

see you all either in the room or virtually. Um, I uh want to get us

0:08

started as promptly as possible, but I recognize that we were probably missing quite a few folks that we might be

0:16

anticipating coming. Do are there So, I did not hear back from Disability

0:21

Rights Vermont folks that I wrote to. Okay. I mean, we're expecting

0:28

um Did we have someone from the school board association? Yes. Um

0:35

yes, I am here and my name is Muhammad. Last name Dio P. I'm trying to figure

0:41

out how to get my camera on. Welcome, Muhammad. Nice nice to have you

0:46

here. Thank you all. That may everyone that heard from.

0:53

Great. Um, so I think what we should do first is um I'll introduce ourselves

1:00

since there's some new people here. Hi Tim, good to see you. Um, Tim, you're on mute.

Um, so I think we should introduce

1:07

ourselves um because there's some new people here um and then we can get

1:14

started. So I'll um let's do this. Let's um do introductions in the room until we

1:21

get to this side of the table and then we'll go to online um introductions and then we'll do the other side of the

1:27

table. But I'll kick it off. I'm Lauren Hibbert. I'm the deputy secretary of state and with that I'm going to turn it

1:32

over to you Dan. My name is Daniel Brown uh and I work in the elections division.

1:38

I'm Susan Clark um and I am in Middle Sex. I'm representing the Vermont League of Cities and Towns on this um within

1:46

this group and I'm a facilitator and uh trainer on public

1:53

engagement. Um and Andy Hooper is the other person who uh I think is

1:58

representing the League of Cities and Towns and I think he texted he is coming late today. Perfect.

2:05

I'm Frank Nelson from Pod. I'm on the planning commission energy coordinator and delegate to the DNH rail trail

2:12

advisory group u

2:22

Michael and Mar uh the people on the team my interpreter sitting behind

2:35

their blinded for the department of disability aging and independent

2:40

um Kelly Pyella. I am uh Jenny's admin assistant

2:47

fairly uh well titles say your title is still to be

2:52

decided and I'm Jenny Proer. I am the general counsel and the director of municipal

2:58

assistance at the secretary of state's office. Great. And Tim, can you please introduce

3:04

yourself? You're on mute, Tim. You're on mute. Yes. Okay. Thank you. Good morning.
Tim

3:11

Arsenal, former town clerk of Vernon, now the assistant town clerk. Nobody will let me retire because I also am a

3:18

member of the Vermont Association of Broadcasters Hall of Fame, working for WTSA in Rattleboro. And there's a third

3:25

leg to the stool. Uh, my stepdaughter Valerie Annis Hughes is deaf and currently works for the Vermont Center

3:32

for Independent Living as a deaf adult services coordinator.

3:38

Thank you, Tim. Um, Muhammad Muhammad J, I do wear multiple hearts,

3:45

but I am here um as a representative uh from Vermont School Board uh

3:51

association. Thank you. Um, Kate.

3:57

Good morning, everyone. Kate LaRose, she her. I live in the Northeast Kingdom. I

4:02

am a middle-aged white woman with blue glasses and my background um is a photo

4:07

of a red sunset with clouds over a lake. Um I am the youth services coordinator

4:12

at the Vermont Center for Independent Living and am here today um in a um role

4:18

as a VCIL staff member as well as somebody with lived experience who has not been able to vote in local elections

4:24

for four years on the basis of my disability um and have not been able to attend a large range of municipal

4:31

meetings. So thank you. Glad to be here. Thank you Kate. Um, Muhammad, I think perhaps you should

4:40

go on mute.

4:46

You have the ability to mute him. Um, Megan, thank you. Um, Megan, do you

4:53

can you please introduce yourself? Hi, my name is Megan and I work with CCTV Center for Media and Democracy, one

4:59

of um a community media center in Burlington, Vermont.

5:06

Thank you. And Cynthia. Hi, my name is Cynthia Shelton. I'm in

5:11

Thatford, Vermont. I'm one of the invisible public and um I have too many

5:17

hats also to describe, but I am very involved in local government and trying

5:22

to get community activated and uh and I'm sorry I can't put myself on camera.

5:28

It blows out the audio. We we've had that happen, haven't we? So, yeah.

5:33

Yeah. Um, and I would just mention that Laura Kushner just emailed me. She's looking for the link to the meeting and

5:38

so I'm going to send it to her right now. So, she should be here shortly. Great.

5:44

Um, well, good. So, um, I'm just trying to pull up our agenda. Um, Jenny, are

5:52

you in the team's meeting or not? I am not in it, but I can get in it if that would be helpful. If you could get in it so that we can

5:58

share. I'm I'm just for everyone's awareness. I'm triaging two issues that

6:03

might pull me out of this room, but I'm going to do my best to stay. Um,

6:10

and um, it would be good for everyone to be able to see the agenda

6:20

in case you didn't see it last night or in case you're watching later.

6:33

in Jenny for me to put the agenda up. Yeah, to share the agenda would be

6:38

great.

6:54

Hi Laura. Hi. Sorry, I was I found it. I was like, do I have the right link?

7:02

Thank you, Laura. This is Jenny Prower. I was just trying to pull it up for you, so I'm really glad you got there faster

7:07

than I did. Thank you. Got it. Laura, um we have quite a few new people

7:13

um with us, which is awesome. Um we won't do introductions again, but if you

7:18

could introduce yourself, that would be great. Uh I'm Laura Kushman from Disability

7:23

Rights Vermont. Great. Thank you so much. Yeah. Um

7:30

so, uh Jenny is in the process of sharing, um the agenda and we also have

7:37

a train going by.

7:42

This happens at 1010 almost every day.

7:49

Might be annoying. It is a little annoying.

7:54

It also I kind of feel nostalgically about it. I like it. Um it can be either

8:01

depending probably on my mental state at the time of occurrence whether you're

8:07

Yeah.

8:14

Well, um Jenny's doing that for people who are in the room. Um did you um learn

8:19

where the water is and the bathroom is? Are there any human creature needs that people need to take care of?

8:26

No. Okay, good. I think I'm asking because I need water, so I might go get water.

8:32

Um, I don't know where that is. It's right next door. Okay, alcoholic sharing.

8:38

No, it's not reading. It's not reading the Okay, I'm gonna go get water.

8:44

Yeah.

8:52

I exist. It's my

8:58

maddening. I apologize.

9:05

You see your elections? Yep. Yeah. Have you been there just since? I've been here since 2021.

9:12

Okay. Yes. Yes.

9:17

you know, 2022. Time just flies. When you're having fun, right, Dan?

9:24

Feel like time flies, but also just kind of like I got it

9:31

downloading it. I tried to do my files. It's not

9:37

exist. Teams is telling you, but when I tried to do the share, it's telling me it can't see.

9:43

Make it

9:49

We're trying to share the agenda. Yeah. Yeah.

9:55

Yeah. From here. One of those technical problems with the meeting that we've been talking about.

10:06

Wait. No, it doesn't want to share. Do you want to try to share that one?

10:13

Um, well, what if we go to This is ridiculous. Sorry, this is not

10:18

gonna work. Um,

10:25

do you want me to try? I can forward it to you. I've got it here. I don't know. I think it's a

10:30

team's It's either user ability me or teams. Is it on the inter? It's not posted on

10:37

our website. No, it's that teams won't actually when she hits share it won't actually. Did

10:43

Mia share? The final agenda is on our website.

10:51

Yes.

11:31

Is this the biggest room that's in this building? We have another one that's a little

11:36

little bigger. Like two seats bigger. We could we could verbally cover the

11:41

agenda. Yeah, it's pretty short. Yeah, sure.

11:50

Where can I have the question? Yes, of course. So, I haven't been to any of the other meetings and I wasn't

11:56

sure where to look to find that information other than the email that I got from your car song. So, I'm just

12:02

kind of curious what kind of um I just want to make sure I'm contributing my

12:09

thought. Yeah. In the last four years in my role with the state, I've received a numerous

12:17

number of referral from town from community members about their frustration with accessibility for

12:24

meeting public meeting. And often times if it's a community member, I piss back

12:29

to tell them to contact the town clerk. And often times if it's a town clerk reaching out to me, they don't know any

12:35

of the resources that available at their disposal. Yes. I can respect that. Yeah, I think that's

12:42

sort of the thrust of this entire meeting. Um the group, you know, where

12:48

we were created by statute um session law to work on accessibility to public

12:56

meetings. Um not just from a disability lens, but from multiple lenses,

13:01

technology, um socioeconomical, there's quite a few lenses that we are looking

13:07

at. Um, and we're really glad that you're here because it sounds like

13:12

you're going to be very helpful. Um, so we really appreciate that. Um, and we've had a series of meetings. Um, in terms

13:19

of your specific question about where to find the agenda, I think if I go here,

13:25

you it'll switch. Uh, yeah. Um, it's on the Secretary of State. Um,

13:32

I didn't know where to look there. Yeah. No, it's very it's I see it now. Okay. It's not that easy. Um, if you go

13:39

to the municipal division and open meetings, let me just go back a page for everybody's awareness. Um, the only

13:46

reason I even knew about the meeting was because I reached out to Abby from your office. Yeah.

13:52

And when they shared the link about the meetings and I was I knew about the open meeting law had passed. I just didn't

13:57

know what was going on. I didn't know who to contact. I'm sure.

14:02

I'm sure that we're missing other people that should be involved. Um and that's um just a hardness but um yes so you go

14:10

to um SOS home and municipal division open meetings and then there's a link

14:17

here for the working group and then you click there and then you can open the

14:22

agenda um further down on this page and let me

14:27

weird that should be easier for me to find. Okay well good

14:33

and then here it is. So um the first um

14:38

item substantial item on the agenda is working group process and report planning because um we are getting

14:46

closer to that um needing to happen, starting to plan for that. Um and I

14:52

think um when Jenny Kelly and I talked about this yesterday, we're starting to

14:57

get feedback on how that can be done. Um, and I think it's good for us to have a a public conversation about sort of

15:04

what we're thinking and then to hear what other people are thinking or have

15:10

responses to what we're thinking. Um, so we have been um, and Laura, for you your

15:18

information, we um have been doing uh,

15:24

and Tim for all of our new people, Tim, Muhammad, everybody. Um we have been um

15:31

taking a meeting and trying to think of a work on a topic um and then um

15:40

there's been some subgroup activity um that has been I think uh successful but

15:46

probably there will need to be more subgroup activity. Um and um I think I

15:54

can speak for everybody that has been part of these meetings. Um and you'll quickly see in this meeting um these

16:03

topics are so big, so complicated. Um the time frame we have is very tight.

16:10

Um, and where Jenny, Kelly, and I sort

16:16

of landed yesterday is as we're thinking about what is in the range of possible

16:22

for a report, we're not going to be able to answer all the questions in full

16:27

capability. I I see this more as an initial larger conversation with the

16:35

identification of issues and um

16:40

maybe for some topics proposed recommendations for solutions but um

16:46

I have planning on my end. Good good um on this topic. Yeah. and and I think everybody is here because

16:53

they have uh strong ideas and strong um

16:59

opinions and a lot of good solutions to bring to the table. So that is awesome.

17:06

The reality is um we probably are not going to be able to you know issue a

17:13

document that is uh comprehensive and affirmatively resolves all of the issues

17:18

that we've been asked to t tackle. Um, but I do think we'll be able to create a

17:24

document that is a strong um exploration of all of these issues and um

17:33

I hope you know fingers crossed and um the the stars align um that we have um

17:44

strong recommendations for future action or future contemplation. Um, and I just

17:51

don't know where that line between future action and future contemplation is going to fall. And it may be

17:57

different for different topics. Um, I have a question. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Do you have a budget limit?

18:03

We have no money. We have no money for this work group and we have no promise of money in the

18:09

future. So I think um you are uh dovetailing exactly where I think um

18:18

this report is going to go um which I sort of crossly sent to Jenny and Kelly

18:24

yesterday. You know I think every topic we could have these are the things that money could fix, these are the things

18:31

that infrastructure could fix and these are the things that people can fix.

18:36

Right? With every topic, we have infrastructure, money, and people as the

18:44

the factors that could possibly resolve uh the issues that this group is

18:49

identifying. And by people, you mean sort of it would be education or training or

18:55

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Um either building the the existing people or additional people.

19:00

Yeah. Which takes money by the way. Yeah. It's all it's all connected. People always call me to do training.

19:07

I'm free. Well, that's great. Well, so we can put you and your resources uh deeply in to

19:14

this report so that people know about you because I think um people do or

19:20

don't. Um and um that's a failing. So that's something that we can uh identify

19:26

and help resolve. Um I have another question. Yeah. So all these meetings in person or

19:32

virtual or hybrid? They're all hybrid. Um, which is

19:37

all the time using the same platform. Meaning are they using teams or go to

19:43

meet or we are using teams. Um, and every time

19:48

Oh. Oh, you're asking Meetings or what? That's what I'm using. Uh, you're talking about open meetings.

19:54

Is there consistent um platform? Uh, no. So, you don't mean this group?

19:59

No. I mean, that's what I meant. Open me law just focus at the state level or the

20:05

focus local agency. Oh our mission for this working group.

20:10

Uhu. Uh for this working group our mission is all open meeting state and local.

20:19

That's my expectation. Yeah. The inconsistency every time I talk to

20:24

none of them are using the same platform. Yes. So the level of acceptability varies depending on the platform that

20:30

they are using. Yes. So that is something that we did talk about um in the technology um

20:37

section of um our discussion but certainly um is something that we should

20:44

talk about today because what you're um bringing right to the forefront is accessibility to a public meeting um

20:51

which is highly dependent on platform. Um, and I think just to be clear when I answered

20:58

your question, I thought you were asking about these meetings. Um, and

21:04

in general, yeah. Yeah. And so, not all open meetings have to be hybrid.

