

VAAC Meeting
March 9, 2009
5:45 Room 280

Present: Michael Rogers, Steve Peck, Denise and Burl Colley, Carrie Wack, Sandy Baxter, Lynnette Thornton and Deb Kunschik (interpreter). Patty McDonald was contacted by phone and participated via speaker phone. Apology was made on behalf of Auditor Kim Wyman who was unable to attend the meeting.

The minutes had been previously distributed and they were approved without corrections.

Under Old Business, Michael Rogers gave a run down on the Secretary of State HAVA grant meeting of February 13, 2009. He noted these grants were primarily poll site accessibility issues and noted Cowlitz received a grant to make their conference room/tabulation area more accessible.

Sandy Baxter gave a run down of the current efforts being made: Business cards with Braille imprint have been sent to the Braille Center in Vancouver, work is underway to have the 8 commercials closed-captioned and they should be available as early as next Friday, the February ballot was on the web page in ASL and audio format.

Michael asked if we had experienced any problems with ballots being stuck in our Automarks. If so he wondered if we could get the machines fixed. Sandy responded that we were not having that problem. Berl said that some of the problems in other counties were due to workers not being trained well on the machines and not knowing what to do when an issue arises.

Carrie Wack was introduced to the committee and spoke about adding as much audio, video, and ASL to our website as can. She asked the committee for better insight for need and to please send her any suggestions on how to make it more useful and noticeable on the web. She talked how she has been adding symbols to show the audio, video, and ASL part of web.

Suggestions:

- Have files not just available in PDF but also Word or Text format, since PDF does not always translate as well by Braille machine and Michael noted with his dyslexia he had problems reading PDF files. Michael indicated he used a machine called JAWS.
- Steve Peck noted it might be good to have a radio button or some other button that indicated ASL was available and not just the symbol or the link. Carrie indicated this would be easy to do.
- Steve Peck also indicated he might have a web designer resource person that he might want to refer to Carrie but he wanted to check with the person before giving out his name.
- Steve Peck also suggested the web site have something on the first page that allows the text size to be increased and/or the page converted to text, including a description of images.

- Steve also talked about a new product that was coming out for persons who were deaf and/or blind that could be plugged into any USB port and it would soon “translate” any web site into audio or text.
- Improvement in navigation was suggested. so if you clicked on the ASL symbol or radio button this would take you to all items in ASL format not just the specific link – so you could then see all the VAAC minutes, Voter Pamphlets, Sample ballots etc. in ASL format would be together rather than navigate through the web site looking for ASL symbols.

Sandy asked if the VAAC committee could forward links for equipment or such items that might be useful in web design to Carrie and herself.

HAVA Grant:

Michael asked about the voter pamphlet being on line with pictures. It was noted there were candidate pictures with the Voter Pamphlet and both were online. Michael asked about the possibility of Thurston joining with the 6 other counties that are undertaking a video pamphlet. Lynnette indicated it was her understanding that this was a pilot project and it was being done by Democracy Live.

Berl Colley suggested a Voters’ Fair on a Saturday afternoon. The fair would have an explanation of changes in voter legislation as well as invite vendors who specialize in Assistive Technology. The AutoMARK could also be displayed. The idea is to present general voter education that would draw general public but this would also expose the public to accessibility issues for people who have a disability. Berl also suggested computers be set up that displayed the web page with its links for people to see what is available on the web page. Berl noted there were two low vision fairs and they had very good turnouts with about 170 people.

Denise asked about our numbers of voters using the automarks at the assisted living and retirement centers.

Sandy responded that we only had 2 at panorama but that is why she would like for the members to help write articles in the Senior News paper to help get the word out about the machines and their use for everyone. Michael agreed that it is a machine the can be used by the general population and that we need to have the machine available at the voter fair if we have one. Sandy said that most of the facilities didn’t need the machine because it was just one issue. Berl suggested we go through the low vision group to make contact at Panorama city that we would get a better response. Sandy agreed and said we needed the VAAC members to help us with these contacts to help the numbers increase. Denise talked about the frustration in not being able to change people’s mindset about using the machines.

Sandy spoke about how the Senior News paper and the political parties will help us get more visibility.

Berl said if we get grant money we should take presentation to the tribal communities.

Sandy talked about the article in the IT transit news for when our automarks are at the transit center. She said that she had wished she had the Braille cards to hand out because she met two blind families at the center in the last election. Sandy also talked about Sahawn Murinko and the letter to the editor he wrote about the barriers for people with disabilities. Denise said she had met him and that he is the ADA coordinator for IT and on the Human Rights Commission.

All agreed that we should prepare a proposal for the voter fair. Steve asked about funding for CD's for VP. Lynnette told him that we already have the ability to create CD's. Steve made the comment of saving trees and sending out more CD's.

Berl also pointed out that we could take presentations of the automark to city council meetings to help get the word out. Lynnette said that we could try to work with John Tennis for TCTV time if we do the voter fair for some coverage.

Denise asked if we had seen other counties proposals for the HAVA money. Lynnette responded that she had asked for copies from Laurie Guerrero but had not received any copies. Then Lynnette spoke about the HAVA meeting and what proposals were accepted. Clark got 50,000 to update ADA requirements on staffed drop sites around county. Cowlitz 46,000, to remodel conference room to allow wheelchairs in the area and make processing visible. San Juan 655.00, to shorten ballot box to make accessible and add lighting. King 14,000 to employee person to manage large HAVA funds they have for new tabulation systems and such. Columbia got funding for a ballot box and light. Block of 6 counties for the video and audio pamphlet.

Denise said we should ask for money to have our boxes evaluated and made accessible.

Sandy talked about the grant and to make sure that we were going to go for funding for the voters fair and we would also look into ADA evaluations on drop boxes. It was agreed by all members.

Meeting adjourned 7:05