



Commissioners, Thank you for this opportunity to present a proposal for the Skagit County Accessible Communities Advisory Committee – the ACAC from this point forward.

The purpose of this discussion is to make the Commissioners aware of the ACAC, create interest and hopefully excitement for its potential, and hope you see the promise the ACAC has to improve not only the lives of people with disabilities, but many more.

If Commissioners agree to move forward with the ACAC, the Secretary of State simply needs a letter assuring our ACAC will comply with the Governor’s Committee on Disability and Employment requirements and we intend to demonstrate to the commission these requirements are met.

If the Commission needs more time or information to make this determination, please tell us what we could do to help.

## OVERVIEW

1. The Accessible Communities Act (Chapter 215, Laws of 2010)
2. Skagit County Accessible Communities Advisory Committee Proposal
  1. City of Anacortes Pilot Program
3. Accessible Communities Advisory Committee Benefit Summary
4. Next Steps

We'll begin with the premise behind the Accessible Communities Act;  
Then discuss a proposal to form an Accessible Communities Advisory Committee for Skagit County, including a pilot program in Anacortes;  
Review anticipated benefits  
Then discuss next steps.

## ACCESSIBLE COMMUNITIES ACT PREMISE

*“The daily experience of living with a disability is an exercise in problem solving. It requires planning every activity and goal to identify the barriers and come up with solutions. Living with a disability requires constant prioritization in use of energy, time and money. Many areas of public policy disproportionately affect people with disabilities. Policies made without input from people with disabilities can have serious unintended consequences.”*

- Governor’s Committee on Disability Issues and Employment

“Nothing about us, without us”

If you have a disability or cared for a disabled family member, you know this statement from the Governor’s Committee is spot on. Living with a disability is an exercise in problem solving, that requires planning every activity and constant prioritization to identify barriers and develop solutions.

Challenges are faced daily that able-bodied people don’t recognize. Frankly, few do, until they become disabled.

As a result, good intentions, without input from people with disabilities can result in ineffective solutions or create even greater hardships and unintended consequences.

The Governor’s Committee recognizes, who better to discuss the needs of people with disabilities, than those with disabilities. The Governor’s Committee coined the tag line, “Nothing about us, without us” which sums up the ACAC’s purpose.

The ACAC brings the disabled community into the discussion.

## GOVERNOR'S DIRECTIVE

Governor's Committee on Disability and Employment (GCDE) announced Accessible Communities Act to:

- Support people living with disabilities
- Engage the disability community, local government, businesses and organizations
- Promote greater awareness and accessibility and offer support for effective solutions and partnerships

Great Concept... How does it work?

The Accessible Communities Act and the ACAC it fostered:

Supports people with disabilities by;

Bringing together the disabled community, local governments, businesses and organizations;

To promote greater awareness and accessibility and offer support to develop effective solutions and partnerships.

Sounds Great! But let's talk about how it gets done

## ACAC AVAILABLE RESOURCES

- ACAC -provides resources for counties to promote better disability awareness and access for people who have disabilities
  - Reimbursement for travel, per diem, sign language interpreters and other accommodations during meetings
  - A grant program to fund small, local projects to improve awareness, acceptance, inclusion and access for people with disabilities.
  - A website to share best practices and other information
  - A searchable database of accessible features for local businesses and other public accommodations

A good start

The Legislature makes resources available through the ACAC to promote disability awareness and access for people with disabilities.

These include:

-Reimbursement to enhance participation in ACAC meetings by people with disabilities;

-A grant program to fund small local projects benefiting people with disabilities

-A website to share best practices among ACAC committees throughout the state

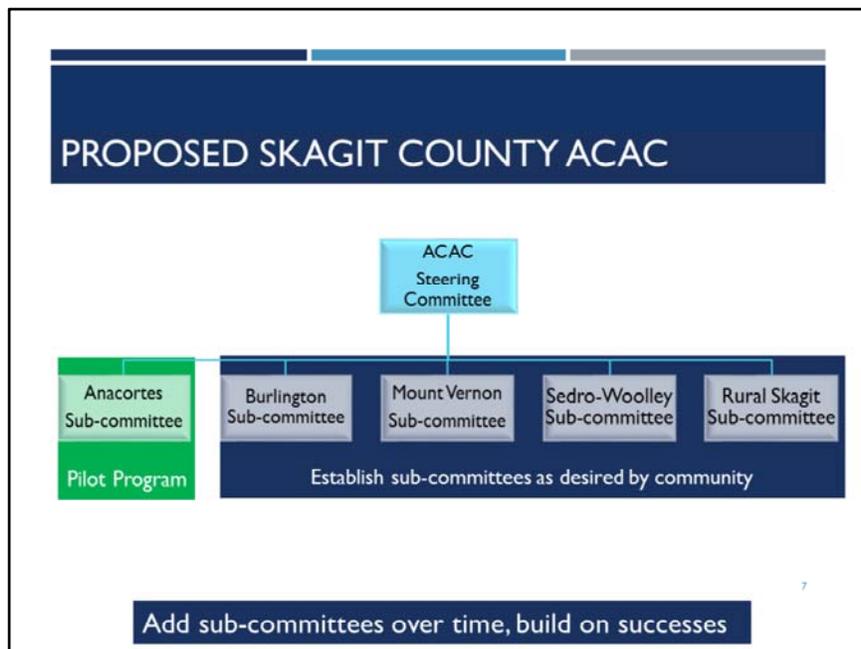
-A searchable database of accessible features for local businesses and other public accommodations, sharing “lessons learned” from others in serving people with disabilities.