21:11

The law varies depending on what type of meeting it is.

21:16

I just wanted to make sure that I gave the correct answer. Yeah. Just run a little bit. So um I'm

21:22

trying to think was kind of about for example I think over they had a resident who wanted to

21:28

participate in multiple meetings. They reached out to me asked me if I had any money I was like no you have to figure

21:34

out they're like I kind of thought hiring interpreters to all these meetings. I'm like well you can offer

21:40

alternative suggestion but will that person be able to understand you alternative suggestion? Not necessarily.

21:48

And so you have to negotiate compromise

21:54

over 173 towns. We have 250

21:59

250 252 entities. Yeah. That concern that this this falls under

22:07

Tim had had his hand up. I don't know. Tim, I'm sorry I didn't see your hand.

22:12

That's okay. And I uh just wanted to pass on that really from a town official

22:19

perspective from both the clerks and even select boards and I would say that

22:25

uh money does come from the select boards if the if the cause is correct.

22:31

Uh there's a guide would be great for information and the bottom line would be

22:36

who do we ask who do we find out to get the appropriate information. Uh from our

22:42

perspective, uh my town has been one of the smaller ones to actually use an ASL

22:48

interpreter at town meeting. Uh and I think it's partially because of the

22:54

proximity of the former Austinine school that I would be interested to know if other communities also get similar

23:02

requests. Not as many of Not as many at the time

23:09

as I'm on the the desk. No, I think it's because they lack the

23:14

knowledge of how to do PIP, how to spotlight the interpreter, how to incorporate them, all the, you know,

23:21

etiquette around using interpreters. And some people have the attitude where

23:27

they're like, "Oh, you want to come? You bring your own interpreters."

23:33

It doesn't work that way. That's not how the law is designed.

23:38

No kidding. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. If I may respond, that's the situation that keep popping

23:43

up on my radar. If I may respond, that would be a subject of a trading for the uh

23:51

municipal clerk treasurers association. They do have a conference every September.

23:58

I've been trying I have offered I have reached out to them every year and not a peep.

24:04

Well, um perhaps we can put that in our report and help make it um more um

24:11

possible to happen. Um you know, I think I think that there's um significant

24:17

education that needs to happen around um access um to open meeting. I think

24:24

that's why we're here. Um, but if I could just back up because I think we've

24:29

gone into um our next topic without I I want to make sure that I give space to

24:35

talk about our workg groupoup process and report planning um just for a minute um because I uh just want to let people

24:44

know where the secretary of state is as the chair of the working group and um

24:50

hear feedback on what our thought plan is. And then also um if we can I think

24:56

there's pieces that can be written um by members here and then we can do an

25:02

editorial process to make sure that the voice is correct um and that we agree on

25:07

what the report is saying. But um our thought process is initial draft for

25:15

the report would be done by the secretary of state's office um with augmentation by others if that's the

25:23

direction we decide or we could do the whole thing. Um and then um we would

25:29

want there to be a review of sections certainly by the subject matter experts

25:36

in um I mean and some of us are subject matter experts in multitude of things.

25:43

Um and then um finally probably review

25:48

by the whole group. that we have to be careful of timing um because of you know

25:55

we are not going to be able to do a group edit of a document um that is a nightmare and I don't want to invite

26:01

that um and uh we but we also want to make sure that everyone's voices and

26:08

opinions are heard uh represented accurately um and that there's a general

26:14

consensus of what the report says perhaps not at the sentence and paragraph level but at the larger level.

26:21

So, um that is the process that we are contemplating. Um and I'm open to we're

26:29

open to feedback on that. But, um that's what we're planning.

26:36

So, it sounds like an iterative process that starts with the Secretary of State's office with a draft. Although,

26:42

it sounds like if there are um subcommittees that have created content, might as well send it your way. Yes,

26:48

please. And you can either use it or not or whatever, but it's to inform the document. Then it goes to if there are

26:56

subject matter experts, which of course there are, that you can get review from them. Ultimately, it goes to the full

27:02

group. And the hope is that we can have a document that has consensus. And if

27:09

there are points where there aren't consensus, that's that's going to be the sticking point.

27:15

That's going to be right where we have to and and that will be reflected in the document. It will be reflected in the document.

27:21

If there's not a consensus on an issue, then that to me means that's an area of

27:26

further exploration and further discussion. Um, and how we put that in

27:32

the document, I think, you know, takes some nuance and tact. Um, and I'm

27:38

confident we can do that. But if there's disagreement um then we need to identify

27:44

that uh for future um review. Got it. Just to cla where can I find the

27:51

document you're talking about? It has not been created. Oh in our minds you can find it here.

27:59

Um you can for those people who are uh new you can go back and watch the

28:05

majority of our recordings. we didn't record our very first meeting which occurred in uh the fall of 2024. Um and

28:15

um there's also uh you know uh minutes that people can review too, but the

28:21

recordings are probably the most the way to get up to speed on the nitty-gritty of the conversation that we've been

28:27

having. Yep. Uh Megan,

28:34

you muted. not muted. Um, how many other

28:39

how many other subcommittees are meeting besides the one that met once or twice?

28:47

I don't believe that there's another subcommittee. Okay. That has been established, but that doesn't mean that there

28:53

couldn't be. And we Sure. Well, I guess that's Could we Could we um have enough time to have a

29:01

meeting again before you complete your report?

29:06

Yes, we have uh quite a few meetings already scheduled. We've scheduled I think we have at least

29:14

four more in this summer. Um and then I think and this is number six.

29:21

We have 10 total. A different way to say by statute. Yeah. Okay. A different way to say and maybe

29:27

you said it. I'm sorry. Maybe you said it, but a different way to say it would be when

29:33

are you going to begin working on your draft? What's our deadline?

29:38

Okay. The deadline for subgroups um would be probably

29:45

August. Um would be great. Um the end of August

29:50

Yep. Um, yes, please. Um, and

29:56

so submit material by the end of August. Okay, that would be that would be phenomenal.

30:02

Not that we will say no after that. I'm sure we will say yes, please. Um, and

30:08

sorry, can I can I just finish up my sentence? And I think um

30:13

if then we'll start working on this report um in earnest. We are trying to

30:20

work on sort of a structure and a sort of an outline uh now but um in terms of

30:27

writing I think um we probably are it's going to take some time uh to get there

30:34

and just given summer and all of the competing priorities I think it's

30:40

unlikely that we will start drafting in earnest until September. And I'll just

30:45

mention our last scheduled meeting currently is September 12th, but we scheduled these meetings, the 10

30:53

required by the session law, that does not foreclose us from having additional meetings. And I never intended for

31:00

September to be the last of our meetings. I just knew when I was scheduling meetings that we had to have

31:05

10. I wanted to make sure that everyone had as much notice of the 10 as possible and so put those 10 in the in

31:13

circulation um as fast as possible, but we should from my mind probably at least

31:19

have a meeting uh once a month after September. Okay. And then I have a follow-up

31:26

question or the second part of my question um which

31:31

was is it as the way the way I understand it if if there's a strong

31:39

dissent around a particular topic or it's not included members of the

31:44

subcommittee are welcome to write a addendum letter. Is that correct or something? Is there some sort of

31:51

process? I would prefer not an addendum letter. Um I would prefer that we as a

31:57

group identify and talk about the conflict um together. I think Okay. Um I

32:03

think an addendum and I mean I'm I'm happy to this is a group. Uh I'm not the

32:08

final decider. So but um I would prefer to not have one-off letters from

32:14

particular constituency groups in the report. I would like us to make a report that reflects the opinions of all

32:21

together. Um, even if we don't all agree on a single opinion, I would like for that disagreement to be talked about in

32:28

the body of the report. I think that's much easier for the reader and I think it's more respectful of the the work

32:35

group process. So, um, that's just a personal preference of mine. Um, and if

32:42

there are people that want to do addendums, we can talk about it. But, um, everyone's going to be reacting and

32:47

responding to this report um, as it becomes public, too. So, um, you know,

32:53

if there's testimony about it, then everybody can go in and talk about it. Um, but yeah.

Um, Jenny, I'm just going

33:00

to go to Kate. Thank you.

33:06

Oh, Kate, you just put yourself on mute for reference. I'm just popping into chat the eight charges um of the working

33:13

group because um I I'm feeling really strongly that the first charge outlined

33:19

there recommending best practices for running effective and inclusive meetings um and universal design

33:26

all of the other things that fall after that number two through seven two through two through eight that really

33:33

flows from number one and so I'm really um I guess to name attention. I

33:41

would love to see this group demonstrate and practice effective meetings um and

33:48

accessible and universal design. And I haven't like I don't know that there are a lot of examples of how we haven't done

33:55

that yet. And I think it would be really incredible to take a step back to mindfully work through that. And I think

34:01

a lot of the pre-meeting emails and questions about um you know the just

34:06

there's so much great learning there that we can dig into. Um but I'm concerned about recommending best

34:12

practices for hybrid meetings and ex and universal design and writing that when

34:18

we ourselves haven't done that yet. And so um I just really want to underscore

34:23

how important I that that really is going to be for everything that follows. And that's not a focus on a particular

34:29

population, right? That's not for people with disabilities. That's not for young parents at home. Like that is literally

34:35

an everyone practice and skill. Whereas the rest really are topic areas, but number one is a practice and skill

34:44

and we take that feedback um Kate and um I think we all are deciding and learning

34:51

and talking about this. So, um I don't know that we're going to get to a place

34:57

where we are um meeting perfection and I don't hear your feedback as saying that.

35:03

I'm not asking for perfection. I'm asking for I acknowledge that here is how to ask for reasonable accommodations

35:09

for this meeting. We have not done that yet. That's very important. Here is where you can park. Here are all the

35:14

materials in advance. Right? So that people with a screen reader, people like needing translation or interpretation.

35:19

So there are very simple things. Not talking about perfection. talking about here are the main bullet points that if

35:25

we're recommending them, we need to practice them first. I do not disagree with you. Um, but part

35:32

of what we're talking about today is exactly what you are bringing up. So,

35:38

until we talk about it, um, for those of us who are not immersed in it, we don't

35:44

know that we need to do it quite frankly. So, um, we need to talk about it and then we can incorporate it going

35:50

forward. Um, and we hear the feedback well. Um, but I, you know, we have,

35:56

we're learning, too. Um, and that's why we're all together.

36:04

Um, Jenny, yeah, I think I'll postpone because I think they can fit in later.

36:10

Muhammad. Hey, thank you. Uh, I've been listening a lot as a new to this group as well. I

36:17

do very much uh appreciate uh Katie Larus. I hope I pronounced your name

36:23

correctly. Uh the comment you uh put in place just right now. Uh I was wondering

36:29

based on Kate's comments whether this is an agenda topic we can have at our next

36:34

meeting because it does I mean it sounds like many of us agree with Kate that we

36:40

ourselves need to model and to model something we have to uh establish a

36:45

process that we can all agree on to model uh

36:50

based on this very meeting we are already having or test it out at least. Can we just add

36:58

it as a topic of discussion at our next meeting as it might not fit today?

37:04

Well, I'm hopeful that we can talk about it today as we're talking about what it

37:10

means to have an accessible public meeting. Um, and if there are things that we all agree upon as baseline

37:18

requirements or even best practices, then we will do our very best to

37:24

accommodate those in meetings going forward. Um, I don't think that that is off. I

37:31

think that's reasonable. Um, and you know, I'm sorry that we haven't u met that expectation previously, but I

37:39

honestly I'm going to say very humbly, we don't know what we don't know and

37:44

we're doing our best and we're learning. And so that's why we need this group of experts together and we um want to learn

37:51

and we want to grow and we want to adapt and that's what we're going to be asking

37:56

all open uh public bodies to be doing. So, it's great that we are learning as

38:02

we're going and um and getting better. So, and we're this report is going to be

38:08

recommending that all public bodies do that. So, we have to do that with humility and we have to do that with

38:15

integrity and transparency. So, yeah, I really agree. Humility,

38:20

transparency, grace, kindness. Um these are all things that that the these are

38:26

this is um a such a huge huge lift that we've been asked and frankly I think the

38:33

legislature asked this group to do it because it was too big for them. Um and these were the gnarly bits that

38:39

they that they struggled with. How can we get all of this in one place? And um

38:44

and and we'll talk about the tensions. I mean it's like it is are these things

38:50

not happening? I mean, in a in a group that with this much goodwill and this much good intention, it's still a lift,

38:58

that's um that's something to know. That's something to reflect back and to understand. So, I'm really appreciating

39:04

the conversation, what we're learning. Yeah. I'm just going to go to Megan and then

39:11

you, Frank. Would

39:16

would it be would it make sense um in to just pause now and and maybe I missed

39:23

this thread, but could we just pause now and ask what some of those minimum

39:28

requirements might be from some folks? I heard Kate name two or three. I've heard

39:34

other folks name some. And it could be, you know, we could just sort of pause and put that in the notes and in the

39:41

agenda as a learning opportunity. I would very much like to do that, Megan, but can I

39:47 just go back to our agenda just from a process standpoint because I don't want to lose it and if people have opinions

39:55 about the process that the Secretary of State is thinking through, can we just
40:00

talk about those in terms of this working group process? And as we're gearing up towards looking to a report,

40:08 um I just want to know how people feel about the process that I just outlined.

40:13 Um and um I guess part of that is are there subgroups that have not yet been

40:20 formed that we need formed or that should be contemplated and is did you have to comment on that?

40:26 That is that is what I would like to address and I'm going to put on my um

40:31 general counsel hat. Um because the open if so we are a legislative work group.

