

POLLING PLACE WORK GROUP

Participants:

Dorothy Robinson, Becky Boland, Mark Hinds, Kevin Klecker, Lynnea Atlas-Ingebretson, Edwin Holmwig-Johnson, Ken Rodgers, Catherine Dorr, Nasra Noor, Idil Farah, Sharon Day, Sara Lopez, Kent Robbins, Al Bangoura, Roda Hassan, Hussein Ahmed, Abdulkadir Warsame, Ayub Sharif

City staff:

Grace Wachlarowicz, Elections
Judy Schwartau, Elections
Jilla Nadimi, Elections
Tim Schwarz, Elections
Steve Poor, Community Planning & Economic Development (CPED)
Ahmed Muhumud, Neighborhood & Community Relations (NCR)
Mariano Espinoza, Neighborhood & Community Relations (NCR)
Gao Vang, Neighborhood & Community Relations (NCR)

The following are combined notes/minutes taken during meetings of the Polling Place Work Group, held on April 2, 5, 29, and 30, 2013.

A few initial comments collected:

- The Polling Place Assessment Guide currently includes the word ‘handicapped’ in certain sections—this language should be updated to reflect current usage of “people with disabilities”
- Seward Square Apartments (6-2): Comments made concerning inadequacy of this site for polling with long lines outside; no line management; difficult/narrow space for voter flow; and little assistance or accommodation for disabled/elderly voters.
- Seward Towers East (2-9): site was confusing for residents in the tower, who could not vote in their building, even though they could see voting taking place on site
- Minnesota Church Center (6-9 & 7-10): to avoid confusion and difficulty with voter management within the site, an effort should be made to find a new location into which we can move 6-9
- Marcy Open School (3-3): reported that power door is not functional
- Northeast Middle School (1-3): reported that power door is not functional

The group identified some “Must Have” qualities of polling sites:

- Accessible restrooms for persons with disabilities; need to be truly accessible, including a 60 inch turning radius and/or 36 inch T-Shaped turning radius
- Accessible power-assist doors must be functional—when assessing polling sites, test the doors
- Adequate lighting; if lighting is insufficient, supply site with supplemental lighting (general room lighting and/or adding additional lights to booths/tables)
- If the polling site is an apartment building/public housing, ensure that the voters living in the building can vote at the poll within their building, i.e., that the site is NOT being used for a different precinct
- Designated parking spaces, or some parking options; if there is not a lot available, need nearby street parking; designate “voter parking only” on sections of street, when possible—base on neighborhood profile...are most voters walking/biking or driving?
 - Parking that is available is obvious and/or parking areas are marked...signs or volunteers available to assist voters in finding parking

The group identified the following “Like to Have” or “High Priority” qualities at polling sites:

- Polling site is a large venue: gym, auditorium, etc.
- Interior space available for voter queuing; space for 100/1,000 pre-registered voters, if possible
- Interior space allows easy movement in opposing directions, for voters coming and going; no narrow hallways
- Polling place lies within the precinct and centrally located
- Polling place is not isolated/cut off from majority of voters by major road/highway
- Polling place is visible for voters...visible from street, entrance and parking visible
 - Add signage to make easier to find
 - Pre-designed layouts of each polling site provided to judges; judges will not have to determine best layout design themselves
- As few outside activities in areas around & pathways to voting space as possible (within the voting area there *cannot* be any other activities taking place)
- For schools, have solutions/procedures to work around traffic/parking when students are arriving or leaving via bus, etc.
- For schools, ensure security for students; limited access to school by voters; use of voter-exclusive entrances/exits
- Snow – ensure facility has adequate plan in place for snow removal, as necessary
- Avoid using site for two polling locations/double location, if possible

