

Santa Cruz County Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee

Thursday, March 16, 2017

10:30 a.m.

701 Ocean St., 3rd Floor Elections Office

Minutes

In Attendance: Gail Pellerin, James Davies, Veronica Elsea, Lynn Stipes

Gail reported that of the 857 registered voters in Santa Cruz County involved in the March 7 Special Election – Lakeside Joint School District tax measure, there was a 59% voter turnout. There was one touchscreen voter and 4 provisional voters. One voter has expressed a possibility of a lawsuit because he believes voters were unable to vote because of the road closures in the area. Gail and Lynn both express that offers were made to residents by our office to meet people or hike to homes of those who were unable to cast their vote because of road closures. Also, all voters were mailed a ballot.

For the upcoming November 7, 2017 UDEL Election, there are 6 special districts currently scheduled for November. Most of these districts usually end up appointed in lieu rather than going to election. The county may be interested in doing an election this year. They missed the March 10th deadline for a June election and they could possibly go in November. The other possible date would be August 29th but that is an all mail ballot election date and it will need to be determined if they can qualify for all mail ballot.

Jim reported that he wants to go through all of the audio units and see which ones work best and be sure to send the best ones out to the places that we know they get used. It seems that some of the audio units work better than others.

Gail reported that our entire electronic voting system is old and is in need of being replaced. We are hopeful that the current system will get us through the 2018 June and November elections. The reasons to wait on getting new equipment are, that there is not currently any new systems certified for use in California and we are waiting to see what the new laws regarding vote centers will require.

Veronica offered to write up a list of what to do when certain problems occur while using the audio voting unit. Gail said that would be very helpful and we could share it with other counties that use the same system as we do.

Jim showed a spreadsheet of the different polling sites we currently use and what mitigations are needed for each site. The polling sites are improving as facilities and have been upgrading and adding accessible features, such as new ramps. Jim explained that most sites still need Van Accessible parking. He suggested that we offer to give one of the Van Accessible metal parking signs that we have to each polling site that needs one. This might offer some incentive to get more sites to have a Van Accessible space. We all agreed.

The State VAAC was supposed to meet yesterday (3/15/17) but the meeting was cancelled. The state VAAC has not had a meeting in 2017. They sent out applications to recruit members and have received 25 back. They will be selecting members from these applicants. It is unknown if Gail will be chosen for the State VAAC this year. Also a concern is the new federal budget proposal will have a huge impact on California.

Gail gave the following legislative update:

SB 450: Voter's Choice Act & accessible vote-by-mail ballot –mandates that an accessible VBM system be in place for the new Vote Center model. There are currently 4 systems being reviewed: Democracy Live – Secure Select 1.0, Dem Tech – Ballot DNA 360 Voting 2.0, Prime III – Prime III, and Votem – ABVote 4.01.

Gail showed us a new envelope design with holes on either side of the signature line to help a person who is blind find where to sign on their vote by mail ballot envelope. Veronica tried it and was successful. We all agreed it was a good improvement.

SB 589 in regards to voters who are under conservatorship and how they can get the right to vote back if it has been lost in court proceedings. Gail will put more information up on our website.

Helen was unavailable to give a report on outreach opportunities coming up. Gail mentioned that High School voter registration weeks are coming up at the end of April and Helen is working on scheduling that. Veronica offered to be called to attend and help with outreach events especially to promote voting for the disabled. She also shared how she talked to students at UCSC about organizing to be ready to vote in the next election. Check their voter status, are they going to vote here or back home? Do they need to ask for a vote by mail ballot? She suggested having workshops and other outreach at the campus before elections to avoid all the kids coming in to vote on Election Day who are not registered here. Gail explained a little about the Conditional Voter Registration (CVR) and that we will have CVR center at our office, in Watsonville and on campus in future elections.

Gail expressed concern for our VAAC Membership and is going to start a campaign to get new members. She will develop and launch a VAAC website and will create an application for membership that we can distribute. We hope to have this done by next week and have applications due the middle of April.

The change in name from Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee (VAAC) to Voting and Language Accessibility Committee (VALAC) was discussed and it was decided to stay with VAAC.

Gail reported on the Future of California Elections March 9 Conference. She sat on a panel with 3 other people. There is a power point presentation available for anyone who request it. Gail will email a copy to Veronica. There was discussion on the top reasons for not voting; it's too hard, it's too complicated, can't get to the polls, don't know how,

Future Agenda Items:

Gail will be attending a meeting on Sunday from 2-3:30 at Garfield Church on Ranked Choice Voting.

Jim and Lynn are to look into where else to put drop boxes for VBM ballots for future elections and report back.

Remaining **Meeting dates in 2017:**

Thursday, June 15

Thursday, September 14

Thursday, December 21