



Voting Accessibility Committee (VAAC) Meeting Minutes

August 13, 2019

1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

City Hall, Room 48

Meeting Attendance

John Arntz, Director - Department of Elections
Nataliya Kuzina, Deputy Director - Department of Elections
Mayank Patel, Department of Elections
Andy Pastalaniec, Department of Elections
Fred Nisen, Disability Rights California
Heather Kittel, Mayor's Office on Disability
Hillary Brown, Poll Worker Representative
Sheraden Nicholau, State Council on Developmental Disability
Derek Czajka, San Francisco Voter
Fiona Hinze, Independent Living Resource Center
Jane Ferguson Flout, Catholic Charities San Francisco
Jane Glasby, SFPL-Library for Blind and Print Disabled
Rylan Smirlies, Dominion Voting Systems
Travis Kester, Dominion Voting Systems

Meeting Minutes

I. Welcome and Introductions

II. Meeting began with a demonstration on using the accessible Ballot-Marking Device (BMD).

- A. Rylan Smirlies from Dominion Voting Systems (Dominion) provided information on the design and development regarding the accessible features of the BMD.
- i. The BMD is a large touch screen tablet. The device is attached to a printer and an Audio-Tactile Interface (ATI) keypad which allows voters to vote using the audio feature. The ATI keypad, which is a hand-held device. Headphones are normally attached to the ATI to allow the voter to hear the contents of the ballot privately, but for demonstration purposes, it was attached to a speaker for the VAAC participants to hear. The ATI keypad also supports a "sip and puff" device which is available upon request.
 - ii. San Francisco, poll workers will be responsible for activating the ballot by entering a "poll worker card" into the BMD and then entering a code. Poll workers can assist in selecting the appropriate language, using the ATI, and voting using the audio feature.
 - iii. You can use the ATI keypad to navigate through the contest and different choices within each contest. Currently, the BMD refers to every ATI button by its name, shape, and color in the instructions at the beginning of the session. The BMD will also inform voters on using the ATI's functions and which buttons to select throughout the voting session. Heather Kittle from the Mayor's Office of Disability

made a recommendation to have the name, shape, and color be mentioned every time there is a new action for voters who might be memory impaired. She also made a recommendation to have a reference section on each screen to remind voters of the button functions. A recommendation was also made that if a voter was to push a button that the device will prompt the voter “is this the action you want taken?” to support the voter in selecting the correct button. According to Rylan Smirlie; adding these features could increase the time needed to vote, yet Dominion is considering ways to improve these features so the voting experience is increasingly accessible. Also, currently a voter can push the “Help” button to have the ATI features recited.

B. Participants were offered to practice voting on the BMD.

III. Reviewed recommendation for improvements referenced in letter VAAC sent to Dominion in October 2018.

Platform

A. The BMD is not universally accessible for independent use during voting and scanning ballot.

1. Dominion is actively trying to phase in a new development for independent use of the BMD without the assistance of a poll worker. There are couple of challenges with the hardware, but eventually they would like the language, device, privacy screen, and any activation independently managed by the voter. The poll workers responsibility would limited to assisting the voter to the voting equipment.
2. Dominion is also reviewing the direction that the BMD gives the voter at the end of the voting session, to provide more contextual information for voters with visual impairment.

Audio

A. Voters cannot independently access the audio instructions when using the BMD.

1. Dominion is actively working on a fully independent development for audio functions so that voters would require no assistance from poll workers.

B. The voice from the synthesized speech function could be replaced with a human voice.

1. Dominion does allow human recorded voices on the BMD, however the Department would need to have people make recordings of all instructions, notices, etc. The Department indicated that all ballot content will be recorded in human voices and will use synthesized speech to provide audio associated with the equipment’s functions.

C. Dominion is considering the compatibility of other, better voice synthesizer engines that voters may consider as providing provide more clarity when using the audio ballot.

Text

A. The zoom feature should allow for a greater selections for sizing content beyond the single option to increase the magnification to one “large” setting.

1. Dominion is considering incorporating more selections for content size in relation to federal and state certification criteria regarding text sizes.

B. The BMD could provide more options regarding screen contrasts.

1. Dominion is currently testing various color/contrast options for the interface, however adding customizable features also increases the complexity of the system making it more difficult to navigate ballot content for some voters.

- C. The options for colors is limited and needs to be increased.
 - 1. Dominion indicated that currently the BMD supports full color WCAG compliant contrast, Black on White 20:1 contrast, and White on Black 20:1 contrast. Dominion is reviewing other low contrast settings and also considering options for screens that reduce glare.