Election Day / Voter Experience Items & Recommendations

- Poll workers that speak languages in precinct/translating services available at polls, including assistance with completion of forms/registrations
- Poll workers with language skills at entrances, to point people in right direction, get them translation services (not all voters can read or will bother to read signs—even if the signs are in their native language)
- More direction and/or signage for voters to instruct on which line to stand in, where line begins, where to start, what documents are needed, and maps of voting precinct and nearby voting precincts
 - *Have such signage in multiple/dual languages*
- iPad for judges to assist in checking precincts for voters
- Phone app that allows voters to check polling location
- Population is aging; senior population will be increasing and we need to think about how we can assist this group in lines, with seeing & reading the ballots, etc.
- Seating options / extra furniture is available and provided for long waits in line, for elderly, disabled, or others, as needed
- Poll workers should approach those with obvious difficulties in line (those in distress, pain, etc) and offer assistance to advance in line, with notice to surrounding voters in line—should the voter choose to accept assistance
- More poll workers to work lines of voters, to check voter's precinct/registration, make sure they have proper documents to register, to hand out sample ballots, etc.
- Display a large sample ballot, that can be seen by voters waiting in lines
- Have maps available to hand out to voters in the wrong precinct—to be able to circle correct location for them on map; also, list of sites used in last election that have been moved/changed and the new location addressed and/or marked on map
- If in a large gym, auditorium or such...utilize some of the space for voter queuing, rather than only having queuing outside of the larger space
- Use all doors available---in one door, out another, when it would assist voter flow
- Create separate lines for registered voters and non-registered voters, when sensible...if large numbers of people in line are waiting to register, move some registered voters ahead to receive ballots, and work line to provide registration materials to people waiting in line to register
- Provide alternate voting space for people who choose to vote outside of voting booths, or to utilize if booths are occupied
- Volunteers/church/community organizations can provide: assistance in voter directions, parking, other needs outside; or with elderly inside...they could “adopt” a polling place and assist with extra activities not covered by available judges

- Expand use of Automark
- Utilize not only for persons with disabilities; use for illiterate voters, voters with poor English skills, etc
- Provide signs that include *images* of items needed to register to vote
- Provide a children's area, for voters waiting in lines with young children...something to keep the children occupied (crayons, something simple)...or perhaps something like that to hand out in line; if space and site staff available to assist with a special area

Outreach/Training/Recruitment Items & Recommendations & Misc. Notes

- In our reminder letter or in contract with polling places, specify that all lights are to be in working order, and accessible/power doors are functional
- Go beyond neighborhood organizations/typical avenues for government outreach and communications...build trust in communities
- Site layouts provided to judges indicate preferred voter paths/queuing, to assist in line management—accessible route(s) into and through site are the routes noted on layouts (or *both* accessible and non-accessible routes)
- Create new outreach and education efforts in the community re: basic elections process, voter registration, RCV, absentee voting, etc (offered in a variety of languages)
 - For Seward/Cedar-Riverside, need for Oromo translations, not only Somali
 - For outreach, materials, etc. consider needs for Russian and Amharic in certain areas
- Use community TV, radio (KFAI), neigh orgs., church/mosque functions (in Latino communities: Incarnation Church, Sacred Rosary, St Stephen's), Somali malls, Confederation of Somali Communities, Oromo Community Center, Centro, Latino Communications Network
- Voter education & outreach efforts should include information on how voters can be involved apart from the election day voting process...i.e., party caucuses, etc.—different opportunities to vote, get involved...which thereby lead to them becoming active voters...involvement beyond a Presidential election every 4 years
- Provide clear training to judges on how/when to transfer poll workers from a less busy location to nearby locations in need of assistance
 - Especially movement of judges with multi-language skills to sites which may have a sudden/pressing need for additional assistance
- Instruct judges to check temporary signs throughout the day, as they may get damaged, torn, removed, and so on
- Recruit judges via churches, mosques, parks
- Recruit more university students (who also happen to have language skills)
- Judge mentors to work with student judges

- Provide voter info via community newspapers
- Create and mail out voter guides (inclusive of all info needed to vote: how, where, what elections, etc.)
- Encourage voting throughout the day, not just at peak times
- Provide time period for early voting / Saturday voting
- Offer more info/education re absentee voting and offer absentee voting in remote locations
- Extensive designating of street parking as “voter-only” is difficult via Public Works; attempt to do so in most-problematic sites
- Judges need to know voters can have someone (of their own choosing) to assist them with their ballot (reading or understanding it)—give more detail on what’s allowed, etc
- In training and/or recruitment, stress idea that judges are there to **enable people** to vote—maybe this will help to recruit more judges

Alternate sites to research/consider:

Webster School

Lyndale School on Grand

Brand new building across the street from North Point Health

Lincoln Community School

Wilder School

Pillsbury House

-school moving to 38th & Pleasant??