40:38 It is not universally agreed upon whether legislative work groups fall underneath the open meeting law. The way

40:45 the Secretary of State's office generally assumed that we ought to and therefore do try to comply with the open

40:51 meeting law for our legislative work groups. The open meeting law applies to

40:56 committees as public bodies just as it applies to the original body. And so we have been

41:03 walking a fine line with gatherings of folks from this body because if we form

41:12 a committee, we are forming a public body that needs to comply also with the open meeting law, agenda, minutes and so

41:18 forth, public participation. However, if a nonquorum, so if a group of folks

41:24 gather without a majority of the appointed members of this group, they

41:30 can do that. They can gather, they can talk, they can produce documents. They can bring things and ideas as a group

41:36

back to the larger group without us needing to come, you know, follow the open meeting law for those individual

41:43

group conversations. But the moment at which this group starts to delegate and name and create committees, um I feel we

41:50

should be those committees should be complying with the open meeting law as well. So that is why I think we're being

41:56

not so structured about let's form a subgroup that has this task

42:04

with these members. Um, if we want to do that, I think we can, but then I think we need to be contemplating that those

42:11

groups are falling within the open meeting law as opposed to informal loose groups of people who have interests who are gathering on their own and and and

42:17

bringing things back. So those are the two paths we can two ways we can go. Yes. And and can I just piggyback on that question of open meeting law? Um uh it

42:26

does that mean that this whole group should not as I did be sending emails to the full group? Um so the the general

42:35

rule is don't hit reply all with a substantive response right because we don't want to be having a discussion of

42:42

a quorum on substantive matters outside of a morning meeting. It is fine to send out information for discussion. It's

42:49

when somebody hits reply all with more substance that we've decided we've opened in the dialogue and we're within the open meeting law. So it is perfectly

42:55

fine to send out information. But you might notice that we tend to here in house reply to one individual person

43:01

back instead of doing the reply all so that we don't start that kind of back and forth that dialogue. It really

43:07

should be in front of the public. Yeah. And you could anticipate if that starts to happen one of us saying uh we're

43:14

starting to have an open meeting law opening. we need to stop and and bring this to our um next

43:21

conversation and it's not to diminish the conversation. It is to follow along.

43:26

Right. Right. And best practice suggest uh in that

43:31

email at the bottom somewhere of the email to set a reminder please do not

43:36

reply all just for people to get to be used to um

43:43

not replying to all. Yeah, that is a good reminder and that goes for everybody who's part of this workg

43:49

group. If you're sending an email, it would be great if you put that at the bottom of your email. Um Frank,

43:55

I was just going to go into that. Uh so are we advisory technically? You

44:02

think? Oh, this our group. Yes. Yeah, we're legislative advisory advisory. So we can meet without a

44:09

physical presence location. I believe that we should not because we are not a

44:16

local um group. We are a state group by dent of being under the secretary of

44:22

state. So we the state groups advisory or um not um have to be hybrid.

44:30

You guys are deemed public body associated a state state public body,

44:35

right? as opposed to a local public value which the rules are different for state versus local.

44:42

Okay. I think that four were attended one meeting and two attended the second.

44:48

There was meeting conflicts with the technical group. Um and I don't think we

44:54

covered Megan may agree and Andy and Sue that we really didn't even skim the

45:00

surface of technical which is a huge issue. uh I think going forward into the

45:06

future. So yes, um I want to recognize that there's more work to do in that group of

45:14

individuals. Um and to go to Jenny's um process qu question, I think while um

45:27

I would prefer that those groups are informal because we don't have a

45:32

standing infrastructure for people to use for set work groups. um we don't

45:38

have the bandwidth here to host those to have them be hybrid to have them um be

45:46

fully accessible. I would love to say that we did but we just don't. So if we

45:51

have informal groups of people talking um then with their areas of interest um

45:59

that is very helpful. Um but I think we all need to have the ground rules that

46:05

those conversations will come back to this group. We'll talk about them in this group.

That's how we can make that

46:11

informal process transparent. Um and certainly that those informal

46:18

conversations are not making any decisions. Um they're they're informal

46:23

groups to help um get ready for a public meeting and conversation about the

46:29

topic. Um, so I think that is the direction we should go. Um, and

46:37

you know, I I I really have to say honestly I wish we could make them more formal, but that would require us

46:45

reserving this room, having this tech infrastructure, having a staff person here. Um, and it is um not possible for

46:54

the Secretary of State to say yes to that at this time. Um, Megan, I see you

46:59

are first.

47:06

So, I have three questions. Try to be brief. How many is a quorum for this body?

47:13

I'm gonna ask Jenny to look into. Let me count them up. I've got the I think it's six, but I could be wrong.

47:20

I'll wait. I'll I'll wait while you do that. Or I'll ask you your next question and I will come back to it if that

47:25

works. Go ahead. So to your first question on the process which is we're

47:31

still on the 1010 to 10:30 section of this agenda, right? Process. Yep, that's

47:36

fine. No, it's it's great. Um so I would like to continue work with um you know an

47:43

informal on the hybrid tech and best practices and have a thought of um would like to make sure that

47:50

um before the you all get too far in your process that we have time to

47:56

present which I think I've already said or implied. I just want to make sure that that's clear.

48:02

Um I have and that is my deep hope Megan and we will make that happen. Yep. And then um I'm wondering if we can

48:11

ask so you know this sounds like it sounds like the conversation we're having is sort of like basic organizing

48:17

101 and that stuff gets done by relationships but that's not

48:22

transparent. It's the rub of democracy. It's one of those weird rubs of

48:28

democracy. Um, can we ask here in the meeting for that informal gathering?

48:34

Like, can I say, "Hey, I'm gonna be talking I'm going to be putting together some stuff. Anybody want to work with me

48:40

on that? Can I do that or is that um

48:45

crossing that line into do I have to do that outside this body or can I do it

48:52

here?" Does that make sense? I think I think given the squidginess of where we are, I think it's good for you to do it here

48:59

um so that people know that it's happening and um and people in this group feel

49:05

included to participate in the informal conversations happening offline. Jenny, do you have an answer to Megan's first

49:12

question? So, we have 10 designated members of this group. The membership that is the

49:17

legislature required has 10 folks. So, a quorum of 10 would be six members. Now

49:23

we have a lot of folks who are participating here who are not who are regular participants contributing a lot

49:28

who are not on this list of official working group design um and so they

49:35

would not count towards forum. That's right. So the it's six who are named in the

49:43

which is which I can go through actually that would be helpful. Yeah. There are two designines of the Vermont League of Cities and Towns. There are two

49:50

designines of the Vermont Municipal Clerks and Treasures Association and then the Vermont School Boards

49:56

Association, Disability Rights Vermont, the Vermont Access Network, the Secretary of State,

50:03

um the chair of the human rights, so the human rights commission all each one of

50:09

those has one designate and then the secretary itself state herself or her design is the is the 12th. So we have

50:16

one from each of those groups except for two from the league. and two from VMCTA.

50:22

So, a quorum is six. And Megan, did you have a third point

50:28

before I move on from you? No, I think that's great. It sounds like it sounds like anybody here could say

50:34

like like I'm going to say I want to work more on the hybrid meeting. Who's interested in that? and then I will

50:42

reach out to those folks myself and everything will be brought back to the

50:47

um open session. Yes. And I think if there is a group of

50:53

people who have um something to bring back, if one person contacted um Jenny

50:59

and myself to let us know that you're ready so that we can add you to the agenda, that would be really helpful.

51:05

And um because we have the topics as originally set up, you know, in I don't

51:12

know when we set them up in in March, but and the topics that we're supposed to be talking about each meeting, but

51:18

obviously we can be a little flexible on what's actually talked about in those

51:24

meetings with additions to the agenda. Um Kate,

51:30

thank you. Um, I just in reviewing all of the recorded meetings, I just I I I

51:37

really want to name that we have shared a lot words like good intentions and goodwill and peace and and that's great

51:45

in framing a report, but I really believe we need to be more transparent in the report framing. So public

51:51

meetings in the state, locally, school boards have in some cases centuries,

51:57

centuries of exclusion and discrimination by design to certain groups of people, right? And so the

52:03

recommendations we are making in very small part really is about undoing some of the attitudinal barriers created by

52:11

centuries of systemic exclusion. And I really believe that needs to be named in

52:16

any report framing because when we look at who is represented, who is at the table, who is not, this isn't some

52:23

facilitation technique that's missing, right? Like it's not because of that. It's because of the systemic pieces that

52:30

came before and are continuing to be perpetuated by our traditions. So I for any framing like this is more than a

52:37

technical piece of writing. This is really about how do we recommend

52:43

practices to undo centuries of people being told they are not allowed to vote, they are not allowed to be at the table.

52:50

So, I just feel that it's really important to name that it really does go beyond just sort of the the woowoo good

52:55

intentions, goodwill piece. I uh hear what you're saying, Kate, and

53:02

I um imagine that there will be pieces of the report that reflect that. Um it's

53:08

hard for me to to know where that will be and how that will be reflected at

53:13

this particular time, but we'll we'll talk about it. um because I what you are

53:20

articulating is something that um is not the first time that that's been

53:25

articulated in this group and I think it's a common thread in this group that there some of the practices that are

53:32

commonly known um for open meeting whether it's well-intentioned or keeps a

53:39

well-run meeting have um either intentional or unintentional

53:44

consequences for people and both be intentional consequences which could be limiting public comment which frankly we

53:51

have made a decision here. We could have made a decision that only the people named in the session law could make any

53:57

comment or conversation during this meeting. We have not done that. We don't

54:03

want to do that because we want everybody's voices and we need everybody's perspectives. Right? But

54:09

there are decisions that are made with a very um

54:17

tricky thing. Facilitating a meeting is not easy. I don't just want to name.

54:23

It's a skill. It's not easy. Um and um there are decisions that are made that

54:29

are intended to intentionally exclude people or are made with good intent but

54:36

um have unintended consequences. So I think that it will be very well um in

54:43

this report and how it's uh written I I don't know yet. Uh, Laura.

54:52

Um, okay. So I guess I just wanted to make a suggestion because it seems like

54:58

we really aren't making a lot of progress and we are talking about the workg groupoup process and so I'm

55:06

wondering we have these topic areas which we are having maybe we've got one

55:11

small working group working on one but maybe we should be

55:18

having small groups meet on each of the topic areas and Maybe moving forward

55:24

since we have so little time and we're focused right now on on how we're

55:30

conducting these meetings and whether these meetings themselves are accessible which is an important question or

55:35

whether we're focused on the right things also an important question but we're not getting to the topic areas and

55:42

in our past meetings we've sort of started to dive into the topic areas but really run out of time before we've made

55:49

a lot of progress or any decisions about what recommendations ations or very few decisions about what recommendations

55:56

um should be made. And so I'm wondering if in this time that we're, you know, we

56:02

have from 10 to 12:30 scheduled, maybe maybe moving forward, we can use the

56:08

first hour for people to attend separate workg groupoups on each of the topic areas and then bring their discussions

56:15

on each of the topic areas to the larger group so that we can talk about what

56:21

what's been discussed so that we can maybe in smaller groups make a little

56:26

more focused progress. address um on the specific topics that we're trying to address and

56:35

at least in that way um know that we're

56:40

um getting to the the agenda items that we really want to be talking about in a

56:46

in a more focused and thorough manner. Um, yeah,

56:52

just a suggestion. Laura, I hear your suggestion and I'm trying to think whether it's a feasible

57:00

or from a technological and physical standpoint because um we would have to

57:07

have people here um to be able to do

57:12

subgroups. I think if everybody was in this building, we would have space to accommodate that. Um it would be tricky

57:19

from an open meeting perspective. Um I think so there's two problems with your

57:26

suggestion that I see. Um and I think fortunately or unfortunately

57:34

I think we need people to work outside of this dedicated meeting time in to do

57:40

this informal but very important subgroup work. um so that we can um have a

57:49

structured conversation um as in this dedicated time and um it

57:55

is I had originally Yeah. I mean it is possible for us to do

58:01

breakout rooms from you know teams. You just do breakout rooms. So like we all

58:07

come together to meet then set it the first hour aside for people to go into

58:12

different breakout rooms from the teams if they want to discuss specific topics

58:18

you know topic four topic seven whatever topics and then bring that information

58:24

back to the group so that it's actually going to get discussed and each of the

58:30

topics is going to be addressed um in a in a more thoughtful and focused

58:36

way that I am very committed. Yeah, I hear you. And I'm very committed to the second half of your statement. I

58:43

want the that work to be happening and I want us this time to be very focused and

58:49

dedicated. So yes, and I know that we do not have the technical capability to

58:56

hold breakout rooms in this building in a hybrid manner. And um I know that if

59:04

we did that that would be tricky from an open meeting law perspective if there was a
porn. So I'm asking for that work

59:11

that you're that breakout work to happen not in this dedicated time and then we

59:16

can structure the agenda so that we have report backs on particular topics. I

59:22

would love that. And you know when we originally set up these meetings, we

59:28

were hoping that uh the groups that we identified as the primaries would

59:33

actually facilitate and need those groups. Um I don't think we have done a great job of setting that up and helping

59:40

that occur. So, um, we really do need those, um, informal groups to come back

59:47

with, um, topic areas and, um, discussion areas for this group to talk

59:53

about. So, I'm really hopeful that that's what we can do. And, um, maybe we should just take, um, I want to I don't

1:00:02

want to lose our time on talking about the topic four, which is the accessibility guide for polling and

1:00:08

public meetings. So I just trying to adjust the agenda as we're going. Um so

1:00:14

bear with me if we could just take I don't know the next 10 minutes to

1:00:20

identify topics where informal groups could get together and identify who

1:00:26

would be interested in those topics so that someone can coordinate that work um

1:00:32

who's interested in that topic. I think that would be really well worth their time. So um the best practices and um

1:00:42

guide um I think um we have spent some good time on I don't know if there's

1:00:48

anybody who wants to meet independently on that but um our plan on that piece is

1:00:54

that it's written almost at the end um and with all the topics that we've been talking about. So I don't think that

1:01:01

that's something that we start with. I think that's sort of an end product. Um, but Jenny, if you could say the other

1:01:08

topics, um, that might be helpful. Sure. And Cynthia, I'm not ignoring your hand. I just I'm trying to be efficient.

