



MEETING MINUTES

Benton County Accessible Communities Advisory Committee (ACAC)

Benton County Justice Center

Thursday, October 21, 2021

2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

The meeting of the Benton County Accessible Communities Advisory Committee was held in-person at 2:00 p.m. on Thursday, October 21, 2021, at the Benton County Justice Center. Present at the meeting were committee members Amanda Hatfield, Vice-Chair (County Elections Manager), Shyanne Palmus (Commissioner's Office), and Deidra Beck, Coordinator. Judith Davis and Gretchen Hormel joined the meeting by WebEx.

Due to the Chair's absence, Amanda Hatfield, Vice-Chair opened the meeting at 2:03 p.m.

The first agenda item was a report on the Dan Thompson Memorial Funding application for three Insight Interpreter on Wheels Video Language Remote Interpreting Services/Video Language Line devices. Because the application for funding was due prior to this October meeting, on September 29, Deidra had emailed the prepared application and information to the committee members for their review and scheduled a special October 6, WebEx meeting for the committee to discuss the project and to vote on whether or not they wished to apply for the funding. The committee unanimously voted in the positive, so Deidra sent in the application prior to the October 8th deadline. Although an email was received confirming that the application was received, to date, there has been no notice of award or denial of the funding. Deidra will notify the committee as soon as she receives any information.

Four members of the committee performed the first ACAC Site-Evaluation at the Benton County Public Service Building on September 30, 2021. Amanda asked that those who had been evaluators report on how the process went and discuss their take-aways from the evaluation. Judith stated that it went quite fast and easily, and it was agreed that it took less than 1 ½ hours at a rather leisurely pace. Shyanne felt that the evaluation form was pretty simple and not daunting to follow. After participating in the evaluation, Dallas

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Murry volunteered to put together an eval kit with the necessary and helpful measurement tools, etc., so that members performing any future evaluations would have whatever was needed ready and on hand for the group to take with them to the site. After the evaluation, all four members performing the evaluation agreed that it may work more efficiently if the committee had two separate eval forms; one designed specifically for business offices and one for entertainment, recreational, or restaurant facilities. In addition, Shyanne pointed out that the form needs to distinguish between the accessibility of the areas used by office staff and those for public service situations as the requirements of each may differ in scope. Deidra agreed to design two separate forms each representing the different type of facility purpose and the distinguishment between that of staff and public areas for the committee to review. The evaluators agreed that limiting the groups to a rotation of four committee members, divided into two teams with each team having one person complete the form and the other to do the measuring, etc., worked most efficiently. However, Shyanne mentioned that if a site was small, it may be best to send only one two-member team. Judith stated that it was very advantageous that Matt Nash had been able to participate as one of the evaluating members because of his experience with a wheelchair. His experience and observations on accessibility were very helpful. She suggested that in the instances when we do not have an experienced wheelchair member able to attend, perhaps the group could get a wheelchair to use during the evaluation to test the accessibility of the site. Gretchen said that she felt this was why it would be very good to be able to have a group with a diversity of disability experience and awareness. Deidra reminded that such was the hope of the committee that we would, in the future, be able to grow into a group of members with diverse accessibility experiences and knowledge. Regarding the findings on the site evaluation, it was observed that overall, the facility was very compliant and accessible, but there were some recommendations that could be given. Deidra agreed to send a copy of the evaluation findings to all members of the committee to review.

Now that the committee has had experience using the site-evaluation form, Deidra asked the committee how they preferred to follow-up and share their findings with the business(s) they have evaluated; should they request that a representative walk through the facility with them during the evaluation, meet with them immediately afterward, or send a copy of the evaluation after the forms are accumulated to one? Gretchen thought it

would be good to have someone from the facility to be available throughout the evaluation, and Amanda liked the idea of sending them the findings afterward. Shyanne suggested sending the whole report with a summary of the key observations. Gretchen suggested including a cover letter summarizing the findings. Deidra reminded that it was important that the evaluation not be overly negative and come across as criticism, and Gretchen stated that it should be approached as a ‘best practices’ exercise and include a “Thank you” statement for their participation. The consensus of the committee was that a copy of the evaluation would be sent with a cover letter thanking them for requesting our evaluation services and summarizing the findings in a positive and helpful presentation. A Certificate of Participation would be included that the business could choose to post however they wished. Because a quorum was not present at this meeting, Deidra will prepare these templates for the committee to vote on in the November meeting.

The next topic on the agenda was in regard to the ACAC By-Laws. Because there are newer members, and the by-laws have not been reviewed since the beginning of the committee’s formation, Deidra thought it would be a good idea for all the members to look over and discuss whether any updates or revisions should be made. Of particular consideration are #7 and #8 in the by-laws that concern committee member attendance. Amanda read aloud that, per the by-laws, ACAC members are expected to attend all meetings, and if unable to attend, they are responsible for notifying the chair or staff as far in advance as possible. Also, under #8, if a member is absent without excuse from three consecutive meetings, the ACAC may recommend to the Board of County Commissioners that the member be removed for lack of participation. The member is given 30 days written notice of such recommendation. Deidra asked the committee which they would prefer, that any member that is subject to removal for lack of participation be notified prior to recommendation for removal to the Board or at the same time. Shyanne expressed that she felt it was more appropriate to notify the member in advance of requesting their removal and giving them an opportunity to respond. All present members agreed that, due to not having a quorum, this will be brought up for a vote at the November meeting. Deidra promised to include a copy of the by-laws to the committee members when this meeting’s minutes are sent so they can review them and prepare any comments or concerns they may have.

Membership term expiration was brought to the committee's attention. At the end of December 2021, the terms of five committee members will expire. Deidra will send notification to each of those members to give them a chance to report whether or not they wish to continue with the committee and remain for another two-year term. After response from these members, Deidra will prepare a Resolution for the Commissioner's approval in December, prior to the December 31, 2021, expiration date.

Currently, there is one vacated ACAC position and one position that is in 'lack of participation' status. Should there be some of the members that do not wish to continue, the committee would have other vacancies, as well. Deidra encouraged that if any member is aware of someone that may be interested in applying for membership, to please encourage them. Deidra was informed of two people that had expressed interest, and they were sent a letter encouraging and instructing them how to apply. Because they had not yet applied, Deidra sent them another note as a reminder. Again, the committee was urged to seek persons with a diversity of accessibility or disabled experiences.

As the last item listed on the agenda, Deidra asked the committee if they had any suggestions for potential speakers for our upcoming meetings. The committee agreed that we should not try to have any speakers for our last two meetings of the year. However, all were encouraged to send any suggestions to Deidra for the 2022 meetings.

After asking if there were any other concerns or topics that members wished to discuss, and none were brought up, and Amanda adjourned the meeting at 2:43 p.m.

The next ACAC meeting will be in-person on Thursday, November 18, 2021, at 2:00 p.m. When the agenda for that meeting is sent out, Deidra will notify the committee members whether the meeting will be in this same Justice Center location or in the new Administration Building.