

Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee (VAAC) Meeting Minutes

November 7, 2017, 2 p.m. – 4 p.m.

City Hall, Room 305

Meeting Attendees:

John Arntz, Director, Department of Elections
Nicole Bohn, Director, Mayor's Office on Disability
Fred Nisen, Disability Rights California
Bill Hershon, Disability Rights California
Nataliya Kuzina, Department of Elections
Kimberly Daniel, Department of Elections
Mayank Patel, Department of Elections
Andy Pastalaniec, Department of Elections
Aurora Livingston, Department of Elections
Catherine Lee, Department of Elections
Cuong Quach, Department of Elections
Gerry Porras, Department of Elections
Iva Maurin, Department of Elections
Jill Fox, Department of Elections
Jonathan Aaberg, Department of Elections
Regan Huang, Department of Election
Shane Burgos, Department of Elections
Yelena Cappello, Department of Elections
Andrew Barickman, Slalom
Bryan Finney, Democracy Live
Caitlin Morgan, Institute on Aging
Chantal Chan, Slalom
Elizabeth Dublap

Francis Lau, State Council on Developmental Disabilities
Jackson Soderquist
James Cunningham, Slalom
Jane Ferguson Flout, Catholic Charities San Francisco
Jeremiah Beasley, SFSU – Disability Programs and Resource Center
Jeremy Wallenberg, San Francisco Tech Council
Joanna Fraguli, Mayor's Office on Disability
Joshua White, San Francisco City Attorney's Office
Katherine Powell, Episcopal Community Services of San Francisco
Lisa Maria Martinez, Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired
Lucy Aczel, San Francisco Tech Council
Lulu Feliciano, SFMTA
Marti Goddard, SFPL Access Services
Sascha Bittner, State Council on Developmental Disabilities
Walter Delson, Independent Living Resource Center
Walter Guerra-Ostolaza

Meeting Minutes:

1. Introduction of committee members
2. Bryan from Democracy Live gave a presentation of OmniBallot, the new Remote Accessible Vote-by-Mail system that the Department will begin using for the June, 2018 election to allow voters with disabilities, voters in the military, or voters who reside overseas to electronically access and mark a ballot
 - a. Since 2012 Democracy Live has been the largest provider of web-based balloting in the United States, providing ADA ballot compliance for over 400 jurisdictions, and was recently certified by the California Secretary of State to provide Remote Accessible Vote-by-Mail services in California

- b. OmniBallot provides users the ability to electronically access and mark their ballot and is compatible with assistive technology, such as screen readers, sip and puff devices, and jelly switches
- c. A requirement for the system to be certified by the California Secretary of State was that the ballot was prohibited from interacting with a remote server; nothing that is marked on the ballot is saved on a remote server
 - i. Markings are stored on a local server – or personal computer – and no cache or cookie features are used to store information
- d. Sample ballot markings can be saved and returned to at a later time, however the ballot cannot be saved and returned to at a later time
 - i. Ballots can be made to stay open for unlimited time or to timeout in a predetermined amount of time as defined by the county
- e. Depending on how the County enables the functionality, voters can access the Remote-Accessible ballot through the current county voter lookup tool that is featured on the elections website
 - i. The language included on the first screen of the ballot is required by the California Secretary of State and sets forth the provisions under which a voter is entitled to use the Remote Accessible ballot option
- f. The ballot marking application provides users with a warning if too many selections have been made for a particular contest (over vote) and the summary page informs voters if a contest was left blank (under vote)
 - i. The technology does not have the capability of determining whether or not the under vote was intentional, so the warning serves as a final reminder to the voter before printing, in the event that they wish to cast a vote for the contest in question
- g. Implementation of the OmniBallot is currently being contemplated by the Department and VAAC members will have an opportunity to provide feedback on implementation and outreach strategies
 - i. Concerns were raised about discrepancies between how the Remote Accessible ballot and standard paper ballots appear
 - ii. Concerns were raised about how requests for Remote Accessible ballots might be tracked
 - iii. Concerns were raised about the ballot remake process that is required for all ballots that are not marked on standard paper ballots and for other scenarios in which the ballot tabulation equipment cannot read the ballot markings
 - iv. Concerns were raised about anonymity associated with voters who choose to mark a Remote Accessible ballot
- h. The OmniBallot is just the latest enhancement to the accessible voting options offered in San Francisco county and is a result of state legislation that was passed to allow jurisdictions to conduct all Vote-by-Mail elections rather than providing polling places
 - i. Voters have the choice to vote using the OmniBallot, Remote Accessible Vote-by-Mail option, the Edge Touchscreen and Audio ballot, or a standard paper ballot

