

# Minutes



# ELECTION ASSISTANCE COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, JULY 26<sup>TH</sup>, 2006

@ 9:00 AM to 10:30 AM

GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION ON DISABILITIES

41 CHERRY DALE CT.

CRANSTON, RI 02920

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**ATTENDANCE:**

Rory Carmody, Chairperson, Robert Pires, Michelle Hayes, Arthur Plitt, Robert Rapoza,

**EXCUSED:**

John McDonald, J. Patassi, Steven Florio, Kate Bowden, Susan Silva

**GUESTS:**

Miguel Luna (State Board of Elections)

**STAFF:**

Bob Cooper

## AGENDA TOPICS

**1**

**CALL TO ORDER**

Rory Carmody, Chairperson

Meeting called to order at 9:25 AM, by the Executive Secretary, in the absence of the Chairperson. Chairperson arrived shortly after the meeting began.

**2**

**Feedback on the Use of the Automark Polling System in the Primary**

Members reviewed the letter from the National Federation of the Blind of RI (see attached), written testimony from a Commission staff person (Teresa Carr- Hopkins, also attached) and personal testimony from 2 Committee members (Robert Pires 7 Regina Connor).

Bob and Miguel spoke about the:

1. the current poll worker training on the Automark and need to conduct additional "hands on" training of poll workers;
2. problem with the ink cartridges drying out once taken from their sealed packages, so its unusable beyond the day its installed into the Automark; and
3. Automark booting up should take only 2 minutes.

Members discussed the need for signs at the entrance to the polling place informing voters who are elderly or disabled that they can move to the front of the line and that anyone wanting to use the Automark should inform the polling place's warden or clerk immediately upon entering to the Automark is ready once they have signed in.



September 28, 2006

Mr. Robert Cooper  
Executive Director  
Governor's Commission on Disabilities  
41 Cherrydale Court  
Cranston, RI 02920

Dear Bob,

Per your request, here is a short summary of the problems people, who contacted me, had at the poles on September 12, 2006.

Jennifer Aberdeen [REDACTED] Voting District-3914 [Woonsocket] When she arrived at the pole place, the machine was not on. The pole workers attempted to put it together, but had no idea what they were doing. She was able to look at it and figure out how to insert the printer cartridge and turn the machine on. Once it was on, she proceeded  
To Vote without a problem.

Regina Connor [REDACTED] Voting District-1A [North Providence]. The machine was not on when she arrived at the poles. The pole workers had a difficult time getting the machine running. Finally, after an hour, she was able to vote without any further problems.

Priscilla Fratantuono [REDACTED] Voting District-4 Voting Place-Windmill School [Providence]. The machine was not on when she arrived. The pole workers made no attempt to put the machine on, even though she requested for them to do so. She had gone to the poling place with her daughter and the pole workers told her to let her daughter fill in the ballot for her. Since they left no other choice her daughter assisted her in voting.

Elizabeth Frampton [REDACTED] Voting Place-Diamond Hill Ski Lodge [Cumberland]. Elizabeth is a mother of a blind child. Since she had been made aware that anyone could use these machines, she decided to ask to vote with the machine. Here too the machine was not on. The pole workers told her that she could not use the machine, because she was not disabled. When she explained that she was told that anyone could use the machine, the worker became argumentative and belligerent. They went so far as to say that blind people did not need these machines because they have other methods to vote. She was embarrassed and humiliated in front of everyone at the poling place at the time.

Richard & Catherine Gaffney [REDACTED] Voting District-22 Voting Place-Riverside Middle School [East Providence]. As with everyone else, the machine was not on. After we signed in we asked to use the machine. They were expecting our request. They told us that they were not given much training on starting the unit. They said they only were told to put the key in and it would start. They found a printer cartridge in the box and had no idea what to do with it. After reading the manual, they finally got it working. When Catherine voted all went well till it was time to print out the ballot. It got stuck in the machine. Again they had no idea how to get it out. They read the manual further and after much trial and

error it was retrieved and placed in the tabulator. When it was my turn the ballot also became stuck in the machine, it was retrieved, but it was bent and I had to vote again. This whole process took over an hour.

