

PIERCE COUNTY DISABILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, August 26, 2008 1:00 – 3:00 PM. TACID Center, Room 21
(Resolutions passed are underlined)

Committee Members in Attendance:

Wayne Terry, Dan Eberle, Christine Seymour, Jena Floyd, Robert Wardell, Michael Corsini, Alice Stephenson

Committee Members Excused:

Penny Condoll, Jacki Pierce Droge, Chris Jones, Marlys Tron, Dianna Carlson, Linda Lohdefincks, Vicki Imholt, Ron Stone,

Others in Attendance:

Pat McCarthy, Lori Augino, Mary Schmidtke, Candy Yarbrough from Pierce County Office of the Auditor, Trina Forest and Sara Stiltner from Center for Independence, Chris Ensor and Mary Beth Quincy from TACID, Deborah, Mark, Heather

1. Welcome and Introductions

Christine Seymour called the meeting to order and made some opening remarks.

OLD BUSINESS

2. Approve Minutes of July 8, 2008 Meeting

Correct Linda L.'s name.

Committee moved to approve. The Committee voted unanimously in favor to approve last month's meeting minutes as amended.

3. Primary Election

Pierce County gave a brief progress report about the primary elections. Pierce County trained about 350 poll workers for the primary elections. Mary Beth Quincy, from TACID, conducted a disability training session. Pierce County said the training was good experience for poll workers. There will be additional training for general election. Pat McCarthy publicly thanked TACID for their work. Pierce County confirmed that the election went well. There was a lower turnout than expected (40% percent turnout, expected for 43%). Pierce County anticipates a huge turn out for fall. Forty percent is considered high for most counties in Washington. There is one write-in race, unique for this election, for the legislative seat in the 28th district. Once the write-ins are precincted, then there could be a republican opponent for the democratic.

There were two new polling places, at TACID and CFI. Additional training session for hands on training for the poll workers assigned to TACID and CFI. The training occurred at TACID. The training went through mechanics and stretched out over a 4-week period. For the primaries, there were 12 voters at TACID and 8 voters at CFI. Pierce County considers a smaller number desirable for any pilot program. The poll worker costs for both locations was \$970. The wireless connection cost is 140 for both cards and \$100 a month. Pierce County can use the wireless cards for other events in the field.

The County listed what went well for the two polling locations. At TACID most everything went well. The staff was very helpful and the internet connection was strong. There were demonstration machines at both locations so voters could train on the machine before voting. Several people who tried the demonstration machine didn't vote, as they probably submitted an absentee ballot. At CFI, a number of voters dropped off absentee ballots. The county identified some areas for improvement. There could be an additional sandwich board at CFI, so it has same visibility as TACID. Poll workers have already been trained and worked with TACID on a recruitment effort. Some were some Pierce County staff at TACID because they knew about the wireless issues.

The sandwich board outside the polling locations says "vote here", not "drop your ballot here" that is displayed on Election Day from 7am - 8 pm. The committee recommended advertising on the sign that voters drop their ballot off at any polling area and posting the sign at TACID during the week leading up to the elections to alert people that it will be a drop off and voting location. TACID is looking to partner with TCC to promote voting at TACID.

The wireless connection weakened throughout day at CFI. Pierce County staff spoke with CFI about using their wireless as a failsafe. Another option is for the poll workers to use cell to call the offices in the event that the wireless goes down. At both locations, many voters said that they didn't know that TACID and CFI were polling places, despite the announcements. Pierce County asked committee for other ways to get the word out to the voters. TACID and CFI have better access to audiences. TACID and CFI will advertise on website or email blasts or add on to other mailings and direct voters to PC site for additional information.

The county offers fifteen express booths. These are manned, drive up booths where the voters gives their ballot to a person. There are teams of people that man the booths from Friday before election up to 8pm Election Day. The express booths have signs that say "drop your ballot off here". Once TACID and CFI have drop off boxes, will have host a similar sign. The committee asked if there could sign outside CFI and TACID that says "accessible voting here." All polling places have an accessible machine.

Often, there are more absentee ballots dropped off at the sites than actual votes cast. The county aims to make improvements at TACID and CFI before November. They passed out a survey to the voters. Fifteen voters completed them - 2 first time voters, 3 absentee, 12 poll voters. One said while she/he liked the new ballot, he/she would still use absentee ballot so he/she could take their time.