Voting Machine Usability

- A. The BMD is difficult to use for some voters.
 - 1. Dominion is considering improvements to the hardware that will increase the ease and ability of voters to interact with the equipment and navigate their ballot content.
 - 2. Presentation of a contest on a ballot is a configurable option and could be managed to provide a single contest per screen, however these controls are managed by the Department when creating the election's project file. The Department indicated that it seeks to balance the time to navigate and vote long ballots with the presenting more than one contest per screen.
 - 3. Dominion is continually considering ways to improve their systems and communicating with voters to understand their needs to increase the voter experience and voters' confidence in using the equipment.

New Recommendations

- A. Fred Nisen recommended to have an adjustable table or implement an option to lower the on-screen touch keyboard from the top of the screen to the middle or bottom. The Department explained the complexity of having to setting up and the delivery of an adjustable table. Currently the Department plans to deploy the BMD on 3-feet by 3-feet folding tables, which meet the ADA standards.
- B. Heather Kittel recommended combining all components into one unit to so that voters can mark print and cast ballots by using one machine. She explained that having voters bring their ballots to the tabulating equipment machine after using the accessible equipment may not be an accessible method for all voters. Dominion explained that there is no all-in-one unit on the market as of now.
- C. Heather Kittle recommended exploring contrast options that would reduce glare.
- D. Recommendation to have voter control dimming setting, without the need of a poll worker or department staff.
- E. John Arntz recommends making configuration for contest appearance and option for the voter to choose and not at a project level.
- F. Hilary Brown recommends putting a much more detailed video on YouTube regarding the machines and how they function.
- G. Jane Glasby recommends having optional keyboard for the write-ins for someone that can type to make it an easier and faster experience.
- H. Derek Czajka recommended that instead of having each unused rank recited line for line, to recite the range of ranks.
- I. Jane Glasby recommends making the ATI controller more intuitive.
- J.

IV. Summary of meeting and announcements

- A. Timeframe for Dominion to explore and implement recommendations

- i. Rylan Smirlies confirmed that it varies by specific features as some are easier to implement and test while other take more vigorous time and resources. Timeline could be from six months to more than a year.
- ii. Whenever new features are implemented they need to undergo thorough testing and then be submitted to federal and state agencies for additional review and testing before being certified for use by voters. These testing and review processes require time. The Dominion's current priority related to upgrades is to implement a method allowing voters to independently activate all devices and functionalities such as audio ballots, the positioning of the onscreen keyboards, increasing the number of options for displaying content such as text sizes and colors and contrasts.

V. Announcements

- A. The department will review the updated brochure regarding accessibility and voting at the next VAAC meeting scheduled for September 19, 1:30 p.m. at City Hall, Room 305.
- B. VAAC will provide direct input into developing new version of online accessible vote-by-mail system.
- C. Department is updating materials for Emergency Voting program will provide this material in relation to the VAAC in the next upcoming meeting.

VI. Additional Questions and Information

Jane Ferguson: Other than outreach to voters, how will voters know of this option and how will they request to use the BMD?

Mayank Patel: All Polling Places and Voting Centers will be equipped with a BMD. Poll Workers will be required to inform the voter they will be receiving a paper ballot and that the voter has the option to request an accessible ballot with touchscreen and audio features.

Nataliya Kuzina: There will also be signage indicating this option to the voter at all locations. Which will be shared with VAAC members in the future.

Derek Czajka: How does this process compare to setting it and activating a ballot on the Edge machine?" In his previous experience as a voter the poll workers had to constantly call the Election Center for assistance with the machine.

Mayank Patel: The BMD is overall simpler than the Edge, for example, poll workers had to use a card activator, which is a separate device from the Edge to activate a card (ballot), and then have the voter insert that card to activate their ballot on the Edge. Now the poll worker would use one card and punch in the code to activate their ballot on one device and the voter will be set up to start marking their ballot.

Jane Glasby: When will the device be set up and ready to go at the polling place?

Mayank Patel: Poll Workers are required to have this machine set up by 7 a.m. when the polls open. Poll Workers will have to make sure the printer and ATI controller are working to make sure it will work when a voter is present.

Jane Glasby: Is the ATI controller an off the shelf product? Also, consider using ATIs similar to those units used by people with sigh disabilities when listening to audio books.

Rylan from Dominion: It is off the shelf, we work directly with the company that makes them so they fit our needs.