Terry & Paul Hopkins [redacted] [Columbus Ave. Fire Station, Pawtucket] in their situation, once the machine was turned on and started the machine did not work. Another machine was brought in and that one did not work either. They were at their voting place for over two hours. They finally had to vote with pole workers help.

Dr. Donald Deignan [redacted] Voting Place-Center Place in Providence. When he arrived at the polling place the machine was not on. Once it was finally up and running, the ballot would not come out after voting. The pole workers there had said the training on the maintenance of the machine was very sparse.

We had one person who wanted to remain anonymous. In their case the machine was not on, and the person at the polling place could not put it together so they could not use it. After an hour their transportation came to take them home. They had to vote with the assistance of the pole workers.

Another anonymous contact inform me that the pole workers were instructed to do all they can to discourage people from using the machines. There were no instructions on the set up or operations of the machines.

As you can see most of the problems revolve around the lack of training by the pole workers. Also, the lack of publicity on who can and cannot use the machines. To my knowledge everyone should be using them. Otherwise, it is separating the blind and disabled community from everyone else. In my opinion, those machines should be on and in working condition first thing in the morning. These are good machines and with the proper maintenance the elections should go smoothly.

Sincerely,

Richard A. Gaffney

President, NFB of RI

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#### SEPTEMBER 12, 2006 PRIMARY DAY VOTING EXPERIENCE REPORT

On primary day I arrived at the polls ... at the fire station on Columbus Ave. in Pawtucket ... at 11 AM via a very nice volunteer driver with my husband, Paul. While signing in I asked if they had the new machine and the answer was yes. The ballots that were already given to us were taken away and we were told to "stand over there and someone will help you". We stood and waited and waited while others voted and left. I noticed a man to my left setting up a machine and after awhile we were invited to sit at it. We were handed new ballots and I tried to insert mine and with a little help, got it into the machine but all the voice would say was, "please insert ballot and wait 30 seconds". I tried it different ways but nothing changed. The man who set up the machine came to help with no luck so he called for help and followed phone instructions to no avail. Soon a technician arrived and the two men took the machine all apart and put it back together again and it still didn't work. By now it was about noon time so our driver was notified and he chose to wait for us for as long as it would take to help us vote. Another machine was ordered from Branch Ave. and it arrived within 15 minutes and was set up promptly. It worked fine and we both were able to vote with very little trouble. We left about

1 o'clock tired and frustrated but glad that we had persisted and were able to vote independently!

Terry and Paul Hopkins  
Pawtucket, R.I. 02860

<b>3</b>	<b>Grant applications:</b>	Rory Carmody
	<b>Providence:</b> Requests \$2,150 for 50 Disability Parking Signs @ \$25 and 50 Van Accessible Signs @ \$18.	
	<b>East Greenwich:</b> Picked 8 Van Accessible Signs for their polling places, from the Commission and requested an invoice.	
	MOTION: To direct the Commisison to purchase the signs from Corrections Industries on behalf of Providence and East Greenwich.AP/RCo passed unanimously	
	<b>Scituate:</b> The polling place accessibility inspections identified barriers regarding handrails and door hardware. They have not submitted a request for funds yet.	
	MOTION: To authorized up to \$1,500 for Scituate polling place renovations. If the renovations exceed \$1,500, Scituate may submit a request for additional funds, that would have to be approved by the Committee. RCo/RCa passed unanimously	
<b>4</b>	<b>OTHER BUSINESS: Election of Vice Chairperson</b>	Rory Carmody
	MOTION: To elect Regina Connor as Vice Chairperson, AP/MH passed, Regina Connor Abstained.	
<b>5</b>	<b>ADJOURN</b>	Rory Carmody
	Meeting adjourned at 10:45 AM. Next meeting October 27,2006 @ 9AM	