1:01:16

I will get to you. I promise. Is somebody not on mute? And um, is there someone who's not on mute there?

1:01:24

A car or something? I can mute from here. Thank you. Thank you. Perfect.

1:01:31

So our topic list is one recommend best practices for that's broken out running

1:01:38

effective inclusive meetings maximizing participation and accessibility in meetings
annual meetings and meetings of

1:01:44

public bodies use of universal design training public bodies for open meeting

1:01:49

law compliance recording municipal public body meetings and the means and timeline
for posting. So that's a big

1:01:57

umbrella best practices. So I'm not suggesting that we have an independent group on
that because it's everything.

1:02:02

Everything exactly. So So what's the next one? So the remaining

1:02:08

I guess there's one, two, three, four, five, six more plus other topics. We have reporting.

1:02:13

Could you read those slowly please? I'm so sorry. Um this the next one is reporting the
findings of the civic

1:02:20

health index study which is by our office um and how to reduce barriers to

1:02:25

participation in public service. So I think um certainly that is an area that

1:02:31

the secretary of state is a subject matter expert in um and we can write

1:02:37

that section of the report pretty comprehensively but open to feedback on

1:02:42

it. Um what's the next topic? The next one is identify the technical assistance equipment
and training

1:02:49

necessary for municipalities to run effective and inclusive remote or hybrid public
meetings. And so Megan, that's

1:02:56

the group that you have been participating in. Um, are there people who are interested in
that topic who

1:03:03

have not expressed um interest in that who have not previously expressed interest in
that topic so that that

1:03:09

group can meet? You have the Y.

1:03:16

I can My problem with my law is I can participate in everything. Yep.

1:03:24

That is tricky. Um, but would you like to be included in

1:03:30

that? Yes. Whatever you think that I I think so you identified something

1:03:38

that I that we have talked about on a very small level but from a lens that we

1:03:43

have not considered which is um that different platforms have different um

1:03:50

accessibility and you know that very well. So I think that would be helpful

1:03:55

for the um for the group

1:04:01

technical question in regards to subgroups relative to deal with meeting law is we have three people who were

1:04:08

named by the legislature I think that Susan Andy and Megan are named on that list right that were participating in

1:04:14

the group. Can you have is a limitation that you can have two without being a

1:04:22

you can have um under six under six without being a quorum. A quorum is six

1:04:28

but there's a but with the thing outside of a meeting you can't discuss business in a meeting socially uh if you're more

1:04:36

than two of you discussing that's another thing that has been

1:04:42

no so if The groups that we are contemplating are

1:04:49

considered committees of this body. Undefined term in the open meeting law.

1:04:54

We usually think about committees as groups that the the overarching body has

1:05:02

designed designated overseeing the work of that um child group. I'm going to

1:05:09

child here. Um if you have a committee then that committee is in its own right

1:05:16

a public body that follows open meeting law on its own. So then the number of members of that committee

1:05:23

would then you calculate quorum using the number of members of that committee as the

1:05:30

denominator. So if you had three members of that committee then two would be a quorum of that committee. Right? If you

1:05:37

are doing what we are hoping to contemplate here, which is these are these are not committees of this body.

1:05:44

These are not groups that are designed by this body, assigned by this body, given tasks by, overseen by this body.

1:05:49

They're picnics that everybody's invited to. Well, you know, and I mean I think at

1:05:55

this point to me it feels like we are crossing that line into moving into the committee

1:06:01

and it's making me nervous there. Yeah. So if you but if you have so so

1:06:08

Frank calls up Susan and says can we talk about this right that is two people only one is a

1:06:15

designated member of this body and and or if I was say Lauren calls up Susan can we talk about this then we're at two

1:06:22

you know we're still not at quorum right so they can have any conversation they want they can draft whatever they want

1:06:27

they can't make decisions they have to bring everything back here but they're not acting at the direction of this

1:06:33

So that's the distinction and two two is not relative. There's no two anywhere. Two becomes relevant if you've got a

1:06:39

public body with three members. That's when two becomes relevant. And that is very relevant at the municipal level because so many public bodies at the

1:06:45

municipal level are bodies of three and they can't discuss stuff out of if you're a body of three.

1:06:52

And does that include written material? like if but if I if I created written material about a topic that was relevant

1:06:59

to this can I share? So if you are co-writing so let's say

1:07:06

we're all meeting in Google Docs and editing you are entering into potentially the gathering of a public body realm

1:07:14

drafting a document to share and sharing it around at different times with people. If you're involving a quorum and

1:07:22

people are making substantive back and forth, then you're in open meeting law territory. You can create a document to share.

1:07:29

Okay? And I could like I could draft something, send it to one person, say, "What do you think?" They could send it back to me. I'm like, "Okay, this is

1:07:35

getting better. Maybe I'll send it to another person for their review." Right? The best practice is typically you can

1:07:40

send it out to everybody and then you assign a point person and each person the point then people send back their

1:07:46

edits to that point person who then puts them into some sort of form that everyone can review at the big meeting.

1:07:51

That's usually the best practice there. Yeah. As opposed to doing group editing or doing sort of daisy chain editing

1:07:57

which is what we have to be extremely careful about with our longterm report.

1:08:03

Um, okay. Under Frank, I am really trying to get us I I

1:08:09

I don't want to cut you off, but and I but I'm really trying to get us to a place where we can move forward

1:08:15

on the topic that a lot of people are here to talk about. So, I I want to try and avoid what Laura is talking about,

1:08:22

which is that we never get to the substance of the topic. So, um, if you

1:08:28

are interested in the technical group, um, Megan is going to be I'm I'm just

1:08:33

going to do this. Uh, hopefully this is okay. Megan is going to be the lead on that. Contact her if you're interested.

1:08:40

She will make sure that if you're interested, you will be included. Is that that is that too far over the line,

1:08:45

Jenny? We're gonna We have to do this. There there's So,

1:08:51

there's a question. the way I think the other way um Laura is Lauren is like the

1:08:57

way that I'm thinking of it is is again as an organizer in order to be effective

1:09:04

I need to find allies and communicate with them and so I I I'm

1:09:10

going to do that and I welcome I'm really glad and I don't I can't see or

1:09:16

um and I'm not familiar with who's sitting to your right but I'm Can you introduce uce yourself again.

1:09:23

Laura Seagull. Oh, Laura Seagull. Okay, great. Yeah, I I know your name. Perfect. I think um

1:09:32

Yeah. So, like I heard that Laura has some things. And so, as an organizer,

1:09:38

I'm going to listen for what I can do. Not just some, I have a lot.

1:09:45

I'm gonna overwhelm you. I can't. saying, "Not just some, I have

1:09:51

a lot." Oh, yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. So, I'll I'll reach out to Laura and

1:09:58

Frank and Susan and Andy and I think we're well within under the quorum and

1:10:04

anything and whatever we discuss we'll be bringing back and um so

1:10:11

because I want to be I want to be an effective organizer and be able to bring and so I hope other folks will do the

1:10:17

same thing if that makes sense. Thank you. Okay. And we have an organizer on the

1:10:23

next topic, Jenny. So we covered best practices, we covered

1:10:28

civic health index, we covered technical assistance. So the next topic is is the one that we have we're here today to

1:10:33

discuss, which is produce a guide for accessibility for polling and public meeting locations.

1:10:39

That's Brian. He's bringing the Advil.

1:10:45

I had some I could have given you.

1:10:52

Anyone else need Advil? I'm happy to join that if needed.

1:11:01

So, I'm sorry. So, we need the next topic is to create

1:11:07

a guide for accessibility to polling and public meetings. We're going to talk about that today, but are there people

1:11:14

someone who would be interested in being an organizer on that topic? And are there people interested in that topic?

1:11:22

His hand is up.

1:11:32

Laura Kushman says she's interested. Laura, are you willing to be the organizer?

1:11:46

Laura, if you're talking, you're on mute. We cannot hear you.

1:11:53

She says yes. Perfect. Thank you. So, if you are interested in that topic, please

1:11:59

um please reach out to Laura.

1:12:07

I don't have everyone there. Okay. Um

1:12:13

I'm gonna get Yes. I'm gonna clip over. You know what I'm saying? You guys are doing You're working hard and it's too warm in

1:12:19

here. Do you mind closing? Thank you. I'm going to close these. We're in a secure location.

1:12:25

So, I was actually hoping at the end of the meeting that I could confirm what everybody's email address is and who

1:12:33

should be on that invite going forward because we've had some new participants and I wanted to clean up the invite

1:12:42

information. So could could we just quickly either do that quickly now or do that at the end of the meeting?

1:12:48

Can you do that at the end of the meeting and committed to doing it? Yes, but that was something I had on my

1:12:53

own personal to-do list. So it would be helpful for my clarity to know which of the people

1:12:59

are um on the committee versus

1:13:04

for reasons. Yeah, that was part of my thinking too. Yeah. Uh Cynthia, I see your uh chat

1:13:11

which is that you're interested in the best practice training and participation group. Um that is all of us. So I would

1:13:18

prefer that we have subgroups on the specific issues and then we bring uh

1:13:24

that work back and that we don't have an organizer on that big first topic

1:13:31

because I think that is our entire charge really and then it's

1:13:38

broken up into subgroups. We could have written this workgroup as that's one

1:13:45

and then we have 1 A, 1 B, 1 C, 1 D. Um, so I would prefer that that conversation

1:13:52

is done in this space together and not on one ons. What's the um the next

1:13:59

topic, Jenny? Next topic is study the feasibility of using electronic platforms to support

1:14:05

remote attendance and voting at annual meetings. And that is one we have not yet talked about that. We have not talked about that. Is

1:14:11

there anyone who's interested in being an organizer on um electronic voting and

1:14:17

remote attendance to annual meetings? And I see Susan. Thank you. So we will

1:14:22

make sure if that if you're interested in that topic, please reach out to Susan. Um what's the next one?

1:14:29

The next one is analyze voter turnout and the voting methods currently used throughout the state. Okay, that is

1:14:36

securely the Secretary of State's office, but open I think we will bring

1:14:41

um data on that back to this group. It's kind of a more black and white question than others. I think open for debate

1:14:48

on that uh statement and um but we could have a group conversation about the data

1:14:54

that we bring back. What's the next? And this is the last substantive one. investigate whether increased use of

1:15:01

resources for participants such as child care, hearing devices, translators,

1:15:07

transportation, food, and hybrid meetings could increase participation in local public meetings. And we put that

1:15:14

on the agenda today as a place to touch on if we got to it. I probably will not

1:15:20

today. Yes. Although it feels like it might be tucked under number one in terms of best practice. Really does touch everything.

1:15:26

Was who was this written by a committee or something? Yes. And was it all the problems that nobody

1:15:33

wanted to address in the moment to your to your So um

1:15:41

that to me we could um we'll we do have a whole meeting dedicated to that topic.

1:15:47

Um but to me that's a thread that runs through all of the other conversations much like the ex the best practices

1:15:55

guide. So, um, and I don't know that we're going to have

1:16:02

concrete things to say. Uh, I don't, except for that,

1:16:07

yes, childcare is helpful. Yes, translators are important. Yes. Um, you know, you need to think about the time

1:16:13

of your meeting so that it's accessible. Um, so we'll we'll have I'm sure some

1:16:19

things, but um we uh

1:16:25

we have a big conversation there. Um

1:16:33

Laura, do you have the ability to I So those are our groups and I think we have everything identified. Um,

1:16:41

I would like to now get to our topic of accessibility guide for polling and public meeting. And um, Laura, I'm

1:16:49

reading your comment, which is disability rights Vermont already has some polling place and voting guides for

1:16:56

voters voting in federal, state, and local elections. We also have a voting rights guide for people with disabilities that's printed and in

1:17:03

braille. Um, they're not a guide for lawmakers, but might be useful and I'm happy to share. I think our charge is um

1:17:11

candidly, do we need to update that guide? Are there pieces that are missing from that guide? I think that guide is

1:17:18

what hopefully people are using in this uh state and we need people to be using

1:17:24

in that state and in this state and um but there's probably things that need to

1:17:29

be changed, modified or explained. So um that's that's what I this topic is and

1:17:37

um is it also the role maybe of this process to lift up that guide so that it

1:17:44

so do you have copies of I think we have three we have one small brochure uh

1:17:52

looks like this it's a trifold brochure on it's pretty

1:17:57

basic I don't know if my camera can see that or focus on it But um

1:18:04

and like I said, it's a trifold guide. We have one that's a booklet um which I

1:18:12

don't think I have a hard copy of with me right at the moment. I can send you

1:18:20

around. And then we have this one which is the

1:18:25

one that's al printed but also in braille which why my camera won't focus

1:18:32

I don't know but um I believe Laura that the secretary of

1:18:37

state has all three of the ones that you're talking about and I believe that we have digital links to them on our

1:18:43

website um and that we refer people to them frequently but whether people know

1:18:48

about them is a different thing and whether we need to to work uh together

1:18:53

or whether I mean I don't even know that we should supplant Disability

1:18:59

Rights Vermont's guides, but maybe we can make a recommendation that they do

1:19:04

um that you do, but I I don't know that this group should be doing that.

1:19:12

Update it. Yeah. What What are you saying?

1:19:17

You're saying it needs updating but not by this group. Is that Oh, yes. Yeah. Reaching a lot of information. I seen it before, but I was

1:19:23

like, "Oh my god, this can't be it." Really? So, um, Laura, I don't know if you heard

1:19:31

what Laura was saying. Um, two Lauras and a Lauren. It's going to get confusing. Um, but, uh, she was saying

1:19:38

that in I don't you speak for you. I'm sorry. I don't want to speak for you. Um, I mean, I don't have it memorized,

1:19:45

but I remember seeing it in the past and I have a lot of feedback I could easily give you.

