



MEETING MINUTES

Benton County Accessible Communities Advisory Committee (ACAC)

Benton County Justice Center

Wednesday, September 22, 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 Wednesday, September 22, 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), Judith Davis, Corp. Dallas Murray (Corrections), and Deidra Beck, Coordinator. Matt West and Gretchen Hormel joined the meeting by WebEx.

In Matt Nash’s absence, Amanda Hatfield, Vice-Chair opened the meeting at 2:03 p.m.

The first item on the meeting’s agenda was opened for discussion regarding the All-County Virtual Zoom Meeting on July 21, 2021. Amanda shared that the meeting lasted nearly two hours. Elaine Stefanowicz, Program Coordinator for the Governor’s Committee on Disability Issues and Employment led most of the meeting and shared much of the same information that she had presented to us when she was our guest speaker earlier that month. She covered funding opportunities, limits, and deadlines for application. Deidra shared some of her notes from the meeting that highlighted Cowlitz County’s successful projects like their accessible horseback riding ramp and expanding their County building entrances to be more ADA compliant and accessible. Cowlitz County spoke of some of their methods for building membership and awareness. They often participate in their Senior and County Fairs with a booth and a raffle. With their raffles, they have a card for the participants to mark whether they would like to learn more about ACAC or are interested in being invited to a meeting. Deidra mentioned that this might be something our ACAC would want to look into. Amanda and Shyanne warned the committee of the prohibitive cost hosting a booth can be. Amanda suggested that if the County opens a booth in future fairs, perhaps we could share it and set up with them. Deidra shared that the Recreation

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and Conservation Office was highlighted in the All-County meeting as a good option for possible funding help in projects.

Discussion was invited about the “Drive-By” ADA Lawsuits article and concern affecting our Tri-Cities businesses. Deidra shared an additional article from the Tri-Cities Journal of Business that featured stories from a few businesses in the Uptown mall that had lawsuits filed against them. The committee discussed their concern for these businesses and those that are vulnerable to being filed against, as well. In June, Shyanne had sent a notice to Matt Nash, Amanda, and Deidra regarding a webinar organized by the Tri-City Regional Chamber of Commerce that had representatives from the Northwest ADA Center to teach businesses how to comply with various aspects of ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act). Matt had reached out to a member of the chamber requesting information on the possibility of our ACAC partnering with them on a second presentation. Deidra will work with Matt to see if this is something we can move forward on. The committee discussed the idea of putting together a brochure or something to help inform businesses of basic ADA requirements and resources to assist them in addressing improvements that they may need to make to satisfy compliance. Judith suggested the possibility of developing a ‘Top 10 List’ of basic requirements. Amanda and Shyanne brought up the concern that any printed information might be construed as legal advice. The committee agreed that this concern would be researched prior to moving forward with the project.

As discussed and decided in previous meetings, Deidra had tentatively scheduled with the Benton County Public Services Building on Wiser Parkway for the committee to practice using our Site Evaluation Check List for inspection of accessibility on September 30, 2021. Agreeing that this was a good date, the committee decided that it would be best to limit the number of committee members participating so as to not crowd or overwhelm the building staff. It was agreed that we would send three to four members at each evaluation opportunity and rotate members as they are available and wish to participate. Judith recommended that with four members doing the evaluation, they could divide into two groups with one completing the check list and the other doing the measuring or whatever activity would be required in the inspection. Judith, Dallas, and Shyanne agreed to do the inspection, and Matt Nash or Deidra will join them. For review, Deidra promised that she would send the Site Evaluation Check List with the September meeting minutes.

As additional new business, Deidra mentioned that she would reach out to learn whether or not we can continue to use the Commissioners Executive Conference Room at the Justice Center once the Commissioners Department moves into the new Administration Building. She shared that being able to use the public connectivity with WebEx works most efficiently for streaming the meetings, and she will ask whether we can continue to meet in this current conference room or whether we would have to reserve one of the rooms in the new building beginning in November.

With no further comments or discussions presented, Amanda adjourned the meeting at 2:31 p.m.

The October meeting will be scheduled as an in-person meeting on Thursday, October 21, 2021, at 2:00 p.m. in the Commissioners Conference Room at the Justice Center in Kennewick.