a laptop with E1C to Panorama. Berl suggested that there may be some initial resistance or hesitance, but with enough advance publicity there may be some E1C success.

In regards to E1C, there was lengthy discussion about laptop compatibility with screen reading software such as JAWS and Window-Eyes. Mary mentioned that E1C works with all software. Tillie reminded the group that Denise, Wesley and Patty have tested E1C but would prefer to test a larger E1C ballot. Tillie is hopeful that the Elections Division will be able to have Denise test such a ballot by next month.

VAAC PLAN:

Valerie read the 2015 VAAC plan that was presented to the committee. Mary expressed an interest in expanding the AutoMARK™ to include other alternative tools of voting (such as E1C and a mobile app). Berl remarked that he would like to participate in public presentations. Lynnette reminded the group that the VAAC Plan can be a living document and changed throughout the year. In lieu of passing the plan, Valerie will update it and email to Elections and the VAAC for approval.

MOBILE APPLICATION:

Topic shelved until next meeting due to time restriction.

Other:

Berl mentioned that it would be beneficial to meet more than once a year. Lynnette noted that when the VAAC first began, meetings were held quarterly. Berl affirmed the benefits of quarterly meetings, and the group agreed to meeting quarterly.

Joyce noted that recruitment is a priority.

Mary discussed HR 1143 (eliminating the requirement for civilian voters to return hard copies of ballots when they use the online marking tool). Mary championed the bill for the following reasons: (1) the vote's privacy is protected with the privacy sheet, and (2) the emailed ballot is a pdf rather than an "Internet vote." She explained that this will be another tool for the voters with disabilities who would prefer another option to the AutoMARK™.

The meeting adjourned at 3:09 p.m.