Rainer communication did come here to film Pat, and Chris, and Tara Smoot (a new poll worker). Smoot shared her polling experience for the camera. Tacoma Weekly wrote an article about HAVA project.

A committee member said, via email, that he thought the touch screen was working pretty well. It asked yes/no questions. Overall, he was pleased with procedure. The committee was concerned about mobile security and asked the county what safeguards are put in place. The screens have memory cards that are physically taken from one to another, there is no connectivity between polling booth and internet. Connectivity is just to look up registration. If a voter came to TACID then went somewhere else to vote, the poll voter would provisionally vote at TACID, then the county would check to see if the voter voted somewhere else and are eligible to vote. The county would never turn someone away. The county will show TACID and CFI as polling sites on their website before general election. The Committee asked if it's possible to use headphones and big screen, and the county said it wasn't. The committee suggested changing the wording on the ballot from "cast" to something more basic "send."

Christine called discussion to close. Other input can be sent to them via email.

4. Locked Ballot Boxes

Pierce County gave a brief progress report on installation of the locked ballot boxes. At the last meeting, the committee recommended to install the boxes at the malls near the transit centers. Unfortunately, the malls (Tacoma, Lakewood, and South Hill) are not interested in hosting the ballot boxes, due to concern about liability potential with people walking and driving up to the boxes, and potentially the trucks could hit them. With drive up and walk up, and that drivers of trucks will hit it. Pierce County received permission from TACID to host a box. Another ballot box will be at the election center or annex. Originally, CFI was in consideration for hosting a box, but CFI is now thinking about moving. Additionally, there isn't a good spot on that area that would be appropriate for drive up and wheelchair access. Pierce County will most likely not install a ballot box at CFI.

For now want to get five purchased and sited. The county is looking at libraries that are not currently used as polling places. The county asked the committee to advise on the accessibility of libraries. Most libraries most likely already have surveillance cameras since already a book drop off. The committee suggested South Hill, Spanaway, Summit, Steilacoom, Gig Harbor and Lakewood libraries.

The Lakewood library is close to CFI and Lakewood town center. HSDC has had a good working relationship with the Pierce County libraries. Gig harbor has a drive up too. The committee also suggested medical centers, such as Allenmore and Saint Josephs. The committee stated that the pastor at Champion Center would be willing to work with the County. Champion Center has a security staff.

5. Polling Staff Disability Training

Mary Beth Quinsey, TACID, gave a brief progress report. The topic was covered during Pierce County's progress report of the election. Mary Beth had a nice time as she found people to be very receptive and asked questions. The committee asked if there was there any role playing? There was some role-playing, though it was fairly minimal.

6. Polling Site Accessibility Report

Trina Forest, CFI, gave a brief progress report.

The project was really exciting. Trained volunteers went out with staff with checklist and equipment and evaluated 56 of Pierce County's polling stations. Volunteers enjoyed conducting the evaluations and wanted to do more. Overall the evaluations showed that the polling locations are in good shape. Most of the feedback was concerned signage or propping doors.

Only one polling location was not recommended to continue as a polling location. The location was accessible from parking lot to front door, but then approached a flight of stairs going down to the polling room.

Pierce County said they have election disability signage they use on Election Day and they generally deploy 10-15 signs per location. They physically create accessible location spots on Election Day. CFI volunteers were not able to see this signage, as the evaluations were not conducted on a day when the sites had signage from the county. Some polling locations didn't have room for an accessible van. The committee is concerned that people won't follow parking spaces. Pierce County also puts out blue wheelchair sign to make some parking spaces bigger. To Pierce County's knowledge, no one has come to them saying they had trouble dropping their lift.

CFI couldn't reach anyone at Waller Road Grange to conduct the evaluation. A committee member shared a story about the difficulty voting with Waller Road Grange. CFI will send the ADA specialist to follow up with Waller Road Grange. Three locations were problematic enough to send the ADA specialist out to evaluate.

During November, it may be too cold to prop open the doors. For the locations where the door is too heavy or the handle inaccessible, there could be a greeter who could help open door for heavy doors.

These polling locations should have something in writing sent to polling locations to make recommendations. Pierce County will respond to report.