These resources are a good start and demonstrates commitment.



However, the greatest benefit the ACAC provides a platform from which to address decision makers who have the potential to improve the quality of life for people with disabilities and a framework for collaboration between these elements.

More on this in a minute.



We propose establishing a sub-committee for each community that enables a focus on the needs of people with disabilities within each community- which will get down to details such as, which street corner needs a curb cut.

This will be a learning and growing process, and propose the Skagit ACAC launch with Anacortes as a pilot program, then roll out to other communities as they desire, using the Anacortes template, if it fits them.

There will be need for oversight and coordination of the sub-committees, especially when managing the ACAC grant funding from the State. The ACAC Steering Committee would provide this function.



The proposed ACAC Steering Committee membership includes representatives from the County’s Audit and Public Health departments, plus from each sub-committee. The primary purpose of the ACAC Steering committee will be to manage the grant request process, from point of request receipt, evaluation, submission, disbursement of awarded funds and associated reporting.

The composition of the steering committee will support coordination of activities across the sub-committees such a need arises; however, the steering committee’s primary purpose will be to manage the ACAC grant process.



The workhorse of the ACAC will be the sub-committee. It'll be composed of three groups of volunteers, each with varying levels of responsibility, expertise and commitment, intended to efficiently utilize the volunteer labor.

**Core members** are recruited to fulfill specific roles, will include persons with a diverse range of disabilities, oversee committee operation and meet at least once per quarter.

**Consultants** are subject-matter experts, providing input on issues as they arise, and attend meetings as needed.

**Stakeholders** are individuals interested in following ACAC sub-committee activities, they'll receive sub-committee correspondence, are welcome to attend meetings and contribute to discussion, as will the general public.

A City Official (elected or staff) will **Champion** the sub-committee, providing oversight and assurance sub-committee is aligned with City's goals.

## ACAC SUB-COMMITTEE ANACORTES MEMBERSHIP

### Core Members (tentative)

Name	Role/Represents	Qualifications
Col. Eric Johnson (ret.)	Champion	COA City Councilman, Kiwanis Aktion Club advisor
Kirk Kennedy	Co-leader	Disability due to MS, power wheelchair user, non-driver
Sylvia Cooper	Co-leader (COA)	Advocate for PWD, Committee Administrator
Joann Olmstead	Hearing impaired	RN, Skagit Hearing Loss Assoc., Skagit Hearing Loop Advocate
Jerry Olmstead	Hearing Impaired	Pres. Skagit Hearing Loss Assoc., Skagit Hearing Loop Advocate
Paul Denham	Mobility Challenged	Wheelchair user, Skagit Transit Assoc. user
Andy Arvidson	Visually impaired-blind	Pres. Skagit/Island Counsel of the Blind, Guide Dog Users BOD
Colette Arvidson	Advocate/assistance dogs	VP Anacortes Lions Club, Dog-on-Call pet therapy
Donna Erlandson	Developmental Disability	Parent of Aktion Club member

### Consultants

Name	Role	Qualifications
Gunnar Christiansen	COA-Public Works	Engineering-ADA compliance: streets, sidewalks, curb cuts, etc.
Joann Stewart	COA-Building & Permit Dept.	Building Dept-ADA compliance residential & commercial buildings
Stephanie Hamilton	Anacortes Chamber of Commerce	Exec. Director, representing local businesses
Keiko McCracken	ASD 103	ASD Community Engagement Coordinator, children advocate
Brad Windler	Skagit Transit Auth.	Route planning, service for people with disabilities
Sally Hill	Anacortes Senior Activity Ctr.	Center Coordinator representing senior population
Nancy Novak	Skagit County Public Health Dept.	Developmental Disabilities Program Coordinator
Sandy Perkins	Skagit County Auditor Dept.	Chief Deputy Auditor

Members are Connected and Involved

Core members and consultants have tentatively been defined for the Anacortes ACAC sub-committee.