1:19:52

So, we did update the voters's guide before the um November elections, the

1:19:59

large voters's guide. In the large voters's guide, um you know, it's it's

1:20:05

about it's a lot of information. It's not just an accessibility guide. It's a it's a

1:20:13

voters's guide. I mean, it has the town clerk number for all of the towns in

1:20:19

Vermont, you know, um for anybody who needs to ask questions to their town

1:20:24

clerks about local elections. Um uh it

1:20:29

we made it larger print, more accessible language. We did make revisions then.

1:20:36

I'm sure as with always additional revisions need to be made. For instance,

1:20:41

our braille guide, um the QR code doesn't work. We we're not sure what

1:20:46

happened with that, if it printed wrong, but we, you know, we know that there need to be um uh edits made. But these

1:20:54

are very costly to print and so we haven't rerun it. We're just going to continue to use them without the

1:21:01

functioning QR code until we have to do another printing. Um

1:21:07

but the production of these brochures is is um is expensive. We try uh we try to

1:21:15

we can't every for every typo or error or missed information that we have in

1:21:21

these. We can't just do another printing. Uh we have to sort of use what we have until it's till we're out and

1:21:28

then we can make edits. And so that's sort of how it happens is that once we're out of the ones that we've got, we

1:21:35

look at what what wasn't correct the last time or what needs to be updated

1:21:41

and we update them and then we'll do a new printing with a new version.

1:21:47

Clarification there. It looks like it um really does specify

1:21:52

it really focuses on state and local elections and then local elections that are Australian ballot only. Is that

1:21:59

accurate? Um, it does. No, it talks about uh I'd

1:22:06

have to go back and look, but it does say like if you can't get to your polling place, you can make

1:22:11

arrangements. I mean, it really depends on the town. I mean, which would only work for Australian ballot. So, like it talks about car

1:22:18

side, which is great for Australian ballot. It talks about incarcerated individuals, which is great for

1:22:23

Australian ballot, but there's the other piece of the hund and some odd towns that don't do Australian ballot. So, I

1:22:30

just wanted to see like I just I feel like that maybe it's what exists now that we are aware of.

1:22:35

Yeah. It's uh it's it's not what we want or hope to see. It's what what currently

1:22:42

exists that we are aware of. Um, Laura, um, I'm trying to remember,

1:22:51

Linda Kramer, I know she's retired, but she was the one that shared that with me

1:22:56

and but I can't recall if she share with me when we were in edit mode or if it was already cover. So, I think it was

1:23:02

already perfect if I remember correctly. So, that's why I was very disappointed that they didn't um ask me to provide

1:23:11

feedback before you did that. I'm sorry. I know you just referred to

1:23:17

Linda Kramer. Yes, she's retired two years ago. Yes.

1:23:23

She shared with me more than two years ago.

1:23:29

She shared it with me more than two years ago. Yes, we've updated it since then.

1:23:38

So, and any if anybody wants to see it, I don't know if you it's accessible on the

1:23:43

website, the the larger guide, but if you go to the disability rights VT

1:23:49

website, uh it's in our resources under publications, I think it's the first one

1:23:55

that comes up.

1:24:00

So I think in interest of of facilitation I think it would be good

1:24:07

for folks to be reviewing that document and Laura I think it would be helpful

1:24:12

for us to know um how

1:24:18

and and the openness of disability rights to receive suggestions for

1:24:24

change. And then there's a whole separate bucket which is best practices

1:24:30

and um how these things could be done better that may not be appropriate to

1:24:38

put in the guide. I think there's two possibilities of buckets. Is that a fair

1:24:43

thing to say? Laura, I think you're on mute if you're

1:24:50

talking. I'm not I wasn't talking, but yes. I mean that of course we if there are any

1:24:57

suggestions for how it could be better or more accessible of course we would

1:25:02

take them. Again like I said I don't know what our funds are going to be to do a new production of those um right

1:25:09

like um that's not something that's paid for by the state. It's something that is

1:25:15

paid for out of our federal funding which is who knows what's happening with our federal funding. Um,

1:25:22

so, um, I'm sure, like I said, when we can reproduce that

1:25:29

document, we will reproduce the document with whatever updates or changes are

1:25:34

needed. And I think it would be fair to say that

1:25:42

one thing that could be in this report is there needs to be a state funding

1:25:47

source to enable that this document can be updated and dispersed more um more

1:25:54

frequently um and more um widely um and

1:26:00

that that's an investment that the state should make. um that I I don't know if that's the consensus of this group, but

1:26:06

that is my opinion. Um and um that's something that we could put in the

1:26:11

report. You know, as a state, we're committed to our our voting and our open

1:26:16

meetings being accessible. So, people need to be trained on how to do it and people need to know their rights and

1:26:23

people need to know how to enforce their rights. And so, that's an important piece of this entire work. Um, and so we

1:26:32

we could make the recommendation that that's an investment that the state should have.

1:26:38

I should probably be a little more clear about that. So, we did just have the big

1:26:43

beautiful bill vote and now all of their budget cut recommendations are going to

1:26:50

go to appropriations and the discussions will be had. But right now, our

1:26:55

protection and advocacy for voter access, which is the money that pays for

1:27:01

this guide, that is right now recommended at zero funding in the next

1:27:06

fiscal year. So, we are not expecting to receive any more money from the federal

1:27:12

government right now for our voter access funding. That's zero funding in

1:27:18

the proposal. that tracks with all voter education

1:27:23

uh everything. So I Yes, it's horrible.

1:27:29

So yeah. Oh um maybe one of the value added things that this group can do I'm sorry just one minute. Can can Laura

1:27:36

Can you mute when you when you're on it? There's a lot of noise. Thank you.

1:27:41

Um yeah, I was just going to say maybe one of the value added things that this group can do is understanding the

1:27:47

economic situation that we're in. Um parse out things that we can do that

1:27:53

might not cost money. Things like if an organization is willing to take feedback

1:27:58

and update those documents, then making those documents um more widely

1:28:03

publicized um online and through trainings with the town clerks association. basically lifting up the

1:28:10

the content that that already exists in a way that maybe doesn't always have to have a have a printed copy, a fresh

1:28:16

printed copy in everybody's hands every week kind of thing. Um, that might help the legislature

1:28:22

to to say yes to things if they don't cost money, but they're a good idea.

1:28:28

And I think um Yes. And sometimes the printed copy,

1:28:34

particularly when we're talking about braille, um means that we are run into

1:28:39

accessibility, but that does maybe we don't need um a full run of every

1:28:45

document printed, but specific documents in braille or other accessibility. So

1:28:53

yes. Yes. And um

1:28:59

I think um the tricky pieces which have already been identified um by Kate are

1:29:07

um uh annual meeting that is not Australian

1:29:12

ballot um which runs into the electronic voting um and um open meetings um in in

1:29:22

general like uh public meeting um because there is some great guidance

1:29:28

about voting by Australian ballot um and accommodations. Could they could they be

1:29:35

expanded? I'm I'm confident they could be. Um but those topics are well

1:29:40

covered. I think it's the um annual meeting without an Australian ballot or

1:29:46

theformational meeting before Australian ballot um and uh open meeting. Can I

1:29:53

just insert a point? Um, we could we could please keep substantive conversation in the in the room and

1:29:59

virtual room and off of the chat. That would be really helpful. Yeah, it I can't follow the chat and and

1:30:06

do this. So, I just want to note that yeah, we we have the uplock, but if we got everything brought uh Megan just

1:30:12

mentioned that the links that we're posting are able to she's unable to read. So, we can try to help facilitate that we get those links out to everybody

1:30:19

as needed. Yeah. I'll write that down as something to look into. Thank you.

1:30:26

Um, Megan,

1:30:32

I largely what I'm thinking about in this report, it's and I think I'm

1:30:38

hearing what other folks are saying is that we're putting up a mirror. This is what exists.

1:30:45

This is how it needs to be improved. This is what it's going to cost. So that

1:30:51

our report has some action steps that can be taken and and maybe also this is

1:30:58

how what exists can be improved upon and

1:31:04

what exists can be spread more widely. I think I'm having a little

1:31:10

bit of a hard time because I don't and that would be where I would hope that maybe some folks would bring and put

1:31:18

that together or maybe it would be from the secretary of states. I I want to I do want to acknowledge that I'm offering

1:31:25

myself as an organizer. I'm doing it I'm getting paid at my work to do it. Although it's added to my workload, it's

1:31:32

not separate from my workload. And so we are asking folks to do something that is

1:31:39

um in addition to the regular work they're doing or if they're a volunteer uncompensated.

1:31:44

But it would be useful to have like what does exist? It sounds like there's something that disability rights Vermont

1:31:53

has put out. Are there other resources? Um

1:32:00

and how do we see those reflected and how do we see those reflected? So we know what to point out is missing or

1:32:06

needs to be added to or the cost questions.

1:32:12

There was a lot in what you just said, Megan, but I think that um you're accurate in

1:32:20

your forecast of what this report is final report of the act 133 group is

1:32:26

going to be, which is we are going to be identifying resources that exist on all of these topics or resources that don't

1:32:33

exist. um like I'm just going to name it would be great if we had a unified

1:32:39

statewide uh platform that municipalities could use for open meeting that um so we had the same type

1:32:47

of platform with the the rules and permissions and capabilities that um we

1:32:55

agree our best practices and that all towns had access to that contract and

1:33:01

used it. Um now all towns don't have internet so that's a that's a gap right

1:33:08

but um so there's a couple of pieces there but um

1:33:14

so we are going to identify the types of platforms that towns are using the types

1:33:20

of solutions that towns are trying to figure out some people are making recordings on iPhones and that is their

1:33:28

record of a meeting or the way that they're particip creating partic participation in a meeting. That's not

1:33:33

against the law. It's certainly not best practice, but it it's not against the

1:33:38

law. So, um, for some for some,

1:33:44

um, bodies. Um, so we're going to be identifying those things, the current state, and

1:33:52

then what would be phenomenal for future state. And then for some topics, we're

1:33:57

going to be talking about these are the things that are out there right now. And I think

1:34:04

this topic um accessibility for polling and public meeting there's quite a few

1:34:11

um quite a few uh documents out there but most notably it is the disability

1:34:17

rights Vermont guide which is sort of the current

1:34:23

best like the guide that everyone relies on. So um but there's probably more.

1:34:29

Yeah. I was just going to say on my website I actually have a guide about how to make your virtual meeting

1:34:34

accessible. Oh, that's great. Um, a lot of check out. Yeah, I think we do.

1:34:45

Can you put that and go to the wicket of death and then

1:34:53

just look I think it's under assisted technology and then

1:35:01

Can you put that in the chat, that website, web address, please?

1:35:06

I don't have access to the team invite. Nobody gave it to me. Send it out to

1:35:11

Yeah, we can send that out to the group or Laura, maybe you can send it to Jenny and she can send it out to the group.

1:35:17

Um, if that works. Um, and uh

1:35:23

we uh we'll try and do our best to make sure that all of the documents are

1:35:29

available to everybody.

1:35:41

So having identified the those areas um

1:35:49

open meetings and annual meeting that is not Australian ballot slash informational

1:35:55

meetings. Can we talk about um issues

1:36:00

that we have seen around access to um town meeting in its uh nonAustralian

1:36:08

ballot form or open meetings

1:36:14

like what are the issues that we can identify are not um easily answerable on

1:36:23

um how accommodations need to be made. Kate,

1:36:29

yeah, thank you. So, the big one of course is for the 120 to 150 um towns

1:36:36

that have floor votes for one of the v various three styles of voting. Um,

1:36:42

de facto systemically, if you are incarcerated, if you are home or bedbound, or if you are in a skilled

1:36:48

nursing facility, you cannot vote in over a hundred towns in Vermont and

1:36:53

local elections. Um, so that is a problem. It's over a

1:36:59

hundred towns. Um, and it's actually going and you all at Secretary of

1:37:04

State's office will have the data better than I do. Um, but based on the Excel spreadsheet, it's actually getting worse. It got better for a time. I think

1:37:11

it was like 100 or 90 towns and now it's like back up to 150 um, for one of the

1:37:16

three styles of voting um, including officers, public options, budget. Um,

1:37:22

and then the other piece of it, and this also goes to, uh, I think number two of

1:37:27

the working group charge about barriers to running for office. Um, if you are not, if you're in a floor vote town and

1:37:34

you're not able to be there in person, um, that becomes a problem for running for local office. And also, uh, people

1:37:41

who need to get signatures. um if you are needing to go doortodoor but you

1:37:47

can't physically get to the doors um because of barrier issues that also becomes an exclusionary process and and

1:37:55

just the way that petition signatures work I yeah it's not it's it's not great

1:38:01

so um I think those two systemically across the board because they impact so

1:38:07

many towns the majority of towns and so many verers I think those need to be addressed

1:38:15

Um Frank an easy one is that a town meeting would be considered under open meeting law and

1:38:22

the agendas that are published uh in the annual reports don't have public comment

1:38:28

section so that you could all add a public comment section to the agendas.

