Santa Cruz County
Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee
Thursday, November 20, 2014
10 a.m. - 701 Ocean St. Basement – Cafeteria

Minutes

I.   In attendance: Veronica Elsea, Peter Heylin, Michael Bush, James Davies, Helen Ruiz-Thomas, Gail Pellerin, Lynn Stipes

II.   Elections

A. November 4, 2014

There were not many complaints reported for this election. We had a Watsonville polling site that needed temporary lighting. Darkness creates challenges for accessibility. There were two visually impaired voters that came into the Elections office on Election Day. One requested audio touch screen and the other voter assist. There were two voters that called outreach services requesting audio ballot information. Helen mailed them out. This discussion led to the quality of the computer generated audio voice. Would it be better to get a human voice on audio ballot? Veronica suggested yes, however, it is necessary to make sure that whomever speaks is very clear and does not speak with an accent. The biggest challenge that has taken place at the polls is when the audio is not already set up and voters have to wait for that process. Gail suggests using pictures similar to what we use in the blue binders on setting up the audio. Jim suggests the role play technique used in training seems to work very well and maybe that can get introduced into the EVS training.

B. Changes in Elections Staff

James Davies new Program Coordinator – Polling Sites & Operations Center was introduced to the group. His first day was Sept. 15th started during surveying. He has a background in accessibility since 1990.

III.   Polling Places

A. Polling place canvassing and resurveys

Jim reports surveying activities led to extensive discussion about slope determination and path of travel requirements. Support staff that surveyed poll sites gained a better understanding in this area. Jim brought examples of surveys and blue binders to share with the group. This discussion crossed over and into binder revamp project.

B. Site specific binder revamp project

The blue binders are site specific for set up and instruction. Inspectors are required to review the binder. The biggest challenge reported back is that multiple precinct polling sites receive one binder to share amongst the team there are no separate copies to distribute. In those cases, inspectors receive a letter instructing them to coordinate with the other precinct inspectors on

site. Most inspectors will follow the instructions and this procedure seems to work.

Binder project should be thought of as a work in progress. There will always be necessary changes relevant to each election. Staff that has been working on this project was asked to identify ways and suggestions for improvement. Having dedicated focus to this project assists them in having a better understanding to determine how we can improve this procedure. Discussions about use of technology vs paper took place. Lynn asked if it would be helpful for inspectors to have access to the information in the blue binder on our county website. This would give them an opportunity to review set up requirements prior to Election Day.

We reviewed and discussion of Dominican Oaks accessible parking and the restrictions they place on elections to not use theirs. This continues to cause challenges for us to create our own accessible parking on Election Day. Gail suggested we keep Dominican Oaks Independent Living specific for tenants and we use an alternate location for the general community.

IV. State VAAC

A. Survey of voters with disabilities

Gail announced the SOS is circulating a survey for voters with disabilities related to accessibility. She is forwarding and asked for the group to support participation.

B. ASL Voter Guide for November

Discussion took place of changes in format for the Voter Information Guide provided by SOS.

C. COVR redesign

COVR is working in collaboration with the State and Dept. of Rehabilitation on being more user friendly and reliable. It looks as though the trend is moving the future to more on line voter registration. We are still seeing areas for improvement with incomplete information in required fields and voter signatures.

D. NVRA progress

Helen has been outreaching to existing NVRA partners and updating information. We are seeing improvement in reporting, distribution and accessibility compliance. Next year there will be additional attention to NVRA compliance and stronger collaborations with the State to provide required annual agency staff training. The San Andreas Regional Center has posted the register to vote button on their site.

E. Election Day complaints

The SOS track and reports on accessibility complaints, most are about poll workers than access. The other top two include, voter registration and polling place locations.

V.   Multilingual Services Program

> *Votescount.com the county website now has register to vote buttons in four languages, Chinese, Tagalog, Spanish and English. There continues to be staff available on Election Day at the county office for translations in Tagalog, Mandarin and Spanish. On Election Day we had two Tagalog language translators in the office and we had four out of five Mandarin speaking poll workers at UCSC. Spanish speaking poll workers were assigned throughout the county.*

VI.   Guidelines on accessibility in all-mail ballot elections

> *In the November election the county had a 19% voter turnout at the polls. Trends moving into the future of elections seems to be what is called voting centers. More people are talking about them. Veronica asked how that will work for visually impaired. Gail explained that voting centers host the equipment necessary for all types of access.*

VII.   Pick meeting dates for 2015

> *Meeting will take place every 3rd Thursday of the month on a quarterly basis, February 19th, May 21st, August 20th, November 19th.*

VIII.   2015 Election Schedule

> *We are holding a special election in February for CFD No. 2 (Lompico Water) and typically districts scheduled for November end up with appointments to offices instead of elections.*