



VAAC Minutes, September 15, 2022

Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee (VAAC)

Meeting Minutes

September 15, 2022 1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Zoom Meeting

Recording available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DGfSqEV1vos>

Meeting Attendees:

John Arntz, Director, Department of Elections
Deborah Kaplan, Mayor's Office on Disability
Fred Nisen, Disability Rights California
Travis Kester, Dominion Voting Systems
Larry Korb, Dominion Voting Systems
Barbara Simons, Community Member
Elizabeth Ann Dunlap, Community Member & Poll Worker
Fiona Hinze, Independent Living Resource Center (ILRC)
Jim Soper, National Voting Rights Task Force
Linda French, League of Women Voters San Francisco
Shelby Wayment, Community Member
Mayank Patel, Department of Elections
Colei O'Brien, Department of Elections
Diem Vo, Department of Elections
Andy Pastaleinec, Department of Elections
Deanna Mitchell, Department of Elections
Mike Ramos, Department of Elections
Shane Kealy, Department of Elections

Meeting Minutes:

- I. **The meeting began with a discussion of feedback and recommendations previously received from the Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee to the City's voting system vendor, Dominion Voting Systems.**
 - A. John Arntz explained that receiving feedback from the VAAC regarding Dominion's accessible voting systems is part of the City's contract with Dominion.
 - B. Arntz introduced Travis Kester and Larry Korb, representatives from Dominion.
 - C. Kester began the Dominion presentation and addressed previous VAAC recommendations and feedback.
 - D. The VAAC previously recommended that voters be able to access to audio instructions without the needing to manipulate the touchscreen on the Ballot Marking Device (BMD). This recommendation has been partially implemented for the future version. Voters can turn the 'privacy mask' on and off and select a language without poll worker intervention.
 1. Fred Nisen asked if this feature was in presently in use in California, Kester answered no and was not sure of a precise timeline for implementation.
 2. Fiona Hinze asked if the City would need to buy the new version. Kester and Korb explained that no, future updates are included within the terms of the contract with the City.
 - E. The VAAC previously recommended Dominion lower the on-screen touch keyboard on the BMD. This would make the keyboard substantially more accessible for certain voters. This recommendation has been completed and implemented as an option for use in the future version.
 1. Deborah Kaplan asked if the feature has been user tested by people with disabilities and whether selecting the option to lower the keyboard is accessible. Korb said he has not seen it but it should be accessible. Kester said he will follow up with the development team to determine which features are being user tested by people with disabilities.
 2. Elizabeth Ann Dunlap expressed that this feature would be helpful to her.
 - F. The VAAC previously made a recommendation to Dominion that voters be able to dim the brightness of the BMD without poll worker assistance. The option to lower screen brightness individually has been implemented and will be usable in future versions.
 1. Fiona Hinze asked for more detail about the interface of the dimming mechanism. Kester explained he did not have visuals to share at the meeting but will work to share them with the group later.
 - G. The VAAC previously recommended an option to include all contests on one screen, with an option to scroll down. Some voters prefer to have one contest per screen, but some find the one-contest-per-screen display option to be cumbersome, especially when navigating using an ATI. Dominion has partially completed implementing this recommendation in future version; there is now a 'faster' way of navigating the ballot in an accessible session. However, there is no 'one screen' containing all contests.
 1. Jim Soper shared that he found the scrolling tool to be difficult to use.