1:38:34

Okay. Um I will say that the law just was changed to clarify that um annual

1:38:39

meeting by the law now effective now is not considered an open meeting but um I

1:38:47

think you know clearly it doesn't mean that the public shouldn't participate in

1:38:52

the um annual meeting but how and by

1:38:58

what means and um at what time I think

1:39:03

so the technical aspect that we'd be discussing wouldn't apply to the town meeting

1:39:09

by Yes, correct. You know, the Well, I don't know what the best way to answer this question is, Susan, but the the

1:39:17

annual meeting is not defined as an open meeting. The open meeting law does not

1:39:22

apply to annual meeting. That does not mean that the principles should apply and frequently do apply and

1:39:30

um are there but it doesn't meet the exact

1:39:35

it doesn't have to meet the exact structure of open meeting law. Yeah. I mean, I think that the the the

1:39:41

big the big reason and Kate makes excellent points and it's a huge issue and and I can say that in my town it was

1:39:48

one that we identified 20 years ago and started having all of our town meetings

1:39:53

um be run with a Zoom element so that people who were all the things that that

1:39:58

uh Kate named, you know, if you were incarcerated or if you were homebound or something you didn't name if you were

1:40:04

deployed um uh all of those people could by choice

1:40:09

um attend and participate and vote um where we ran into issues um what were um

1:40:17

around voter identification and voter security. So the reason that's a big issue around town meeting and not any of

1:40:24

the other things is because it's a different form of governance. It is not a just a public meeting. It is the

1:40:31

legislative body of the town on issues of finance and governance. And so it's a

1:40:37

it's something that the New England states invested in early because they valued that deliberative process. They

1:40:44

valued that citizen legislator process and that's why it stuck. I don't think it's stuck because it's traditional

1:40:50

because it's how we always done it or because we're trying to leave people out. It stuck because there's a value to

1:40:56

those kinds of conversations. So the question that I am passionate about is how do we get a both and how do we have

1:41:03

those deliberative processes and not leave people out and that was um I feel

1:41:08

like pretty successfully done with a Zoom element but

1:41:13

there's um a a voter identification voter um

1:41:19

how do we make sure that the legislators this of the town are really the

1:41:25

legislators that they say they are when they uh have an electronic uh connection

1:41:30

to the to the event. And there's some sub ways that you can do that kind of thing. Like you could have Massachusetts

1:41:36

does this. You can have if it's not a transportation issue, but maybe it's a a

1:41:42

health issue. Maybe a person can't be in a big group um because of um immune

1:41:48

issues. Um you they could come to the site and have a room um where they could

1:41:54

zoom into the meeting. Those are the kinds of things that those are the kinds of accommodations that can be made. But

1:41:59

systemically, and that that's what Kate is talking about, how how do we how do we really make it fully uh welcoming to

1:42:07

all um it's it's tricky because of those um voter ID issues. And I the only thing

1:42:15

I mean I thought it worked and the previous secretary of state at the time,

1:42:20

Demar Wood, thought it worked. And it's kind of like the wiggly thing that we're talking about with the lots like is does

1:42:27

it work though? Especially with increased voter security um scrutiny

1:42:33

that has happened uh in the last 5 to 10 years. There's just been a lot of a lot of concerns about voter fraud and things

1:42:40

like that. Not not in town meetings but um at the national level and that has trickle that concern has trickled down.

1:42:46

So, how do we how what are some of the tools? And I've done a lot of conversations with a lot of states. I'd

1:42:52

be glad to bring back some some of the answers that that folks have come up with, but it needs it needs work.

1:43:01

Laura, did you have something you wanted to say?

1:43:06

Sorry, I said that as you were taking down your hand. So, if you don't have no pressure to say something, I thought you

1:43:11

had something to say and then as I was articulating my sentence, you took your hand down.

1:43:19

I can't see if you have something to say. I If you do, you're on mute, but if you don't, that's okay.

1:43:27

Unfortunately, okay, you don't. I'm going to go with you. Put your hand down. Yeah. No, thank you.

1:43:32

Okay. Unfortunately, just so you know, Laura, for your name is right over your mouth. So, I can only see your eyes and

1:43:41

your forehead. I can't see your mouth. So when I can have a sense of if you're

1:43:47

talking, but it's just like the way your camera is, you're low on the screen. So I don't know. I don't know why that's

1:43:53

happening and I don't know how to solve it. Uh from our stop sharing, stop sharing.

1:43:59

Stop sharing the stop sharing the agenda. There you are. Ah, perfect. Thank you.

1:44:09

Uh now I can see your full face which is very helpful. Thank you. Um

1:44:15

so and I think that issue is part of the

1:44:20

work about electronic voting. So um other

1:44:26

other things besides remote participation

1:44:31

um and remote voting that need to be discussed by this group.

1:44:40

I think I'll just add that our charge is not just for polling places, right, which are affiliated with town meetings

1:44:47

of the voters, but public meeting locations as a whole, which is a bigger Yeah, I was trying to like

1:44:54

limit the question that we're talking about and then go to the larger question. But um but yes, all of it's on the

1:45:00

table. We have to discuss all of it. I just related to annual meeting. Are there

1:45:07

other challenges that people have heard about understood besides remote

1:45:13

participation, remote voting when there is not an Australian ballot? Um,

1:45:19

answer took the cliff. I wouldn't Sorry, I'm I might be a little ugly. What do you mean by annual meeting?

1:45:25

Town meeting too. Town meeting. Yeah. When the vote when the voters gather as opposed to a meeting of a

1:45:31

public body of elected or appointed officials. Yeah. So the language is used similarly

1:45:38

in different parts of the statute. So it is inherently confusing. I think no matter what it is, I am sick

1:45:44

of hearing the same quote. Why am I being treated like a second class citizen?

1:45:49

Yeah. And not Yeah. So how are ways that you have

1:45:56

heard or seen that people are being treated like a second class citizen? because I think we all

1:46:04

have heard that but I think it's adequate. It's a good

1:46:10

like let's put it this way. You go to the town clerk's office like I used to work with deaf blind people. I go into an

1:46:17

office and I said this person wants to register. They give me a hand and I said this person is deaf and blind. They give

1:46:24

me something. This person doesn't know where. And then they go how they going to vote. What am I?

1:46:32

I'm helping them. And they're like, "How do you know? We're not going to manipulate nothing. If I do that, I'll lose my job."

1:46:39

Right? That's another example. Um, a hearing blind person, a friend of mine, and same

1:46:46

for me. Every time we would go into a public location and I tell them I'm deaf,

1:46:53

they just look at me and freak out and go, "I need help. I need help." And I'm like, "I'm talking to you. You help me."

1:47:01

Why are you freaking out? There's nothing to freak out about. Yeah. So, what are you hearing I'm hearing

1:47:09

is people what I'm hearing about your example is people need a lot more

1:47:14

education and training on how to

1:47:21

be respectful, empathetic, and also helpful to somebody with a

1:47:27

disability who is coming to participate in our democracy.

1:47:33

And so how do we provide that training? How do we provide that expectation of

1:47:41

I could just do the training? Well, that would be that would be great. But but um you're one and you said

1:47:48

you're one woman. So and you appear to be one woman. So, uh, we want to we want to make sure that

1:47:53

there'll be many times I'm down for years and I'm able to do it to, you know, manage it on my schedule and and

1:48:00

make it happen. Yeah. I I really uh say thank you and also want to make sure that we um put in

1:48:07

the report that you have the resources to do that uh so that um it can happen

1:48:13

on a very broad sc uh scale. I mean that's what I do. I provide technical guidance to both local and

1:48:20

state and community agency what they can do not just interpreter any kind of level of

1:48:26

accessibility for people with or without hearing and vision issue. Yeah, this is what I do

1:48:34

and I think I speak for all of us. Thank you because we need you.

1:48:40

Um Cynthia, I see your hand was up and then Muhammad I'm going to go to you. So secondass citizenship in town meetings

1:48:47

straight up intimidation is a thing. I don't know that there's anything you can legislate about it but

1:48:54

it can certainly be discouraged and in this atmosphere it seems to be growing worse. Um in our town we have a select

1:49:01

board meeting in advance of the town meeting where you actually can say something and have a response. But

1:49:08

basically what that does is give the select board a heads up on the things that might be said during town meeting

1:49:14

and gives them time to find some sort of a rational hopefully response to it when

1:49:20

it comes up again in the big group. And um sometimes they just say sorry nope

1:49:26

and that is a dismissal of whatever whatever was brought up. So, I don't

1:49:31

know if there's anything to do about that, but that is one way that people are

1:49:38

disenfranchised in way. Yeah, that was Cynthia. Yeah. Can Can you um describe the kind of intimidation

1:49:46

that we're talking about? Are we talking about physical or emotional or I I because I think they're dealt with

1:49:51

differently. Some of them are really illegal. Yeah. Um sometimes both. I mean, sometimes

1:49:59

there are threats. There were people who walked out of our meeting this um this time because the police were being

1:50:06

discussed and people were afraid to say anything because who wants to say anything against police or fire. Um and

1:50:13

um it was it's as if by the time we get to town meeting the select board has

1:50:19

already made up their mind and they are prepared to knock down whatever comes up and if they don't have a good reason

1:50:25

they'll just say it's not happening. Um, so I would say both emotional and

1:50:31

sometimes just sort of a invisible kind of threat of you don't

1:50:38

want to get on the wrong side of the police because they will pull you over and give you random tickets if you speak

1:50:44

against them.

1:50:50

Um, Muhammad, thank you. Uh yeah, I just wanted to

1:50:57

talk a little bit about um people feeling um underestimated.

1:51:04

Uh however you classify them. I may say I'm not maybe even classified as a

1:51:09

second citizen most of the time maybe maybe 10th if that exists in so many

1:51:16

occasions. Um my point in this is we have we are

1:51:21

having a great topic that is very meaningful um to our community members

1:51:26

across Vermont. Um I would suggest our pole workers, volunteers to be really

1:51:33

trained around cultural competency and um when I

1:51:38

say cultural competency I will bring in um understanding how to deal with people

1:51:45

with disabilities as well which is a part of culture. Um

1:51:51

someone mentioned earlier what whatsoever we're doing right now we should think of it in terms of UDL like

1:51:58

universal design which originated from access

1:52:06

in construction in construction and nowadays it's being

1:52:11

used in education but originally it's really to allow people access uh

1:52:16

facilities buildings When we talk about town hall buildings,

1:52:22

most town halls to get to the offices you have to climb the stairs.

1:52:28

Do they have a wheelchair access? Is it wide enough for a wheelchair to get in?

1:52:36

If someone can walk in a voting poll with wide eyes open,

1:52:44

that does not tell me if they are blind or not. Someone can have their wide eyed

1:52:50

open but blind. Who can identify that? Who can check on

1:52:56

that? Who can understand that? And who how can you assist such person?

1:53:02

And one needs to know how to assist a person with disability because you just

1:53:08

don't jump on somebody and grab their wheelchair and try to assist them. That actually can offend them and hurt their

1:53:14

feelings as well. So such training is very much needed

1:53:20

regardless of what our class is first or second. I just want to put put that out there.

1:53:26

So that's universal design in terms of accessibility.

1:53:35

I I can't talk more about you. I can't talk more about UDL. I do it in everything I operate.

1:53:42

It's a framework I love. Thank you. Thank you, Muhammad. I'm glad that it's

1:53:48

a framework you love and uh we're lucky that you're here. And um I just want to

1:53:54

say nobody should think that they are a second class citizen or a 10th class citizen. That breaks my heart and I

1:54:01

think that is not what we want to create a Vermont where that doesn't happen. Um

1:54:08

and so I just want to say very clearly um I don't like that and I I'm committed

1:54:15

to to changing that as best we can. Thank you. I'm sorry that that ever

1:54:21

happens. Uh Laura, it it does a lot. We're here to help the world uh get better.

1:54:28

Yeah, I'm I'm confident that it does. I there is no question in my mind that

1:54:34

that is what is happening. Um and it is abhorrent and needs to stop. So um Laura

1:54:40

and it's happened to me a lot personally and I'm at the part where unfortunately

1:54:46

in recent years I decided to do act and ballot because of that. Yeah. And and

1:54:53

that is a curtailment of your voting ability and your access to democracy. I

1:55:01

mean, particularly when we're talking about uh annual meetings where there is

1:55:06

not a vote by Australian ballot. Um, so it is it's hard and wrong and I'm sorry

1:55:13

that that has happened to you. Um, and I just I have to just pause and acknowledge that two people in this room

1:55:21

have said that they've been treated as second class or 10th class citizens and and

1:55:26

probably more of us have. I have as well for other reasons. So, I just want um to

1:55:32

acknowledge that and I guess hold space for that state those statements and to say that

1:55:39

it's wrong. Um so I I just wanted to sort of add to

1:55:45

what Laura and Muhammad are saying. Um Disability Rights Vermont does do some I

1:55:50

mean we're talking about ability bias here. When someone walks to up to a bank

1:55:56

teller or to a a polling place attendant or in any situation and they are

1:56:03

obviously a person with disabilities and they automatically get an attitude um

1:56:09

that is about really about the the polling place operator or the bank

1:56:16

tellers's own ability bias um and their automatic their own

1:56:22

personal discomfort, their own personal um lack of understanding about what

1:56:28

they're supposed to do um regarding the challenge of having to deal with someone

1:56:35

in a different way that makes it more accessible for the person that they're

1:56:40

serveing. Um that's all ability bias stuff and I am sure there are probably a

1:56:46

number of us in this group who are trained professionals who understand um

1:56:51

you know who've had sensitivity training who understand ability bias understand that um you know maybe we ourselves

1:57:00

don't approach uh those situations with bias but so many people don't understand

1:57:08

that they're operating from a place that a person without disabilities is normal

1:57:13

and that's the normal and that everything else is not normal.

1:57:19

Everything else is a challenge and it's the responsibility of the person with disabilities to somehow rise to normal.