**Core members** represent a diverse range of disabilities from hearing and vision loss, to mobility and developmental disabilities. Many are also actively engaged in leadership roles for advocacy organizations and core membership could be expanded based upon need.

**Consultants** are subject-matter experts who engage with the committee to provide input as needs arise and the committee is available to advise consultants on disability related issues they encounter.

I am excited for the prospects of the ACAC assembled for Anacortes; it represents diverse disabilities and does so with people who are actively advocating for people with disabilities. I believe we have met the expectations for ACAC membership by the GCDE.



I'm equally excited of the framework the ACAC establishes for improved communication and collaboration with people and organizations, which holds much promise for positive impacts on the lives of people with disabilities.

The ACAC, consisting of advocates representing diverse disabilities, is to be the nucleolus driving change for people with disabilities; local government, organizations and businesses serving them.

ACAC Consultants will be requested to provide their expertise on issues taken up by the committee, or the Consultant could also request the ACAC provide feedback to questions they have.

## ACAC SUB-COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

- As required by the GCDE, the committee will be involved in:
  - “Advising on the needs of persons with disabilities in emergency plans”;
  - “Advising the county and other local governments within the county on access to programs, services and activities, new construction or renovation projects, sidewalks, other pedestrian routes of travel, and disability parking enforcement”;
  - “Developing local initiatives and activities to promote greater awareness of disability issues, and acceptance, involvement, employment and access for persons with disabilities within the community”.

“Nothing about us, without us”

The GCDE provides a “skeleton” of required activities, so let me try to put some “meat on their bones” , or at least as I see it.

Local governments spend most of their emergency planning on big picture items, as they should, and ask residents to shelter in place for a period of time. This works for most of our population; however disabled and elder residents may not have that option. In an attempt to fill this gap, and in conjunction with emergency response planners, the ACAC will develop strategies and action plans to attempt safeguarding the vulnerable in our community.

The ACAC is envisioned to assist in the definition of needs and resulting designs, “before the shovel goes in the ground”, a basic best practice of construction management which yields the best results, in the shortest time frame, at lowest costs (all primarily driven by lower rework requirements).

The ACAC provides a voice for people with disabilities to bring opportunities, issues and concerns affecting the community of disabled persons.

## ANACORTES SUB-COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES TO BE CONSIDERED

- Anacortes Community Theater: improve accessibility for people with disabilities to participate in productions, on stage.
- Automatic restroom doors at City Hall
- Hearing Loop in Brodniak Hall Anacortes High School
- Develop website serving disabled community
  - Community resources, accessible businesses,
- Provide input on sidewalk & curb-cut initiative
- Programs for local businesses:
  - Serving residents & visitors with disabilities
  - Discuss employment possibilities for people with disabilities
- Advocate for people with disabilities
  - Accessibility, Employment, Housing, Emergency Planning

Anacortes has an engaged citizenry who has been successful in advocating for people with disabilities, many of whom will be on Anacortes' ACAC sub-committee, and some have projects ready to be developed by the ACAC.

Such as improvements allowing people with disabilities to participate, on-stage, in ACT Theater productions; install automatic doors in restrooms at City Hall and adding a hearing loop in Brodniak Hall at Anacortes High School.

There is interest to develop programs for local businesses to serve residents & visitors with disabilities and explore employment possibilities for people with disabilities.

It's ambitious, but I believe in what Walmart's founder Sam Walton said, "High expectations are key to everything", and a lot of people can benefit.

So let's talk about those benefits.

## ACAC BENEFITS

The ACAC provides a process through which the needs of people with disabilities can be expressed to benefit:

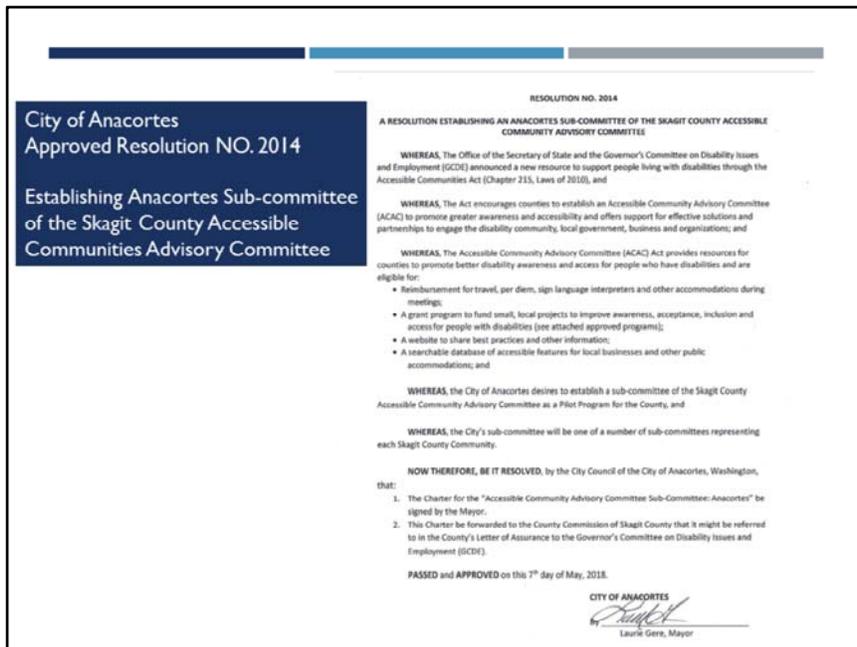
- People with disabilities gaining access to activities they previously were unable to be involved.
  - Friends and family members also benefit from inclusion of people with disabilities in group activities
- Policy makers need the knowledge and expertise of people with disabilities to ensure that their community becomes more accessible and accommodating.
- Businesses benefit by expanding markets which they serve.
  - \*At \$175 Billion, discretionary spending of people with disabilities, more than 2X of teenager's
  - \*Est. 75% of people with disabilities eat out at least once a week, spending \$35 billion annually
  - People with disabilities spend in excess of \$13.6 billion annually on travel
  - 1 in 5 Americans are potential customers to accessible businesses

\*[www.asda.gov/busstat.htm](http://www.asda.gov/busstat.htm)

The obvious winners of an effective ACAC will be people with disabilities. However, associated with them are their family and friends, enabling all to share experiences.

Many government agencies, organizations and businesses are directed by the American's With Disabilities Act to invest in accessible designs; the ACAC can assist that process to help ensure investments are wise.

The US Dept. of Labor published data suggesting people with disabilities have significant spending potential, that programs the ACAC help develop, could assist local businesses to enter this market-estimated to be 1 in 5 Americans and twice the value of spending by teenagers.



To demonstrate the City of Anacortes' support for the Anacortes Sub-Committee of a newly formed ACAC committee, we asked the Anacortes City Council to adopt Resolution No. 2014, which they did unanimously and Mayor Gere signed on May 7, 2018.

## NEXT STEPS

1. Address questions, issues or concerns raised by Board of Commissioners
2. Seek Board of Commissioner's support for ACAC formation
  1. If support received, proceed to #3
3. Receive Board of Commissioner's Signature on letter assuring ACAC formation is compliant with Accessible Communities Act
4. Send signed letter and Skagit ACAC proposal to Governor's Committee on Disability and Employment for review and approval.
5. First ACAC Committee meeting in July 31<sup>st</sup>

If Commissioners are satisfied the ACAC holds promise for people with disabilities and we satisfy the requirements of the GCDE, Sandy is ready to prepare a resolution to that effect, if one is required.

To establish an ACAC in Skagit County, the Secretary of State needs a letter assuring compliance with the GCDE's requirements. These requirements are highlighted in the Accessible Communities Act text found in pages 5-6, of the materials supplied for this discussion. Additionally, a draft of the Secretary of State's Letter of Assurance, with their provided text, is found on page 4 of before mentioned material.

We believed it was necessary (first to prove to us, then the Commissioners), to obtain approval of the Anacortes ACAC sub-committee, and recruit team members, prior to bringing the ACAC before you. Now, having obtained the City's approval and assembled what I believe is an all-star committee, we'd like to get engaged as soon as possible.

Our first ACAC sub-committee meeting is scheduled for July 31, in Anacortes. We are comfortable moving forward if we are waiting for the Secretary of State's approval; however, we wouldn't be comfortable without the Commissioner's approval.

How would you like to proceed?



## APPENDIX



## ACAC GRANT AWARDS (EXAMPLES)

- Improve disabled parking, route of travel and sidewalks at Jefferson County Jefferson County Fairgrounds. Also included in the contract is adding automatic door openers on county buildings, purchasing assistive listening devices for county meetings,-\$47,791
- Add automatic doors to several county offices in Cowlitz County courthouse built in 1923-\$62,903
- Remodel Wahkiakum County's 1938 community center's entry ways & bathrooms-\$115,000 (county contributed \$40,000)

Competitive Grant Process Requires Planning

These are examples of grants awarded to ACAC committees...

Jefferson county improved facilities at County fairgrounds

Automatic doors were added to Cowlitz County courthouse

The 1938 community center was modified in Wahkiakum County.

Grants are awarded as the Legislature makes funds available and are competitive, channel funds to maximize benefits.