- H. The VAAC previously recommended an *option* to include contests on separate screens based on preference. This feature was added as part of CA 5.10A in an accessible voting session and is currently the default option for accessible voting.
- I. A previous recommendation by the VAAC to allow accessible voters the ability to initiate voting sessions, print ballots and tabulate ballots without any poll worker assistance is still under internal discussion at Dominion. Travis Kester explained that this would be a significant change and could require a possible re-design of the Ballot Marking Device user interface.
- J. The VAAC previously recommended that Dominion provide more options for zoom-in/out features and text customization. The status of this recommendation is that it cannot be done and is closed for now, due to the resources and re-designs it would require. Crucially, increasing zoom-in functionality more than already present would break rendering of the on-screen ballot, which would impact voting and machine functionality.
 - 1. Fiona Hinze asked for clarification about the rendering concern. Kester explained that it could impact the marking and tabulation of the ballot and could also be related to limitations of the hardware, such as the tablet. Korb added that the ballots are rendered ahead of time in the Election Management System in two font sizes before being loaded onto the ICX. Real-time zooming on the ICX would put the hardware burden onto the tablet, as opposed to having it done previously before being loaded onto the ICX.
 - 2. Linda French suggested a 'magnifying glass' feature.
 - 3. Jim Soper suggested adding a third, larger, font size option.
 - 4. Elizabeth Ann Dunlap asked for the current font size for the large size. Korb said the sizes could be made larger but he would need to get back to the committee with a specific answer.
 - 5. Kester ultimately said Dominion could revisit this issue.
- K. A previous VAAC recommendation that the BMD screen be made easier to angle and swivel is not currently feasible due to hardware limitations. In the BMD's current iteration, making the screen easier to swivel would not be possible without third-party accessories such as a VESA mount or stand. This recommendation requires further evaluation from Dominion's Engineering Hardware team. Outside of third-party tools, this could be revisited with subsequent hardware refreshes. Larry Korb suggested that certain BMD screens at voting centers or at City Hall (locations where stands could be mounted) could be adapted to be easier to angle and swivel. A proper third-party mount would need to be approved for use.
- L. The VAAC previously recommended that Dominion provide an option for ATI color/shape description play before every contest. The goal of this feature would be to address concerns that only mentioning ATI functions, colors, and shapes at the beginning of the voting process would make it difficult for some voters to navigate the ballot as they proceed through each contest. This recommendation is still under discussion at Dominion. Dominion engineering has noted that adding this feature could be possible but will have to be balanced with other accessible voting options.
- M. The VAAC previously recommended that Dominion take steps to reduce on-screen glare. Dominion currently has a polarized privacy filter for Ballot Marking Device "Prime" under Omnify which helps with screen glare reduction. However, this part is customized to fit the "Prime" tablet and not the "Classic" tablet which is used in California. Dominion engineering is beginning conversations with the machine manufacturer to add a similar filter for the "Classic" tablet.

- N. The VAAC previously recommended that an optional USB-connected physical keyboard be added for write-ins. Dominion has rejected this recommendation because allowing the use of a physical keyboard could pose a security risk to voting operations. Alternative forms of input are still being explored.
1. Dunlap asked whether a Bluetooth keyboard would be feasible and Kester said no.
- O. The last of the VAAC's previous recommendations discussed was in regards to changing the synthesized voice used on the BMD to human voices. The standard synthesized voice in the instructions is not always clear. This recommendation was added as a feature as part of CA 5.10A. During the ballot programming process, the programming team and the county can work together to change synthesized voices to human voices, if preferred. Undergoing a change would require considerable coordination and re-recording of static file voice lines, but is possible with time.
1. Kaplan asked whether Dominion has conducted an evaluation of conformance with California accessibility standards. Travis Kester said he would get back to Kaplan with the report regarding this issue. Kaplan also asked whether these changes would be specific to an accessible version of Dominion's technology. Korb said there is only one version of the software, no separate 'accessible version', he added that Dominion has an accessibility conformance report available online.
 2. Fiona Hinze asked if the local jurisdiction has any customization ability. Korb said that counties may customize within the state-wide approved system.
 3. Fred Nisen asked if a malfunction of the audio on the ATI is a programming issue. Kester explained that it would be a connection issue or hardware issue. Nisen also asked whether it would be possible to mark an accessible ballot using the ATI without audio of any kind playing. Kester suggested unplugging the headphones.
- P. Larry Korb provided updates on Dominion's future California versions. The next California version will take more than a year to roll out. There is no fixed date for the release of the next version. Korb raised the possibility of doing in-person testing with the VAAC.
1. Fiona Hinze noted that California seems to be several version numbers behind other states, and asked why this is the case. Korb explained that there are distinctions between state voting system regulations across different states.
- Q. Travis Kester explained the review process that new "feature requests" undergo. He then solicited new VAAC recommendations and feedback. John Arntz added that further recommendations sent to him would be forwarded to Dominion.
1. Mayank Patel suggested making it easier for poll workers to activate various types of ballots.
- R. Jim Soper asked if a link to 5.10A could be provided. Travis Kester said the information would be provided to the group.