1:57:28

Um, and so we do, Disability Rights Vermont does do training for that, but I

1:57:36

agree with um, Laura and Muhammad that there needs to be training for not all

1:57:45

of our uh, state workers, polling place workers who interact with the public who

1:57:50

don't understand that they're operating from a place of of ability bias. um

1:57:56

certainly could use a training, but if that's some if it's a recommendation that we can make as a way of trying to,

1:58:05

you know, uh remove certain barriers for people. Um it there there are resources

1:58:13

in our community that can help with that. And so I mean that training exists. So whether or not people can

1:58:20

absorb it, understand it, change their behaviors and attitudes, right? I I

1:58:25

don't know if it was Tim or someone just said we can't really control, right? Like how people are going to respond and

1:58:32

if people are going to change, but but certainly the training can be provided

1:58:38

um to try to lower some of those um biases and

1:58:44

make uh you know change attitudes. And I think I just want to not put a a

1:58:52

large emphasis on it, but we're talking about ability bias, but there's also cultural bias, English speaking bias, um

1:59:00

sexuality bias, um there's uh class bias, there's age bias, there's a lot of

1:59:08

biases that we all do and we all have to fight against and we

1:59:16

have to be trained to do it. And the first I'm sure there's more than what I just named but um but we all do it and

1:59:23

we all have to be trained to fight against that urge what of that cultural training that we all have received from

1:59:30

a very very young age and that categorization that we do and we all

1:59:36

have to do that and yes to Tim's point that I'm not please just be careful

1:59:41

about the chat please come on and talk if you're saying something but um maybe

1:59:49

that um you know whether or not someone can hear it and do it is a whole other

1:59:54

thing but knowing that training exists and and and I don't know whether we require the

2:00:00

training whether we make you know there's a ton of questions there um but but we all need to to do that and um I

2:00:07

don't want to take it off of ability bias but I there's so many biases that we all have. I have a question. Um,

2:00:17

if someone did experience anything of that nature, is there a place where

2:00:22

people can file a complaint? Um, a bias about their experience, anything related

2:00:29

to town, election poll, and whatnot. I'm going to let Jenny answer that. Sure. Well, the Vermont Human Rights

2:00:36

Commission has the authority to investigate complaints of violation of

2:00:41

public accommodation laws. which does trickle down to the municipal

2:00:47

level. Um so there is a state entity that has an investigative arm. They

2:00:52

focus most of their efforts on education. I think that's a resource issue. Um but that is the entity of

2:00:58

which I'm aware locally and the body itself. One can make a

2:01:03

complaint to the body itself. Of course. Of course. And so the open I'll step back and say the open meeting

2:01:09

law explicitly states that it expects public bodies to comply with um the

2:01:18

whole assortment of anti-discrimination laws that we have on the books at the state level. And so one could informally

2:01:25

complain to the body of course but one could file an open meeting law violation complaint as well in addition to um

2:01:32

addressing the substantive issue externally. So that works really well for open

2:01:37

meeting, less so for annual meeting. Correct.

2:01:42

The public accommodations would still apply to annual meeting. Correct. Yes.

2:01:48

Muhammad, do you have a comment to make or is your hand lingering?

2:01:55

Thank you for checking. Not at this time. Thank you. Okay. Do you mind lowering your hand so

2:02:01

I don't make that mistake again? Thank you, Lori.

2:02:09

Um, I was just going to say, um, also in response to what Muhammad had said

2:02:15

before about physical accessibility to the buildings, Disability Rights Vermont

2:02:20

is also tasked with um, doing um, uh, polling place surveys, right? So, we go

2:02:26

to the survey centers, we evaluate them for their compliance with ADA, right?

2:02:32

And then we send recommendations to the polling places about their accessibility. Now mind you that doesn't

2:02:40

cover all of the that is the site

2:02:45

accessibility right for people who are going to the site location. We're not um

2:02:51

we aren't uh tasked yet with the technical stuff so much uh technical

2:02:58

accessibility which is why us having this this working group is important for

2:03:04

us to you know because there are already some checks and balances in place for physical accessibility but not

2:03:11

necessarily other means of accessibility. The other thing I wanted to say was in regards to the question

2:03:18

about HR uh seat human rights commission um disability rights Vermont partners a

2:03:24

lot with human rights commission because we do get those complaints from people in the public who and we actually have a

2:03:30

current case that we're co-working on with them um about public meeting accessibility and um and so uh you know

2:03:42

HRC does a lot of the investigation for sure and then um in the in certain

2:03:48

situations where there are additional steps that need to be taken whether it's a mediation or a litigation you know we

2:03:55

sometimes partner with them on stuff like that so um there are um resources

2:04:02

out there um for people when their rights have been violated I think a a

2:04:08

lot of folks have just become accustomed to having their rights violated to the point that they don't know that there

2:04:15

are resources out there to to help them to fight that and to change this. So,

2:04:22

you know, I I appreciate everybody's participation cuz it's uh the more we

2:04:28

know, right? The more people know. Laura, can can disability rights um

2:04:36

share any documentation about the results of the polling location findings?

2:04:43

I feel like somebody asked Lindsay to send that and she said she was going to send some of our surveys information.

2:04:51

Uh I know that there was an email thread about that. I can remind her to see if

2:04:58

we can't

2:05:03

uh Oh, she's

2:05:09

um I will look into it because I know we obviously we have our polling place um

2:05:17

you know uh all the results of our polling place surveys

2:05:22

um collected and I know that there were a bunch of surveys that were done previous to the 2024 general. So, um I I

2:05:31

will check public information. I believe public information. Okay. Yeah.

2:05:37

I wasn't sure about that piece. I'll look I I feel like there was some conversation about that. I don't know if there was follow through, but I know

2:05:43

that there's certainly been I know that I saw somebody posted 2018 polling place

2:05:48

surveys, but there have been more recent ones than that. So there there may have been followup, but

2:05:54

um if you could do it again, I apologize to say um that would be really helpful and we can make sure that people have

2:06:00

access to that. Yeah. Um Kate, yeah, thank you. And just to name I do

2:06:06

put things in the chat because it helps me remember what I want to say because there's so much that we all want to share and it takes a minute for us to

2:06:11

all get around to it. So um Lauren, your first question about what else about annual meetings should we address? Um

2:06:17

and I posted that in chat for reference for people who prefer to read it. Um, so just the same typical things. Lack of

2:06:22

plain language, lack of physically accessible buildings, lack of interpretation, lack of electronic or

2:06:28

accessible printed documents in advance, aisle ways not accessible, no sound systems, lack of meetings that happen at

2:06:33

most convenient times and locations, no ADA accessible parking. The tools exist, but no one knows how to use them. So

2:06:40

elevators, I'm going to ask you, hey, can I just ask you to slow down a little bit? We have someone um who's having a

2:06:46

translator, so if you could just be a little slower, that would be great. Yep. Um and also why I put it in the

2:06:52

chat as well. Um and so um so all of those issues that we know um exist,

2:06:58

right? Um and then the other piece that I want to name is that and this came up at a meeting previously that Laura

2:07:04

Kushman wasn't at. Um people were like, "Oh, there's a guide that show or there's findings that shows where is

2:07:10

accessible and where is not accessible." That's not exactly correct. Um it shows the places that have the infrastructure

2:07:16

and those that don't. that just because you have the infrastructure does not mean that you check the ADA box. So, I

2:07:21

want to be really clear about that. There's ex exhaustive exhaustive um

2:07:27

evidence from our peers all around the state on town meeting day that it's great that they have the omni ballot.

2:07:32

It's year three now and they've never been able to use the omni ballot, right? Um or there is a place that has, you

2:07:38

know, like all the elevators, all the back entrances, but nobody is there to unlock it. Um so that continues to be a

2:07:45

problem. Um, and then the last thing that I want to say because I feel like people continually are abhorred that

2:07:53

there are these laws both state and federal that are

2:07:58

that are not followed, that there are civil rights that people are not um being granted or being denied. And so

2:08:05

the the Secretary of State's office file a complaint with the Human Rights

2:08:11

Commission, right? Entities can file complaints with human rights commission. So, for example, the Secretary of State's office could say, "We know that

2:08:19

in these hundred some odd towns that don't have floor votes uh or that have floor votes that don't have the option

2:08:24

of Australian ballot, that systemically deacto, it is voter discrimination and

2:08:30

it is against both state and local laws and our state constitution, article 7, I believe. So that isn't that when we talk

2:08:36

about the human rights commission, it is ownorous and awful for a person with a disability to have to file that and go

2:08:43

through the investigation process on a person by town by town by town basis.

2:08:48

This is systemic and it exists, HRC exists. And wouldn't it be amazing if

2:08:54

where we identify that civil rights are being denied as a whole across the state that places like Secretary of State's

2:09:00

office said yes, we are filing a complaint. So just an option. we talk about the HRC, but would love to see it

2:09:05

taken away from the individual, that burden put on the system.

2:09:11

And I I think um I add um so a while ago, one of you

2:09:19

talked about the physicality of these birds. And I want to put it on the radar. Have any of you ever heard of the

2:09:26

name David Sagi? He passed away a few years ago, but David Sag was basically the ADA coordinator for higher ability,

2:09:33

which was known as the division of folk rehab. And when I looked at the list that he had, it's still available on the

2:09:40

website, it's all just about mobility focus. And I was there and I get a lot

2:09:46

of complaints how a lot of conferences, none of them, in fact, I found out

2:09:51

literally none of them have a hearing loop system.

2:09:58

and the cost money. So, for example, when I'm trying to get BGS, the secretary's office at uh the agency of

2:10:05

human services to, you know, figure out funding to create one of the conference

2:10:11

room and the water state compact office. It cost \$14,000

2:10:16

and now they're expecting Dale to foot the bill. And I said, "Oh, if you're going to expect Dale to put the B, that

2:10:23

means nobody but Dale can move the conference room.

2:10:30

Just to reflect back on what Kate was saying, I think we can probably all easily agree that enforcement is our

2:10:37

last resort, right? We do not want to be starting with enforcement as as as

2:10:43

the strongest piece that's um protecting everyone. We want we want to be going

2:10:49

with the education. We want to be starting with education. We want to be starting with

2:10:55

the education and training piece, right? Um because you're right, HRC

2:11:01

doesn't have the resources to deal individually, nor does with every situation that is out there, nor does

2:11:07

each individual should they have that put on them as the illness um as as their responsibility to make the system

2:11:13

step up.

2:11:19

So, I don't know if everyone saw, but Lauren stepped out of the room. So, here we are. I wasn't sure. Um,

2:11:27

we are at 15 more minutes. So, we had about five more minutes allotted for general conversation on this topic. Um,

2:11:34

and then we were going to move to wrapping up and planning for what's ahead. Um,

2:11:41

does anyone else have anything they want to contribute on? this piece. I know we talked primarily

2:11:48

about the polling place, but we have moved a bit into the public meeting locations as a whole. Um, which does

2:11:55

have a somewhat different focus in so far as folks are using public meeting

2:12:01

locations for lots of different things besides voting. So, it can be a more expansive look, I think, than than what than what

2:12:08

our guide for polling accessibility is focusing on. Yes, I think that the remote voting issue

2:12:14

needs to be folded into the technical area. It's the same thing, right? The identification

2:12:21

it definitely should be addressed by that group. And I think that there are other additional um elements that

2:12:28

there's technical and then there's yes and I would say in our charge the legislature broke that out into two

2:12:34

separate pieces. One was to identify the technical assistance equipment training needed for

2:12:40

municipalities to run their public meetings. Right? That's one piece. And then the other

2:12:45

piece. So here they did break it up public meetings of bodies versus the

2:12:51

second charge which is using electronic platforms to to support attendance and

2:12:57

voting remotely at annual meetings of the voters. So we have and I do think

2:13:02

the solutions and the questions are different and the solutions will also probably be different and because of the

2:13:07

the voting element the security issue with the voting element, right? And actually the theformational

2:13:13

meeting before an Australian ballot vote I think goes into the public meeting uh

2:13:19

category. So it even so you parse it even even further. And you know what even reasonable

2:13:25

attorneys don't even agree with that piece of things. I know, but generally speaking, it's it's who who's holding

2:13:30

the meeting. Is it a meeting of the board and therefore it's a meeting of a public body with public input or is it a

2:13:36

meeting of the voters? And that yeah, that's where that that line comes down to. But yes, I think

2:13:42

it's generally folks try to hold that informational meeting as an open meeting, long meeting, right? Because

2:13:48

the select board is generally conducting it in most towns.

2:13:55

So with that oh we have a hand up Muhammad. Yes that's me. Um one piece just I want

2:14:02

to maybe mention or reiterate if someone had mentioned it earlier say about

2:14:08

language as well on the paper I was wondering well I'm just reflecting on

2:14:14

the positive because I've seen a lot of positive around uh voting that has

2:14:20

happened already. Um last year for example myself even uh had to spread the

2:14:26

word uh through um multiple channels when I when some videos were produced by

2:14:33

uh Vermont language justice around how to vote as an example which is a great tool a

2:14:40

great tool for those who do not speak English

2:14:47

right and a great tool for those who have not had the chance maybe to be

2:14:53

educated or literate in general. And when I mention that

2:14:59

in Vermont, we do have some Vermoners born in Vermont, raised in Vermont, it

2:15:05

does not mean they are all literate. So, I'm going to count them in. And to

2:15:12

me, that's about inclusion and equity as well. uh not all vermoners had had the chance

2:15:19

to be educated to go through a paper identify whose candidate

2:15:27

to um to vote for and how to do it on the paper. So I'm pointing this out just

2:15:34

to um thinking whether there could be a video recording mock voting for those

2:15:43

individuals. uh to learn on how to actually even vote

2:15:48

once you are in the facility.

2:15:54

I think Laura's got her hand up.

