

Minutes
Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee
October 11, 2019

Committee Members in Attendance:

Paddy McGuire, *Mason County Auditor*

Randy Neatherlin, *Mason County Commissioner*

Amy Davis, *League of Women Voters Mason County (LWVMC)*

Becky Frankeberger, *Citizen advocate for voters with disabilities*

Pat Kevin, *Citizen advocate for deaf voters and the Hispanic community*

Guests:

Patricia Bauccio, *Governor's Committee for Disability Issues and Employment (GCDE)*

Marilyn Crandall, *Accessible Communities Advisory Subcommittee (GCDE)*

Carl Kevin Soper, *Concerned Citizen, representing Kevin Frankeberger*

Danette Brannin, *Mason Transit Authority (MTA), General Manager*

Kelly Franklin, *Washington State Department of Services for the Blind (DSB)*

Cheryl Williams, *League of Women Voters (LWVMC)*

John Piety, *Concerned citizen*

Auditor Staff:

Fina Ormond, *Election Superintendent*

Lorie Bickford, *Election Technician, Outreach*

Call to order: Paddy McGuire, Auditor and Committee chair called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m.

Introductions: Going around the table the committee members, staff, and guests introduced themselves.

Review of the agenda: Paddy explained that there would be two parts to the meeting:

1. Part one - the official annual Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee (VAAC) with the purpose of reviewing the VAAC Plan, including suggested changes, followed by a vote to adopt all agreed upon changes.
2. Part two - a presentation by two invited guests from the Governor's Committee for Disability Issues and Employment (GCDE) on Accessible Communities and the possibility of creating an Accessible Communities Advisory Committee (ACAC) in Mason County.

Part 1: VAAC official business

Fina Ormond, Election Superintendent, kicked off the meeting with a VAAC overview for our invited guests including; a definition of VAAC and its purpose. She referred to the VAAC plan, which all attendees had a copy. She explained that the VAAC Plan is our guiding document and it is reviewed and updated annually. She also pointed out the Clear Access Accessible Voting Unit (AVU) and gave a brief explanation of how it works.

Paddy explained that the plan in front of the attendees, which would be voted on by the committee members, contained changes of the following nature:

- *Clarification/semantics.* Example: disability voting device changed to Accessibility Voting Device AVU and the addition of our specific AVU device, Clear Access, and the name of our particular device, Clear Access, added
- *Changes required due to new statutes.* Example: Polling places are now called Voting Centers.
- *Changes due to the Elections Modernization Project.* The old *MyVote* online registration system has been replaced by the new statewide system *VoteWa.gov*.

Fina gave a quick overview of the plan and the new goals that were established last year, in particular the language change to the goal of creating an annual *Get Out The Vote Week* to coincide with *National Voter Registration Week*.

Paddy thanked Commissioner Neatherlin for supporting an additional staff position, increasing elections staff from two to three positions. He went on to describe what the position entails, explaining that in addition to working on the elections themselves this staff position is in charge of outreach to underrepresented populations of voters, including disabled voters. The new staff member is also bilingual, an added benefit for outreach efforts.

Fina shared accomplishments related to the plan including:

- The new Elections Department website which is more accessible and which will become even more so with planned future improvements;
- Elections Department partnership with *League of Women Voters of (LWV)* specifically recent voter registration training for volunteers who staffed voter registration tables at five sites around the county on *National Voter Registration Day (NVRD)*, September 24th.
- Program for incarcerated voters detained for misdemeanors or who are awaiting trial.

Fina also gave an update on the *VoteWa.gov* the new online statewide elections system that replaced *MyVote*.

Question/Answer/Comments before plan vote:

Patricia Bauccio of the GCDE asked about registration numbers during National Voter Registration Day.

Amy Davis, committee member from LWVMC reported that 34 voter registration forms were filled out (some updates, some Future Voters) but they made contact with 167 individuals who took their "Apple Poll," which was designed to engage Mason County residents by asking them to pick their top three local issues of concern from eight options.

Pat also asked about Mason County population and number of registered voters.

Paddy reported that our approximate county population is 66,000 with just over 40,000 registered voters.

Fina reported that during the midterm elections last year 72% of registered voters returned ballots, an impressive turnout, and that in comparison to other counties we have a relatively high voter turnout.

Amy added that LWVMC is registering a lot of High School students.

Suggestions/Requests:

- Define HAVA, ADA, and REVUP acronyms in the VAAC Plan
- Consider extended hours during the voting period other than just election day, perhaps one Saturday to make it more convenient for those disabled voters who want to use the AVU but are working
- Send copy of Updated Plan and Minutes to all members and guests via email when completed

Paddy reviewed all proposed changes to the plan out loud. A vote was taken amongst the committee members. It passed.

