



MEETING MINUTES
Benton County Accessible Communities Advisory Committee (ACAC)
November 19, 2020

The meeting of the Benton County Accessible Communities Advisory Committee was held by WebEx at 2:00 p.m. on Thursday, November 19, 2020. Present at the meeting were committee members Brenda Chilton, Chair, Matt Nash, Vice-Chair, Amanda Hatfield (County Elections Manager), Judith Davis, Teresa Payne, Gretchen Hormel, and Deidra Beck (Committee Coordinator). Rene Rojas, (Benton County Elections System Supervisor) and assisting us with our WebEx virtual and public access was Cody Shelton from Benton County Information Technologies.

Brenda Chilton opened the meeting at 2:02 p.m. and asked each attending member to introduce themselves.

Because of technical difficulties in our October meeting, Rene Rojas returned to share a video demonstrating the AVU (Accessible Voting Units) Benton County has available in each of the voting centers located in Prosser, Richland, Kennewick, and this year, at the WSU Tri-Cities. Rene explained that these voting units from Clear Ballot are very user friendly and, he believes, the best of their kind available. They are basically an electronic pen allowing anyone that desires to use this method to complete their ballot electronically. However, these machines are primarily for assisting those that may have a disability which makes voting a paper ballot very difficult. The AVU has features that provide puff and blow for those that are unable to voice their choices, sound and earphones for those that are unable to view their choices, and screen color and resolution adjustment capabilities for those that have visual impairments. After viewing the video together, Brenda asked whether anyone had any thoughts as to how we could improve on informing the public that we have these machines available. Judith asked as to whether Edith Bishel for the Blind has been informed about them. Brenda responded that they were informed and aware about the machines Benton County had prior to these, but that they should be reminded of this available service. Deidra suggested that before the next elections approach, we could perhaps contact the media to spotlight the AVU's and demonstrate their capabilities of assistance for the disabled community. Brenda suggested that promoting this to the public

would be a good future project. Matt Nash asked whether there was an electronic application available through these devices to use at home. Brenda stated that she believes that VoteWa hopes to develop just such a feature, but that because VoteWa is still in its infancy, so to speak, the accessibility assistance feature has not yet been approached. All agreed that this should be kept in mind for discussion and future action.

Before moving to the next agenda item, Deidra mentioned reminders from Cody, IT, that before we each join the WebEx meeting, we should select “remove background noise” as we choose our sound settings. Cody also recommends that if anyone re-joins the meeting using another device (phone or computer) because the first was unsuccessful, it’s important to be sure that the speakers and microphone are disabled in the previously used device. In addition, Deidra shared an email from Cody with links for a few WebEx training videos that may be helpful. These will be sent to all members with this meeting’s minutes.

Deidra shared a spreadsheet that lists each committee member and their term durations. On December 31, 2020, we will have six (6) committee members whose terms will expire. These members are: Kyle Bosley, Brenda Chilton, Judith Davis, Gretchen Hormel, Shyanne Palmus, and Teresa Payne. After reaching out to each of these members individually, Deidra reported that all have consented to return for another term with the exception of Brenda. With her regrets, she again informed the committee that she is unable to continue with ACAC, but that Amanda Hatfield has consented to filling her position. Deidra will prepare a Resolution to present before the Commissioner’s Board for approval of Amanda’s appointment to the committee and the renewal of the five expiring terms. In order to establish even rotation, Amanda’s term will be for a one-year term while the returning five will be for two-year terms. Deidra reported that Mari Clark has also submitted her resignation from the committee. Because of conflicting schedules, she is unable to attend the ACAC meetings. All members were encouraged to reach out for new prospects and invite them to apply for this open position. Because Brenda will be stepping down from her position as Chair, the committee will need to elect a new Chair once the new year begins. Matt Nash has stated his willingness to step in as the new Chair, if elected, but invites all others to consider this position. This will open both the Chair and Vice-Chair positions, so Brenda encouraged all members to consider their interest and choice and be ready to vote on these in our January 2021 meeting.

Deidra noted that she has followed up with her promise to reach out to Darla Rhodes, Dave Reynolds, and Elaine Stefanowicz. Darla Rhodes was mentioned to the committee by Donna Tracy, Arc of the Tri-Cities, when she was our guest speaker in August. Donna had heard that Darla had been working on an electronic application that would rate autistic friendly restaurants. In contacting Darla, Deidra learned that the application that she is helping to develop is not for autistic needs only. This application, found on www.theabilityapp.com, actually addresses a broad spectrum of special needs and features that help anyone with a limitation to find a business facility that is accessible friendly. Deidra shared this website to the members over WebEx and will send the link to this website with the November meeting minutes. Donna reported that she joined the 'team' to help with their social media platform development and project planning, and they are very near to taking it live. After explaining to her what ACAC is and describing our new Site Evaluation Checklist, she was very excited to learn more about us. She hopes to discover ways that we could work together with her in their development of their application and our work with our evaluation list in this local community. Darla has agreed to come and join us as our guest speaker for our meeting in January 2020. Because Deidra has not received any response from Dave Reynolds, Coordinator for Access4AllSpokane, she reached out to Spokane County's Auditor for contact information of someone else with Spokane County's ACAC. She was given the name of John Lemus, Vice-Chair to Spokane's ACAC, and has contacted him by email. Once she receives a response from him, Deidra will try to arrange for someone from their ACAC to join us as a guest speaker in 2021. In follow-up to the invitation to be a part of the ACAC All County Virtual Meeting with the GCDE, Deidra checked with Elaine Stefanowicz as to the status of this plan. Elaine reported that they do not have a date yet for the meeting and are giving the new AC committee chair a chance to acclimate to her position before pressing forward.

Another agenda item that Deidra wanted to present to the committee was regarding Ed Carter with Ablefutures.org. Ed had sent an email request asking our ACAC to consider posting an article he was creating that would provide advice and direction to disabled citizens that may be interested in running for a governmental office. Deidra offered to share his article, once completed, with the committee for review and their decision of whether it should be posted on our web page. She sent this article to all committee

members for review prior to this meeting, and virtually shared it with all in attendance. Brenda followed with her thoughts and concerns. She stated that she was hesitant to post Mr. Carter's article because it appears that his is a for-profit business, and she advises that it is best to be careful about appearing to promote an individual company as a government connected entity. Legal counsel has advised her, as Auditor, to not include private business links and posts because of the need of equal opportunity for all, and it would be difficult to post every request. To be clear, Brenda stated that the ACAC page is separate from the Auditor website, and therefore may not be subject to the same issue. It is up to the committee to discuss and decide whether it would be appropriate. Brenda feels that the article and the topic are good, and, speaking as an election official, they are always very excited to see a broad cross section of our community deciding to run for office. Brenda agreed that the committee should step back and not decide hastily without each member first closely reading the article and looking into the author and his business. Then, after discussion, the committee could vote on its appropriateness and whether it should be added to our web page. Deidra will again send the article to all members.

As the last agenda item, Deidra shared a summarized outline of our strategic plan that we established in November of 2019. In that 'whiteboarding' meeting, we came up with both long-term and short-term goals. It was agreed that, while we started out our year with great intentions, the pandemic hit, and we were hindered in our progress. Nonetheless, we did accomplish the greater part of our short-term 2020 goals. Since the first of the year, we have developed a webpage on the County website, we have had four guest speakers, and we designed a Site Evaluation Check List for business accessibility reviews. Brenda encouraged the committee to have another 'whiteboarding' meeting (most likely virtually) after the beginning of the new year to establish new short-term goals for 2021.

The next meeting will be December 17, 2020, at 2:00 p.m. by WebEx.

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