



Meeting Minutes

Voting Accessibility Committee (VAAC)

March 24, 2022 1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Zoom Meeting

Recording available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nDdXEVHq0Vg>

Meeting Attendees:

John Arntz, Director, Department of Elections
Deborah Kaplan, Mayor's Office on Disability
Iman Alzaghari, Mayor's Office on Disability
Fred Nisen, Disability Rights California
Nataliya Kuzina, Department of Elections
Mayank Patel, Department of Elections
Jasmine Hernandez, Department of Elections
Tiff Lee, Department of Elections
Jennie Tran, Department of Elections
Winter Patterson, Department of Elections
Colei O'Brien, Department of Elections
Elizabeth Ann Dunlap, Community Member & Poll Worker
Elizabeth Grigsby, Golden Gate Regional Center
Fiona Hinze, Independent Living Resource Center (ILRC)
Jim Soper, National Voting Rights Task Force
Linda French, League of Women Voters San Francisco
Victoria Post, Community Member

Minutes

Welcome and Introductions

I. The recorded portion of the meeting began with a discussion of SB 1480.

- A. Disability Rights California requested SB 1480 to be included in the VAAC agenda and also provided the [attached fact sheet \(Attachment 1\)](#) that explains the proposed legislation.
- B. [SB 1480](#) would allow people with a “qualifying disability” to return ballots electronically that were voted using a remote accessible vote-by-mail system.
 1. The legislation indicates that a “qualifying disability” means a disability that prevents a voter from reading, marking, holding, handling, or manipulating a ballot, including blindness, visual impairment, an intellectual or developmental disability, or impairment in dexterity, such that the voter is unable to return a ballot privately and independently.”
- C. SB 1480 would allow people with qualifying disabilities to return their ballots without having to physically sign the return envelopes.
- D. Debby Kaplan shared concerns about IT security aspects of the proposed legislation. Fred Nisen responded that Disability Rights California has discussed such concerns with some in the IT security field and those discussions are ongoing. Nisen also noted that IT security experts may disagree on the security of returning ballots as indicated in the proposed legislation. Nisen pointed to the fact that 8 or 9 states, other countries as well as overseas and military voters already have the means to return ballots electronically.
- E. Fiona Hinze raised the question of whether there would be a standardized, state-wide system for ballot return or would it be up to individual counties to create their own system. Fred Nisen responded that each county has its own vendor. John Arntz provided a description of San Francisco’s vendors and Los Angeles’s vendors.
- F. Fred Nisen urged support of the proposed legislation and suggested people reach out to [Senator Glazer](#).

II. Colei O’Brien gave a presentation about the Ballot Drop-Box program.

- A. Colei shared design modifications of the satellite drop boxes, which were suggested by the VAAC in [previous meeting](#). Modifications include the removal of the restricted chute opening, to a 12” long ballot slot. Lowering the ballot slot to 41”. Originally, the ballot slot stood at 46” which is 2” below the max range of ADA regulations which is 48”. Additional implementations include the addition of two braille plates, located above and below the ballot slot. The braille plates state “Insert signed ballot envelope into opening below” and “insert signed ballot envelope into opening above”.
- B. Data collected from the drop boxes from the February 15, 2022 election cycle was discussed. The total number of ballots received by the department was 179, 981, out of which, 21,933, or 12% of the total ballots were deposited into drop boxes.
- C. Current number of ballot drop boxes installed in the city stands at 34. All drop boxes are currently open to voters until 8 pm on Election night, April 19. The Department is undertaking the processes to install an additional 17 drop boxes possibly in time for the November 2022 election. This would bring the total number of drop boxes to 51. More details will be discussed in the next VAAC meetings.

III. John Arntz provided information on the April 19, 2022, Special General Election.

- A. All voters registered by April 4, 2022, will receive ballots in the mail.
- B. After April 4, people may register in person at the City Hall Voting Center, or at a polling place on Election Day.
- C. State elections law allows for the consolidation of voting precincts for local, special or consolidated elections. The Department will organize 183 polling places for the upcoming election, while ensuring that newly formed consolidated precincts are equitably located across the City.
- D. Between March 21 and Election Day, any voter will be able to use the accessible vote-by-mail system (AVBM) with screen readable ballots compatible with personal devices at sfelections.org/tools/ravbm/

- E. Voter Information Pamphlets:
 - 1. Voters will begin receiving their voter information pamphlets during the week of March 14.
 - 2. Large print information pamphlets currently available.
 - 3. Audio versions of the voter information pamphlets are currently available from the Department and the Library's Talking Book and Braille Center.
 - 4. Accessible digital versions of information pamphlets are currently available on the Department's website: sfelections.org/whats-on-the-ballot.
- F. Accessible In-person Voting
 - 1. City Hall Voting Center opens March 21, each weekday from 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. and is also open the two weekends before Election Day, April 9 and 10; April 16 and 17, from 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.
 - 2. Curbside voting available at the City Hall Voting Center and at polling places upon request.

IV. Jasmine Hernandez, who has replaced Peter Stevens as supervisor of the Voter Support Division (VSD), provided descriptions of services her division offers voters.

- A. The VSD phone bank is able to assist voters with registration, vote-by-mail inquiries, election materials, election-specific information, accessible voting services, military and overseas voting, and general customer service.
- B. Bilingual staff is in the department ready to assist voters. Additionally, "language line" service is available to communicate with voters in 240 languages, including ASL video interpretation.
- C. The emergency ballot delivery program exists to provide an accessible voting method. The program coordinates ballot drop-off and pick-up with hospitals, assisted living facilities, and individuals. The program is also able to deliver election materials (voter information pamphlets, registration forms, etc.) to voters who request it. Ballot delivery has also occurred to San Francisco voters located in neighboring counties. Ballot delivery drivers are trained and able to assist voters in the registration and voting process. Voters using the program are able to request an accessible ballot-marking device. Large print ballots and materials are also available. Ballot deliveries for the upcoming election will be available starting April 5. Weekend ballot deliveries are available April 9 & 10 and April 16 & 17.
- D. The VSD is trying to do outreach to spread the word about the ballot delivery program. Fred Nisen offered suggestions for future outreach targets and emphasized how important outreach about this program is.

V. John Arntz proposed a schedule for future VAAC meetings every-other-month.

- A. Thursdays, 1:30-3:00 p.m.
- B. Meeting dates:
 - 1. May 12, 2022
 - 2. July 14, 2022
 - 3. September 15, 2022
 - 4. December 8, 2022
- C. Victoria Post offered her support for this regular meeting schedule. Post also inquired about where to provide feedback of her experience with the ballot marking device.
- D. Arntz solicited suggestions for future agenda items and indicated that, tentatively, Dominion will attend the July VAAC meeting.