3. Slalom Consulting for Open Source Voting System presentation
 - a. Slalom is a national company that conducts business case work, user experience, design work, and provides assessments of solutions rather than developing software or providing directives to agencies or companies
 - i. Slalom is tasked with assessing the feasibility of the City's efforts to develop an open source voting system and the team is 5 weeks into a 13 week contract
 - ii. At the conclusion of their exploratory work the Slalom team will provide a set of models that assess the feasibility of the City's options to possibly develop a highly accessible, open source voting system
 - b. James Cunningham, the project lead, provided a high-level overview of what the Slalom team is working on and stated that accessibility is a key requirement which is important for all voters to cast a ballot independently
 - c. The team began their work by meeting with a variety of stakeholders and defining the requirements and components of a voting system
 - i. The team is working to answer, "What is a voting system?" "What are the functions of a voting system?" and "What hardware/software are necessary to comprise a voting system?"
 - d. Usability vs. accessibility is an area that is being investigated during this exploratory venture, and James shared that he has learned that accessibility does not always mean equal usability
 - e. The Slalom team has reached out to a variety of stakeholders and experts to gain knowledge in relevant areas
 - i. So far they have connected with the California Secretary of State, Travis County, Texas, Disability Rights California, Mayor's Office on Disability, Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Los Angeles County Registrar, Department of Aging and Adult Services, and Senior and Disability Action
 1. VAAC members also suggested reaching out to the Assistive Technology Center, the Center for Accessibility Technology, and the San Francisco Tech Council
4. Nicole provided an update from the Mayor's Office on Disability
 - a. The third week of the month is the Mayor's Disability Council public meeting on Fridays from 1 p.m. - 4 p.m. and the next meeting will be held November 17
 - i. Topics for the meeting are centered around transportation challenges in San Francisco
 1. One topic will be addressing the disability access state parking placard program
 2. Another area will be discussing the City's interaction with the CPUC and disability access with Uber and Lyft, which are regulated at the state level
 - ii. Anyone interested in the topics on the agenda are welcome and encouraged to attend the council meeting
 1. For more information and updates, sign up for updates from the Mayor's Office on Disability using the following link: [click here to sign up for the Mayor's Office on Disability E-list.](#)
 - b. The council is comprised of representatives of the disability community and parents of kids with disabilities who are looking at a variety of issues, which are grouped by topic or timeline

- c. City Digital Services is looking to kick off a campaign to redesign the city website in a way that is more intuitive and user-centered, seeking to develop a more robust interface
 - i. Conversations about accessibility and developing accessibility best will be a primary focus
 - ii. Usability groups will be formed to providing feedback on design and usability to the Digital Services Department
- 5. John shared that in order for the VAAC to have a meaningful impact on the Department of Elections planning and implementation of new programs ahead of the June 2018 election it will be valuable to develop smaller working groups to address topics of interest that have been identified by the group
 - a. Some of these topical areas include:
 - i. Transportation issues related to accessing polling places on Election Day
 - ii. Remote-Accessible Vote-by-Mail and other voting options
 - iii. Outreach and election education messages and mechanisms
 - iv. Poll Worker training and recruitment strategies
 - b. John indicated that he will share a timeline with VAAC members that enumerates key election deadlines and operational periods in which the VAAC can be most valuable in contributing feedback