II. Fred Nisen provided an update on the Secretary of State's VAAC meeting

- A. A poor audio connection interfered with this portion of the meeting. Fred provided the following information subsequently via email.
- B. In the last meeting in July, the SOS' VAAC established five working groups and each group has already met once or twice since July. The working groups are:
 - 1. Resources about accessible voting systems - mainly for poll workers (Fred is on this working group)
 - 2. Making petitions accessible/signature verification
 - 3. Getting more counties to establish or reboot a VAAC
 - 4. Updating the SOS local VAAC toolkit (I am on this working group)
 - 5. Deaf and hard of hearing voters

III. Mayank Patel gave a rundown of the accessible voter information for the November 8, 2022 election

- A. Accessible Voter Information Pamphlets (VIPs) will be available online: sfelections.org/vip
 - 1. The Department expects to post on its website an accessible PDF of the English-language VIP on September 21.
 - 2. Chinese-, Filipino-, and Spanish-language VIPs in accessible PDF versions will be posted on September 27
 - 3. HTML and large print versions of the VIPs will be posted September 30.
 - 4. Audio versions of the VIPs will be available from the Department and the Library's Talking Book and Braille Center by October 7. B. Paper versions of the VIP will be mailed starting October 1.
- B. Accessible In-Person Voting
 - 1. Between October 10 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/access
 - 2. Accessible voting equipment available in the City Hall Voting Center starting October 11, and each weekday from 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. and the two weekends before Election Day, October 29 and 30; November 5 and 6, from 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.
 - 3. Curbside voting will be available at the City Hall Voting Center and at polling places upon request.
 - 4. Emergency ballots: The Department can deliver ballots to people who are unable to receive and vote their ballots by Election Day, including those in care facilities or who are homebound.
- D. Other Voting Options
 - 5. Vote-by-mail ballots will be mailed to all registered voters on October 6.
 - 6. All voters registered by October 24, 2022, will receive ballots in the mail.
 - 7. After October 24, people can still register and vote and must do so in person either at the City Hall Voting Center, or at a polling place on Election Day.
 - 8. The Department will organize 501 polling places for Election Day and each location will provide an accessible voting machine that provides touch-screen and audio options for navigating the ballots and voting.
 - 9. Beginning October 10, people can register online at registertovote.ca.gov, and then obtain and vote an accessible ballot from sfelections.org/access.

IV. John Arntz announced that the next VAAC meeting will be December 8, 2022, 1:30 p.m.-3 p.m., and asked the group if there were any additional questions

- A. Jim Soper asked whether data would be collected about the number of people using accessible voting options. Mayank Patel responded that he would report back in December about numbers for the upcoming election. Patel added that for the June 7, 2022 election there were 147 polling place and voting center voters who used the Ballot Marking Device.
- B. The meeting concluded.

V. The following links are provided in response to topics that came up during the meeting:

- A. California Voting System Standards: [link to California Voting System Standards here: https://elections.cdn.sos.ca.gov/pdfs/california-voting-system-standards.pdf](https://elections.cdn.sos.ca.gov/pdfs/california-voting-system-standards.pdf)
 - 1. The Voting System Standards provide the usability and accessibility requirements developed by the Secretary of State's Office for all voting systems
 - 2. The Secretary of State sets the criteria that voting systems must meet to be approved for use in California
- B. Certification information for version 5.10A of Democracy Suite developed by Dominion Voting Systems which is the version currently used in California: [Link to Certification information on version 5.10A here: https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/ovsta/frequently-requested-information/dominion-voting](https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/ovsta/frequently-requested-information/dominion-voting)
 - 1. VAAC members requested information from the SOS regarding version 5.10A.
 - 2. The certification information provides explanations of the functional testing that the SOS undertook before approving the system for use in California.