



## Meeting Minutes

### Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee (VAAC)

January 31, 2024 1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Recording available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qBKy3RoR3aI>

#### Meeting Attendees:

John Arntz, Director, Department of Elections

Jacquelyn Madson, Community Member

Fiona Hinze, Independent Living Resource Center (ILRC)

Fred Nisen, Disability Rights California

Damara Lopez., Senior & Disability Action

Linda French, League of Women Voters

Helen Smolinski, Mayor's Office on Disability

Andy Pastalaniec, Department of Elections

Anmarie Mabbut, Department of Elections

Jonathan Aaberg, Department of Elections

Mayank Patel, Department of Elections

Tiff Lee, Department of Elections

## I. Welcome and Introductions

## II. State VAAC Update

- A. Fred Nisen provided updates to the group about the State VAAC.
  - 1. Fiona Hinze mentioned she was aware of delays in the application process.
  - 2. Fred said the State VAAC contributed to a memorandum sent by the Secretary of State about guidelines for emergency voting.

## III. Department Updates

- A. Tiff Lee and Mayank Patel provided updates on the Department's outreach efforts.
  - 1. The Department has conducted over 30 presentations focused on accessible election information.
  - 2. At these presentations, the Department helps voters request accessible voting materials such as audio versions of the Voter Information Pamphlet, which is available in several formats.
  - 3. The presentations also help make voters aware of the many other accessible tools and services that the Department offers.
  - 4. The outreach events also serve as a method to recruit poll workers.
  - 5. The Department offers poll worker training online and in person, both at City Hall and at several neighborhood sites throughout the city. Poll worker training is available in other languages for bilingual poll workers.
  - 6. There were several questions and comments.
    - a. Fred Nisen asked about online equipment training. Mayank added that Inspectors (the supervising poll worker at each polling place) must complete, and clerks have the option of completing, an in-person training session with hands-on practice with the ballot scanning machines and ballot marking devices.
    - b. Director Arntz added that audio ballots and ASL interpretation available. Field support teams are ready to assist poll workers setting up these options.
    - c. Fiona Hinze asked about poll worker recruitment. Mayank confirmed the Department aims to recruit four poll workers per polling place, and that after the election the Department will contact to the poll workers who served to gather interest for the November election.
    - d. Fiona asked Tiff about how to schedule outreach presentations.
    - e. Fiona asked whether procedures for registration card tracking for NVRA agencies had been updated. Director Arntz confirmed it has not changed.
    - f. Helen Smolinski asked what the most commonly requested accessible voting tool is, and that the Mayor's Office on Disability would be curious to know about statistics for ASL interpretation and audio ballot requests. Director Arntz said that language assistance is the most frequently used accessible element of the Department's services, and that the Department is not able to track how people are voting.
    - g. Linda French asked about outreach opportunities with the League of Women Voters and suggested that poll workers track voting methods used at polling places.
- B. Andy Pastalaniec and Mayank Patel provided an update on polling place matters.
  - 1. Andy reported that the polling place recruitment process is complete and that the Department will be supporting 501 polling places on election day.
    - a. There are three inaccessible polling sites. One is Third Baptist Church, an important community gathering place. The Koret Center Gymnasium is another, the largest available site on the USF campus that tends to see higher than average in-person voting activity due to the student population. The third site is in a community room at an apartment building in the Lake Merced area – the majority of the voters

- in the precinct live in the building. Curbside voting is available at all these sites for any voter unable to enter.
- b. Damara Lopez asked about accessibility requirements for polling places. Andy responded that the standards are set by the State and Federal government, and the issues are mostly to do with slopes. No polling places requires stairs in San Francisco. All polling places have a minimum of 300 square feet of space to ensure adequate path of travel and space for wheelchair turnaround in addition to the voting equipment.
  - c. Fred Nisen asked what the specific slope measurements at the inaccessible sites are. Andy confirmed, Third Baptist Church: 12%, Koret Center: 13.9%, Lakewood Apartments: 15.8%.
2. Mayank provided an update on the “Vote Here” sign and played a video demonstrating the sign’s setup procedures.
    - a. Fiona Hinze asked about whether the sign will display information in other languages. Mayank confirmed it will be quadrilingual.
    - b. Fred Nisen asked what is on the sign in relation to curbside voting. Mayank said the sign will have a phone number voters can call as well as instructions that the voter’s companion can enter the polling place to request curbside voting.
    - c. Damara Lopez asked whether information about accessible voting will be included in other materials mailed by the Department and whether there will be language support. Mayank confirmed the accessible information will be included in the Voter Information Pamphlet, sent to every voter. Information sent to voters will also include the voter hotline phone number where they can get assistance in languages other than English.

#### **IV. Voting System Update**

- A. Director Arntz gave an update on the future of San Francisco’s voting system.
  1. Director Arntz asked the VAAC if the group would be open to making a list of criteria that would make a future voting system accessible.
    - a. Linda French asked for the link to the accessible voting video.
    - b. Helen Smolinski expressed her support for the list of criteria for a future accessible voting system.
    - c. Fred Nisen also said the list idea is a good one.
    - d. Fiona Hinze expressed support for the list idea. Fiona also asked for a presentation on Director Arntz’s work so far on the future voting system.
    - e. Damara Lopez said the idea is fantastic and would like to participate.

#### **V. Summary and Next Meeting**

- A. Mayank encouraged the group to email questions or comments on meeting topics, suggestions for future agenda items, and announced that the schedule for future VAAC meetings will be April 2, 2024, July 9, 2024, and September 10, 2024. The meeting then concluded.