



MEETING MINUTES

Benton County Accessible Communities Advisory Committee (ACAC)

July 16, 2020

The meeting of the Benton County Accessible Communities Advisory Committee was held by Skype at 2:00 pm on Thursday, July 16, 2020. Present at the meeting were committee members Brenda Chilton-Chair, Matt Nash-Vice-Chair, Amanda Hatfield (County Elections Manager), Luz Rudd (Chaplain for Benton County Corrections), Shyanne Palmus (Communications Coordinator-Commissioners), Teresa Payne, Matt West, and Deidra Beck (Committee Coordinator).

Brenda Chilton opened the meeting.

As the first order of business, Jim Bischoff, Program Specialist for Home & Community Services/Aging and Long-Term Support Administration was introduced as our guest speaker. Jim shared with the committee a bit of his history of working to help persons in the disabled community gain employment through the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. Recognizing the need for more networking of information, Jim's agency decided to launch their first ACCESS Tri-Cities event in 2014. ACCESS Tri-Cities (Allying Companies, Communities, and Employees with Skills for Success) is an all-day event where local representatives of many businesses and service providers can link with people with disabilities. The purpose of this event is so that they can gather together to learn from each other ways toward helping to increase the awareness and promote the employment of people with disabilities. With their theme, "Building Bridges and Breaking Down Barriers", they are working to remove barriers for those with disabilities to gain access to educational and employment opportunities while also increasing the understanding and knowledge of employers toward those job seekers. During this 'free to all' annual event, they feature keynote speakers, host two-hour trainings, and award those local employers that have done an outstanding job employing the disabled in the Tri-Cities area. Although this event is normally held in October each year, due to the current restrictions of social gathering in respect to COVID19, this year's event will be held in April of 2021. Jim expressed that he is very pleased and proud of what they have been able to do with this event and how it has grown and improved year to year. He noted that they have become

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well connected throughout the nation and especially with other ACCESS events in the Seattle area.

Brenda asked whether Jim could see us connecting with this event and if there were areas that we could participate in such a way that was rewarding for both. Jim stated that one of their greatest needs is for sponsorship, but he was also hopeful that we would want to find a way to partner with them. Brenda recommended that our participation should begin on an observational point for the first time. This way, we could learn and see the opportunities for partnership more clearly after we experience it. She invited Jim to keep us informed about their ACCESS event so that we could plan to attend and learn how we can play a roll in their future events. Jim invited our ACAC to attend and will send Deidra more information as the next ACCESS Tri-Cities event draws nearer next April.

Matt West questioned wither ACCESS Tri-Cities had a Facebook page. Jim affirmed that they did, yet, they are still developing it. He will send a link to Deidra when it is completed.

For the agenda item regarding the Site Evaluations, Deidra reported that while the PHS Football stadium evaluation plans are on-hold, we are not giving up on the possibility. It will just have to wait until there is much more clarity of what it looks like when we finally progress toward Phase 3 of Washington State’s Safe Start. We do still plan to first schedule with the County’s Service Building on Wiser Parkway.

Matt Nash reported that the Governor’s Committee on Disability Issues & Employment is putting a stay on any funding for ACAC projects right now due to the financial constraints that COVID19 has wrought on departmental budgets.

Amanda Hatfield updated the committee on the upcoming elections and #VoteReady2020, Benton County’s Election media campaign. Deidra took the committee on a ‘virtual’ tour via Skype of the new temporary Voting Center that has been opened to safely serve Benton County voters in the Tri-Cities area.

Matt Nash had a couple of additional items he wanted to bring up to the committee. He had spoken with the Building Official for the City of Kennewick-Building Safety

Division/Community Planning, Tony Ostoja, and believes that he would be an interesting guest speaker for our meetings. Deidra made note and explained that she would reach out to him for next year since we are scheduled out for speakers through the end of this year.

At the Governor's Committee meeting, Matt had visited with Marsha Cutting, Coordinator of Kitsap County's ACAC. She is wanting to put together an all state ACAC meeting on Skype. Matt will send the information to Deidra.

Matt Nash also noted that it is the 30th anniversary for the ADA law. They had planned a gala event but will instead host it virtually. They had requested one minute or less recorded messages from anyone, disabled or not, that has been impacted by the ADA law.

Our next meeting is scheduled for August 20th, 2020, at 2:00 p.m. We fully expect that it will be a Skype meeting again. Deidra will send the meeting invites out to all members one week prior to that date.

Because Brenda had to leave the meeting early due to other commitments, Matt Nash, Vice-Chair, adjourned the meeting at 3:05 p.m.