Becky Frankeberger noted she did not vote because she was not able to see the plan. Lorie promised her that in the future better accommodations would be made.

Part Two – Accessible Communities Advisory Committees

Paddy introduced Marilyn Crandall, Chair of the Accessible Communities Subcommittee of the Governor's Committee on Disability Issues and Employment. (GCDE)

Marilyn shared some of her background, and explained how Accessible Communities Advisory Committees (ACAC's) receive the funds that they later can use to award community grants.

Pat Baucio, vice chair of the GCDE, expanded on Marilyn's introduction giving an overview of the structure of the Committee and the role of the Accessible Communities subcommittee within the larger committee. She also described some of the various backgrounds of committee members and the extensive experience they bring to the table.

Note: For more information on what was presented please refer to the copy of the presentation given by Marilyn on the ACACs, how they are formed, and what a community can receive by deciding to form one in their county is included with these minutes.

Notable comments by the presenters:

- To date 12 of 39 counties have formed an ACAC. Some are very active, while others are not. Examples of active counties, Spokane and Clallam.
- Marilyn and Pat gave several examples of the types of grants that have been awarded to other counties, including 'Loops' for the hearing impaired (Island County). Other examples can be seen in the presentation handout.
- Pat held up the recently published Mason County booklet on mindfulness activities and suggested how the cost of producing it could have been either partially or wholly funded through an ACAC grant.
- When considering the types of projects that could be accomplished with an ACAC grant "think broadly, funds are generally approved quickly and easily."
- Accessible Communities has been in existence since 2010 but the subcommittee was formed only last year to help encourage more counties to consider forming their own ACAC as the fund hasn't been utilized as much as it could be.

Sharing of Ideas and Consideration forming an ACAC in Mason County

The ensuing open discussion was enthusiastic as committee members and guests discussed various possibilities for Mason County projects among them were:

- Updating traffic crossing signals for the blind and air conditioning in our senior living centers. (Kelly Franklin, Washington State Department of Services for the Blind)
- A pool lift for Shelton High School swimming pool (Cheryl Williams, LWVMC)

The question of how an ACAC is formed was then discussed. Paddy asked Marilyn how many of the existing ACACs started as a VAAC. Marilyn didn't know how many exactly but noted that Pierce County's ACAC evolved from their VAAC.

Commissioner Randy Neatherlin interjected at this juncture that there is "no appetite" amongst the Commissioners to take this project on. He added that he hoped that the Auditor's Office would consider taking it on as we are already doing some of this work through this VAAC.

Paddy, as Auditor, responded with some of his background and commitment to disability accessibility, mentioning his work with former Oregon Secretary of State Bill Bradbury who has Multiple Sclerosis. Paddy was in charge of the HAVA (Help America Vote Act) process in Oregon. He is both personally and professionally committed to accessible voting.

That being said, Paddy noted that he is also committed to doing things well so he has reservations about expanding the scope of this committee. He doesn't want the voting piece to get lost in the process and he reiterated that staff time is limited, particularly with the 2020 election year fast approaching.

It was suggested that Paddy and the outreach staff person, Lorie Bickford, visit Jefferson County to see how they manage their ACAC there.

Pat Bauccio suggested that "the work is done in the committee and the Auditor is "just a pass through."

Randy countered with a warning that committees can't act without county staff present to maintain public records. He emphasized that a committee acting without county staff oversight poses a liability risk to the Auditor.

Paddy asked if it would be possible to apply for grants through the existing VAAC.

Marilyn replied "No, to apply for grants requires an assurance letter from the Auditor and an official ACAC to do this.

There was some more discussion about other possible projects.

Paddy summed it up by saying "here is what we are going to do." "We will take 60 days to do our due diligence on this." That includes Paddy and Lorie making an appointment to visit Jefferson County to learn more about an existing ACAC. At the end of 60 days we will send out a summary of what we discovered and what our conclusions are.

He wants a better understanding of the time commitment and assurance that if we make the decision to expand this committee that we can do a good job. If the decision is made to do so, he reminded Randy that he will be coming to him for more support funding if necessary.

Randy followed that up by cautioning the group that if the decision were made by the Auditor to take this on, that expectations need to be realistic. They would need to start slow and remember that committee members should not be contacting the Auditor or his staff responsible for not getting things done. "I would expect that you would be lucky to have two or three meetings tops the first year."

Paddy asked if there were any more comments, concerns or questions.

Carl Kevin Soper read a prepared statement from Kevin Frankeberger. That statement is attached.

Becky Frankeberger volunteered Kevin to help with grant writing.

Paddy concluded the meeting by reminding everyone that we would have more information to everyone in attendance by December 9th.

The meeting adjourned at 11:30am

Minutes submitted by Lorie Bickford