



MEETING MINUTES
Benton County Accessible Communities Advisory Committee (ACAC)
June 18, 2020

The meeting of the Benton County Accessible Communities Advisory Committee was held by Skype at 2:00 pm on Thursday, June 18, 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), Judith Davis, Gretchen Hormel, Teresa Payne, Matt West, and Deidra Beck (Committee Coordinator).

Brenda Chilton opened the meeting.

As the first agenda item, Deidra updated the committee about the speakers scheduled for the remainder of the 2020 year. Sheila Turner with Edith Bishel Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired was originally scheduled to speak at our June 18, 2020, meeting, but due to the restriction to Skype meetings, she was unable to join us. Scheduled for July 16, 2020 is Jim Bischoff, Program Specialist for Home & Community Services/Aging and Long-Term Support Administration. For the meeting of August 20, 2020, Dona Tracy with ARC of the Tri-Cities has agreed to be our speaker, and on October 15, 2020, Paul Singer, Executive Director, Tri-Cities Residential Services will join us. Brenda reminded the committee that the primary purpose of having guest speakers was to educate us about what they do and how we could work in coordination with them. Because we are in the infancy of our projects, the hope is that through inviting speakers, we can identify potential organizations and projects that we can partner together with.

Shyanne briefly discussed the completion of our first project, the Benton County ACAC website. By linking it with Benton County, she was able to develop and accomplish it quickly. She invited members of the committee to feel free to let her know if they thought of something that would be beneficial to add to it. Shyanne requested that Deidra Beck send her the newly developed Site Evaluation Check list so that it could be added to the website.

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Deidra presented the new Site-Evaluation that had been developed and emailed to the committee members prior to this meeting. It had been requested, that due to the inability to meet and vote on it in person, the committee members would vote through email. Currently there had been five (5) approval votes. Brenda added her vote in favor. Gretchen and Theresa both mentioned that they did not think that they had received it, so Deidra agreed to email it to them for their review and vote. Deidra informed the committee that due to the closure of schools, it was not a convenient time to schedule the anticipated evaluation of the Prosser High School Football Stadium. It was agreed that it would be postponed and addressed again after the schools are in full operation and/or Bryan Bailey, the requestor of the evaluation, is able to coordinate it with us. As had been previously recommended, it was discussed whether we should instead reach out to Benton County and offer to evaluate the newly constructed Public Service Building for ADA compliance and accessibility. Brenda reminded us that while the county is still in Phase 1 of the Safe Start Plan, we should wait until it is evident that we have clearly progressed to Phase 3 and pursue the possibility at that time.

Brenda discussed that getting set up with grant money for our committee's projects is a bit of a hurdle. She is reaching out the Budget Finance Office for assistance between now and August and hopes to get us set up with approval for \$30,000.

Shyanne had contacted Brenda previously to ask whether we needed to be concerned that our public meetings were not available to the public now that we are having to hold them through Skype. Brenda stated that when we initially formed, she asked the Prosecuting Attorney whether we needed to follow the Open Public Meetings Act. At that time, the opinion of the PA was that we didn't need to, but it was recommended that we do what we could to be open to the public. The question was raised about whether we could make our Skype meetings public much like the Commissioners meetings. Deidra agreed to consult with the Benton County IT department about that possibility. Brenda suggested two steps that we could take:

1. Make every effort to make our meetings public. Possibly, we could figure out a way where interested parties can call in and join us virtually.
2. We should go before the Board of Commissioners at one of their public meetings and give a short presentation of what we are doing or have a consensus to do.

This way we can share our intentions publicly and give the board the opportunity to give their consent for us to move forward.

She said that she believed that if we do these two things, we should be in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act. Brenda expressed appreciation to Shyanne for bringing this important matter to her attention.

Matt West questioned whether once we had budget money, would we have a situation that if we do not use all of it, we would lose it? Brenda said that she did not think so. She agreed that there are sometimes 'use or lose' problems with budget money, but that does not necessarily apply to grant money unless there is a criterion that states it must be used by a certain expiration date.

Brenda presented the Benton County Election plans for the coming Federal Election cycle. The slogan #VoteReady2020 was developed to reach out to the community and strongly encourage them to get ready by making sure that they were registered and that their registration was up to date. This way, voters can be ensured that they will receive their ballot through the mail and be able to vote safely from home. In response to the current COVID19 crisis, Elections is making some significant changes and additions to their regular election processes. They are launching an aggressive media campaign and are leasing a very spacious off-site temporary Voting Center that will allow the ability to socially distance the large number of citizens that come for voting assistance (registering, ballot replacement, etc.), especially in the last few days before election. All of the offices will be set up for social distancing and limiting the number that they will assist at one time. Deidra added that one of the great benefits of the temporary Voting Center was that it has many Disabled Parking spaces that will enable them to provide Curbside service to those that are elderly or vulnerable to the virus. The committee was encouraged to help by sharing the message Act Early-Vote Safely as well as share that any with special needs will be accommodated with safety precautions on their behalf.

Our next meeting is scheduled for July 16, 2020, at 2:00 p.m. If on that date, we are still in Phase 1 of Governor Inslee's Safe Start Plan, we will continue to meet by Skype meetings.

Deidra again invited the committee members that if any of them are having difficulty with Skype, to reach out to her before the meeting, and she would provide them assistance.

Brenda Chilton adjourned the meeting at 3:00 p.m.