Committee recommended that until all locations are 100% accessible, the county should put out a disclaimer that tells voter to go to TACID or CFI for complete access.

7. Community Voting Trainings

Mary Beth Quinsey, TACID, gave a brief progress report.

For the grant, CFI and TACID are required to host 15 voting education sessions in the community for disabled groups. Topics should include voter registration, eligibility, the lifecycle of a cast ballot, and counting techniques. So far, TACID has eight disabled groups that will host trainings. TACID sent out letters to many different organizations. The participating organizations are Centerforce, the blind peer support group, bipolar support group, self-esteem, Point Defiance Center Center, Frank Toby Jones, AIDS Foundation, and depression support group. Two classes will be scheduled by HSDC. Mary Beth put out request for suggestions on other locations or groups. The committee mentioned that several groups meet at TACID, and asked they could combine trainings? Mary Beth had asked about that, but groups' meetings are already scheduled for their certain times during the week, and the groups did not want to combine them. The training doesn't have to be targeted towards an already established group.

The HSDC trainings will be a two part series that focus on the deaf community. The first part will relay voter information for the general community (how to get started, registering to vote). The second part will focus on education about the ballot itself. It will be a two-hour workshop. HSDC will do a PowerPoint presentation to introduce many of all the candidates on the ballot. For the second hour, interpreters will be available to address issues in the voter's pamphlet. The value in that would be to make visual and linguistic appropriate to those will not benefit from reading the politicians' language. HSDS will try to get invited to the Hearing Loss of Tacoma meeting.

The committee suggested People First and Huzzah. TACID will follow up to see if they have already contacted them. The committee asked if they contacted all the senior centers, such as Lighthouse or Beacon, or veteran centers.

TACID asked the county what would happen if they don't have 15 groups willing to host training? The County said that 15 is the number to aim for, but it is okay if it makes sense to only have 10. There is \$7350 budgeted for the 15 trainings, with \$1000 for interpreters, and \$2000 for the two public forums. The money goes towards staff time more than anything. The County proposed any extra could funnel into interpreters. TACID suspects that there may be money leftover from the mileage reimbursement allotment, possibly \$300-650 leftover.

8. Other Old Business

A committee member asked the County why there is not a voting site at Newport Village anymore. Pierce County stated they have consolidated the polling locations from 197 to 57.

NEW BUSINESS

9. Brochures

The County distributed a draft of the brochure to the committee for discussion and input. CFI attempted to create a draft of the brochure, but there was no other model in the state to use as a foundation. The idea is have the brochure be multiple pages, back to back. The theme is "It's Easy as 1, 2, 3", with the first step as registration, the second a preparing to vote, and the third as submitting the vote. The majority of the pamphlet explains the machine, either audio or visual, instructions. The committee suggested including information on the drop boxes, listing all the polling sites, contact information, disability logos, and large print. There is money for alternative formats, such as CD or PDF. Sight impaired people would want a CD that could access with Jaws. Pierce County is aiming to get this into the public's hands pretty quickly. CFI will forward the brochure to the committee. The committee should send their feedback to Lori Augino within the week.

10. Public Forum

There will be two forums. The first is a public forum on October 1st at Tacid. CFI and TACID are inviting candidates to speak or have materials available at the forum. The forum will have a fair atmosphere for the first part. Food will be available from 6pm on. After food, guests will go into the big room for the formal presentations. Michael Rogers is willing to give a speech to share a personal story and talk about why it is important to vote. David Lord would also be willing to speak. CFI is looking for an emcee to the event. The committee suggested John Evens, from DVR in Seattle. The second forum will be after the general election, collecting feedback from the community about on how the election went.

CFI distributed a format for event and draft flyer for input from the committee. The flyer should be worded so those with will accessibility issues will know the forum will address their concerns, while also attracting members of the broader community. The committee recommended including the strip logo. TACID suggested to include a statement at the bottom of the flyer to list the include accessibility services such as close captioned CART and interpreters.

The county proposed the possibility of restructuring the grant so the second forum is not in person but instead conducted as an email, survey, etc. The

committee discouraged relying on an email survey since a lot of people don't have email would want to give feedback.

Lori Augino will send an updated PC and disability logo to go on the website.

11. Other New Business

The committee did not bring up any other new business.

12. Dates and Times for Next Meetings.

The meeting time for the next email will be planned via email.