

Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee (VAAC)

Meeting Minutes

22 July 2021

1. Welcome, Call to Order

Committee Members

Elections Division Staff:

- Michelle Ascencion, Assistant Clerk-Recorder
- Martin Cobos, Elections Operations Manager
- Irma Hernandez, Interim Programs Supervisor
- Preston Moore, Records Technician IV
- Jessica Ocegueda, Records Technician III
- Hope DeBorse, Records Technician II
- Jonathan Saint Pierre, Student Worker

Other Organizations:

- Gabe Taylor, Disability Rights California (DRC)
- Sandra I. Aldana, State Council on Developmental Disabilities (SCDD)
- Jannette Jauregui, Ventura County Area Agency on Aging (AAA)
- Tammy Bender, Ventura County Veterans Services Office (VCVSO)
- Jacob Lesner Buxton, System Change Advocate

Introduction: *Irma I.* opened the meeting at 10:30am with welcome greeting and introduced Hope DeBorse as the new Records Technician II in the Elections Division.

Hope D. gave a brief background of her previous employment with Ventura County Veterans Services Office prior to beginning her position with the Elections Division.

Martin C. noted the high turnout of Elections Division staff at the VAAC meeting, and introduced Jonathan Saint Pierre, the new Student Worker.

2. Voting Method - 4 Day Centers – California Gubernatorial Recall Election – 14 September 2021:

Martin C. provided information that this recall election will be run the same way as the November 2020 election, in that Ventura County will conduct the election via In-Person Voting Location (“IPVL”). Ventura County moved to conducting via IPVL from a traditional Polling Place (“PP”), and while not a true VCA, it is VCA-like. Martin stated that this model worked very well in November 2020. The following are the particulars of the 4 Day recall:

- **Dates: Saturday, 11 September 2021, through Tuesday, 14 September 2021**
- **Number of IPVL sites: 51**
- **Number of Vote By Mail (“VBM”) Drop Box sites: 38**

Martin added that this recall election was recently called in July for a September recall date. There had been talk that it would possibly be as late as December, so all CA Counties have been challenged with the tight time frame, the Covid-19 pandemic, and the challenge of finding and hiring election workers.

In summary, Martin stated that the Elections Division just received the certified ballots and that there are 46 candidates.

3. RAVBM Update:

Preston M. discussed the Remote Accessible Vote By Mail (“RAVBM”). RAVBM is an office ballot. RAVBM was also utilized in November 2020 with great success. How to request RAVBM:

- A voter can go to: [My Voter Status – California Secretary of State](#)
- A voter can contact the Elections Division by phone, mail, or email, or by going to [Ventura County, CA – County Clerk and Recorder / Registrar of Voters \(countyofventura.org\)](#) for more information

Preston also provided that:

- The Registrar of Voters is committed to ensuring that accessible services are available to all voters
 - RAVBM allows voters to download and mark their ballot privately and independently using their own assistive technology, print a marked ballot, and return it to the Elections Division to be counted
 - A voter will login to the RAVBM system and mark a ballot, and will need a Voter Access Code
 - After receipt of the RAVBM application, an email titled Official Vote By Mail Ballot will be sent providing the voter with the link and a Voter Access Code
 - A voter can access the system anytime, day or night
 - Marked RAVBM ballots must be printed and returned to the Elections Division either by mail, in person, at a VBM Drop Box Site, or at an IPVL.
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- *Gabe T.* requested very specific instructions along with a link and a video.
 - *Preston M.* referred to the one page Remote Access Vote By Mail (RAVBM) Instructions for returning Your Ballot and other information that can be found at [Ventura County, CA – County Clerk and Recorder / Registrar of Voters \(countyofventura.org\)](#)
 - *Sandra A.* Asked *Jacob B.* and *Gabe* if the VLC and IRCs have videos on how to vote. Jacob will send the video.
 - *Preston* responded that when it comes to military voters, if they are overseas and a Ventura County resident, they have already filled out a federal postcard as an overseas voter for this recall election.
 - *Tammy B.* stated that she is the representative from the VCVSO and that Mike McManus was the prior CVSO, retired November 2020. The current CVSO is James McHugh. James was not available to attend the VAAC today, but going forward, both Tammy and James will attend VAAC meetings.

4. Last Call for feedback on VCA Sites:

- *Jessica O.* provided that at the last VAAC meeting, members were asked for any recommendations for the VCA Sites and asked for any last call feedback from the members.
- *Jessica* also stated that the Elections Division is working on getting the IPVL locations on our website by next week.
- *Sandra* said that she had a very good experience with curbside voting at an IPVL in the November 2020 election. Sandra closed by stating that she is very concerned about a surge in Covid cases and flu season during the September recall.
- *Irma H.* stated that the Elections Division is working on accessibility issues and that every IPVL will be visited to make sure that all are ADA accessible.

5. Outreach Topic – “Your Vote is Secure”:

Irma asked *Sandra* what she requested of *Jessica* as to the Outreach Topic?

- *Sandra* (and *Gabe* jumped in to second) responded that there are rumors about voting by mail issues at a VBM Drop Box Site in November 2020 election. Sandra also mentioned that the National News may not reflect what is happening in Ventura County, but she is concerned about voter fraud and voter safety. Sandra asked what mitigation issues are we doing? Sandra also brought up the difficulty for people to understand the recall process. How it is a two-part process and that the aged and other groups can get easily confused. Finally, Sandra wanted to know how the Elections Division is getting the message out, vis-à-vis flyers, mailings, communications, etc., and how the VAAC members can assist with getting the message out.
- *Martin* responded that members of a certain political party put their own ballot box outside and it was discovered and removed. A press release was put out. Ventura County Elections Division has marked all our VBMs. In addition, we will issue periodic press releases during the recall and will keep the Ventura County Elections website updated. Martin added that we are stretched with Covid, hiring, and the recall timing, but we will do outreach as we get closer to the recall. There will be a communication on 31 July 2021 from our Public Information Officer (“PIO”). Our PIO will investigate and respond to any malfeasance issues from a high level. In closing, Martin stated that there have been no issues with the US Postal Service. The USPS has been instrumental in keeping our elections secure.
- *Gabe* suggested that the Elections Division create a 1-to-2-page FAQ to address the recall questions and concerns that may confuse voters. Gabe stated that the VAAC members will help distribute the FAQ.
- *Martin* agreed with the suggestion and said that the FAQ will be completed within 10 days. Martin added that we are not sure what the voter turn out will be but that we would appreciate help with VAAC members in getting the word out.

6. Changes / Suggestions and Recommendations as We Move Toward becoming A VCA County:

Irma Asked in there was anything else from the members regarding moving forward in 2022.

- *Gabe* suggested to getting information out as early as possible, that we talk about it earlier, hold VAAC meetings, and advertise on radio, TV, print media, on social media, make calls, and by mail.

7. Q & A:

- *Tammy* asked what VCA stands for.
- *Martin* responded that it is the Voters Choice Act from Senate Bill 450. There is a series of criteria that moved voting from PPs to IPVLs for convenience, and suggested that Tammy read Senate Bill 450, for further information.
- *Gabe* inquired about public comment.
- *Martin* stated that Ventura County will have full VCA certified status by June 2022.
- *Sandra* requested in-person speaker events throughout the community and at different groups to educate people on the VCA.
- *Martin* responded that the Elections Division is in process of hiring a robust outreach team and that the team will just that.
- *Tammy* asked when the next VAAC meeting will be.
- *Irma* responded that it is tentatively scheduled for Friday, 22 October 2021, at 10:30am.

8. Adjournment:

Meeting was adjourned at 11:17am (PCT).