2:15:59

Um sorry. Uh, so I was going to say um

2:16:05

that well just sort of in response to Muhammad again, I think disability

2:16:10

rights Vermont would be willing to um produce guides in other languages

2:16:19

except that it's so very costly to hire somebody to translate the materials that

2:16:26

we have and and then produce those booklets in many languages. And the same

2:16:33

with the video, like I think we would be willing to do a voters's guide on video. We do have videos regarding other

2:16:40

services and and things that are available to people in the community. I don't think that that's I I think that

2:16:47

that's entirely possible to do. Um, the other thing I was going to suggest is

2:16:53

that we take some of the last 10 minutes of this meeting to address some of the things that Kate brought up early in the

2:16:59

meeting about how next time we come together. Um we might make sure that we're we've you know addressed anybody

2:17:07

who wants to attends accessibility issues and also um make sure that people

2:17:13

know how to ex access the agenda and the website um so that they have time to

2:17:19

preview before they come to the meeting. So I don't want to ignore that very

2:17:24

important piece that um we we really still haven't addressed accessibility for these meetings. Um, so

2:17:32

that that was all. Why don't we Laurara and then we can then hit on what you're what you're

2:17:37

discussing. Other Lara, I wanted to t both. I brought it up

2:17:42

every year at same time at same time. Money. Where's the money?

2:17:50

You're not aled up multiple time.

2:17:55

So why don't we tackle that last? I I think let's do that. Um topic Laura um for our

2:18:04

next meeting we did want to make sure that we have everybody's contact

2:18:09

information baseline here right yes yes um so what's the best what's the

2:18:18

best way of providing that do we want um I think the new

2:18:24

uh email addresses Laura was one.

2:18:30

Um, Mohamad and Tim, I just wanted to verify that the email addresses that um

2:18:36

were used to do introductions for both of you were the email addresses that you

2:18:42

wanted added to the the invite going forward. Yes, from Tim.

2:18:48

Yes, I'm fine with that for now. Yeah. Okay. I put I put it in the chat, so you

2:18:53

should be able to find it. Yep. And I I saw the um email from

2:18:59

Brian, too. So, that's Thank you. Um I think And Laura Kushman,

2:19:05

you weren't on the invite yet. Is that correct? I made a note to to double check and make sure you were added to

2:19:11

the invite list.

2:19:16

Oh, muted. Sorry.

2:19:21

We can't hear you. I don't know. I think maybe Lindsay

2:19:27

might be on the invite list and not me because it was Lindsay before me. So, I'm not sure. But my email address is my

2:19:34

first name, lur disability rights.org.

2:19:40

And I would like to have my I'd like to have my work email removed. I sent an email from there because I

2:19:46

can't send Gmail from work, but it should be my ahooper.v vtgmail account

2:19:53

and not my ahooper@unmutual.com that's used for this.

2:19:59

Okay, I will double check on that. Um

2:20:04

I think everyone else is everybody else in the room and everyone else and everybody else online. Okay. And are we missing anyone?

2:20:13

Is there actually a July 24th meeting because I know that Susan mentioned that and I don't have a meeting invite about

2:20:18

July 24th. We do have July 24th as the next

2:20:25

meeting. July 24th from 10 to 12:30.

2:20:31

And if you do not have a meeting invite, you should note that down and make sure you get one. Um, but that's

2:20:37

Can we send it to Let's just make sure. So, that's something we want to make sure we do, I guess, is is get the meeting invite out

2:20:44

if maybe rescend it or these came out from Lauren's address, and we've been struggling to figure out in house how to

2:20:50

make sure everybody's getting everything they need. Um, so I will, um, update all

2:20:56

of the email addresses that I said that I would update, add everyone who wasn't already added, and resend that July 24th

2:21:05

meeting invite so that everybody here is getting it, which means you will also

2:21:11

get the agenda when it is produced. Um, and then that is where we can send out

2:21:17

any documents that need forward. Okay. or any links that need to be shared. So

2:21:22

I'll do that today. So hopefully that will level set who's getting what.

2:21:29

And I think at least for me it needs to be for all this is the last meeting I have on my calendar. I'm just realizing so if there are more um I think for all

2:21:35

of us just moving forward that all of them get resent. I guess maybe in the next four maybe maybe what

2:21:42

we could also do I'm thinking here is talk in house if we're going to add some this would be an opportunity to do that.

2:21:50

Um, and and we can we can add that to the conversation. And yeah, I think that's good. All right,

2:21:58

I'm going to jump in because nobody sees my hand. The um that meeting is in

2:22:03

person on the 24th. I have on my calendar. So, I think we have not made any kind of

2:22:09

decision on that. I think I'm just going to say let's keep it hybrid so that everybody can choose which way works

2:22:16

best for them. Um, we welcome anyone who wants to come here and can come here. Um, but I think we'll keep it hybrid.

2:22:24

Yeah, I think that idea came from when it was like, oh, okay, we've got a whatever 10 people who are going to be

2:22:30

doing this and then publicize it and this is a group that needs to work together. So, I mean, this was a mean

2:22:37

almost a year ago that it was like who who are who but the cost of uh of participants

2:22:43

changes weekly apparently. Um, and so I think trying to build those

2:22:49

relationships is probably not realistic and and also people of all over the

2:22:55

place geographically. So yeah. So just for future reference, I mean we'll get this out to everybody, but the

2:23:01

meetings that we have scheduled, we have a July 24th scheduled and then we have

2:23:06

two in August scheduled, the 14th and the 28th and we have one in September

2:23:11

scheduled which is September 12th. We will send out all of that and it is also posted on our website if you go on to

2:23:18

where um Lauren had directed it with Secretary of State's website the municipal tab open meeting law and then

2:23:26

the top tab of the work group. Um so we have that all there but we will make sure everybody gets all of these

2:23:32

states. Is there what what other pieces did we want to address in terms of what would

2:23:39

be asks most helpful visible um things we're missing that we

2:23:46

could that we could improve this process for next time.

2:23:53

Um yeah so just a small thing but an important thing. Um so if you can share who people can direct reasonable

2:24:00

accommodations requests and access needs to um just as a standard super great. Um also making sure that anything that is

2:24:07

shared um has an electronic option in advance too um would be super great. Um

2:24:14

I also oh there is some background noise um happening. Um uh the other thing oh I

2:24:20

just lost my train of thought now. Um what was the other thing? There was one more thing. Sorry, the background noise

2:24:27

is locked out. Okay, so we said making sure everybody knows who they can direct reasonable

2:24:33

access requests to making sure anything that's sent out or to be discussed is also done so in advance electronically

2:24:39

so people can have that in front of them. Yes. And also the last thing is I had also put this in chat because it didn't

2:24:45

feel necessary to say it aloud and I also emailed um Kelly and Jenny, but it would be super helpful to have a list. I

2:24:52

did not see it on the website of what the working groups are. I know some have met before and so I don't know like if

2:24:58

you could share who like some of the things have like there have been working documents that had been created. Um so

2:25:03

if you could just share what the working groups are, who the members are and then who we can contact to be included on a

2:25:09

working group because I was waiting to see what representation was um to make

2:25:15

sure that there's just adequate representation on each group. like I wouldn't be doubling up like if you know

2:25:20

um Laura was on a either Laura was on one of the work groups. So

2:25:28

under the open meeting law, I think that if we as a secretary of state become

2:25:34

that hub and start designating folks and coordinating that, we are then calling

2:25:39

those work groups committees that need to be um meetings that need to be warned with

2:25:46

agendas as opposed to conver in conversations of interested people who

2:25:52

are going to then come back and do that work here. So, I don't think that I can we I don't think that we can commit to

2:25:57

posting a list of here's all of these subgroups that we're doing and here are the members and here is their tasks. Um,

2:26:03

that feels like we're crossing a line to me. Um, maybe we could just reiterate which

2:26:10

people said they were going to be the be the point person be the point person for each topic and

2:26:15

then and then that who you can send out able to send out like an email that says these are the topics that people

2:26:21

volunteer to be point person for. contact that person if you want to be involved. Does that sound reasonable?

2:26:33

Maybe we can just go through them one by one right now and just say who the contact person is for each

2:26:39

group. I and I understand the workaround and I have concerns about it

2:26:48

conflict here. We're just discussing it.

2:26:54

I hear you. I'm not sure how else to handle this.

2:27:02

Um, as Lauren said, we at the Secretary of State don't have the ability to set up

2:27:11

formalized sub groups as committees.

2:27:18

And so, but we we also don't want to prohibit people from

2:27:23

doing work outside. And in fact, it makes a lot of sense for people to be gathering together and talking these

2:27:29

things over. But I I don't I I don't have a direct solution that that that

2:27:35

establishes that in which we can say we're going to establish committees of this group and then

2:27:42

provide the administrative and legal support to those committees which is what we are under statute

2:27:48

required to do for this group. I don't think there's anything that would happen in those conversations or groups that

2:27:54

would not be put through the finest civ of this full group um before it ever

2:28:02

became anything meaningful. I mean that I mean that's the upside is

2:28:07

have those conversations and never worry that they're not going to be

2:28:12

seen by this buller group. Yes. Go ahead Frank. I think in training I think with the ML um is that is avoiding chains and

2:28:21

email chains in that conflict where it gets uh is that if somebody brings

2:28:27

something forward to be discussed at a future meeting then that is not a

2:28:33

present discussion is a future discussion which would be happening potentially here.

2:28:39

So I noticed Muhammad and then Lara have their hands up. I'm mindful that we're over time and that I don't I don't want to run this any further, but I would

2:28:45

like to let those two folks contribute what they would like to say. Muhammad. Yeah, I I am slightly not clear about

2:28:52

what is being said in not having a clear and transparent list of subcommittees.

2:28:58

uh to my understanding um yes you may have some internal laws that I have not

2:29:04

seen but I've been and I am currently in other boards where we have subcommittees

2:29:10

and those are all listed and transparent and everyone knows who is in which group

2:29:17

by that we would I mean I can picture it as um I'm not saying you have to do it

2:29:22

because I saw it then but I'm just saying uh it's it's possible that we

2:29:28

have a spreadsheet, a spreadsheet that would list each committee on its own tab or a working

2:29:35

document, whatever the format is. I I'm not just I'm I don't think this

2:29:41

should hurt anyone else because we are all in one group here and this one very

2:29:47

one group is being divided into subcommittees. Hence, it makes sense that we know who is in which. I just

2:29:54

want to add that piece and if you think your laws don't allow that, I would suggest we review those laws as well.

2:30:02

I don't think it is being divided into subcommittees. Am I right about that? I mean, I'm not I didn't sense I felt like

2:30:07

there's a there are some people who are having a conversation about technology. Am I right? And I mean it's not like

2:30:13

people are going off. And so I think the ask here has been for us to to publish a

2:30:19

and the ask was a list to publish what these these groups who's heading them up

2:30:25

who's members of them and I believe the charge. Am I right about that? That was the ask and that was a line that I felt

2:30:32

made me uncomfortable. And so that's what we're processing right now. Okay. Thank you. Yeah. I think we can um

2:30:39

say in this group who is the leader and people can identify themselves to that leader but I agree with Jenny we are

2:30:47

will be violating the open meeting law if we do that without the infrastructure which will require hybrid meetings

2:30:55

public access in a physical location and IT infrastructure and again I would love

2:31:02

to say that the secretary of state could do that we can't and I I just I have to

2:31:08

maintain that we can't and I'm really sorry about that. So I think we can everyone in this group should know who

2:31:14

is the organizer on those topics and I have you know I have uh Megan as it

2:31:20

Laura as accessibility Laura Kushman sorry um and uh Susan for electronic

2:31:27

voting um what at town meeting at town meeting yes at town meeting at town

2:31:33

not electronic voting in general. Yes. Yes. Sorry. Um am I missing

2:31:40

anybody? Um so that we know. Um and

2:31:48

the second piece was that the piece that was the piece and I think while you were out we collected the email

2:31:54

addresses that everyone prefers to use and we're going to also try to send out resend out the meeting invites for the

2:32:00

rest of the meeting. Perfect. schedule so that for the next four dates and potentially discuss

2:32:05

in-house whether you want to add any to that. Great.

2:32:11

Um, Laura, please. Oh, I'm sorry. I had to step down. I think and also we were going to

2:32:17

identify who um can be reached out to for accessibility for the next meeting um was something that we discussed and

2:32:24

um and then I was just going to say yeah uh if anybody has any suggestions if they want to review the um guide that

2:32:31

already exists um and let me know, email me. I will make sure that I bring

2:32:36

whatever email information I receive from people or suggestions I receive to the meeting so that everybody knows what

2:32:44

suggestions came my way uh about the accessibility guide.

2:32:50

Can you email me so I can email you that? I'm sorry. Laura, can you email me so I can email

2:32:56

you back? Um I don't have your email address,

2:33:02

Laura. It's on the website that Jenny posted. Okay. To go to my web page.

2:33:10

Oh, right. Okay. We'll make sure that everyone has each other's emails.

2:33:15

Okay. Thank you. Um, so the piece that I'm hearing that

2:33:21

has not been resolved is what does accessibility mean for this particular meeting? How can we improve

2:33:28

accessibility for our work? Um and that was a piece that we had put in a parking

2:33:33

lot to talk about at the end of the meeting. Um so um what I've heard is the

2:33:41

um what I've heard I've heard that there was an accessibility issue with our

2:33:46

documents that people would like the documents earlier that everyone would

2:33:51

like to know about the documents. um which I just want to say uh

2:34:01

is definitely best practice um and we can accommodate that um

2:34:07

the access to the documents. I also want to be clear uh we weren't hiding the agenda. It happened yesterday. So um we

2:34:15

are trying to do our best to do this on top of just like all of you on top of a lot of other work. So, um,

2:34:22

so ask for some grace there. Um, and, um, but were there other pieces that I

2:34:30

was missing? The location that we are, which is on our website, but, um, we

2:34:35

could put it on the agenda. Um, that's an easy ask. Um, for everyone's

2:34:40

awareness, there's a lot of public parking here in Montpillar, uh, with parking meters.

Um, but we also have

2:34:46

visitor parking. We're very fortunate to have this sort of parking that is unmetered in front of our office.

2:34:51

I did not know about that. There are some nice parking spots right here. Just want to say very nice.

2:34:57

And um we have Yeah, but were there other

2:35:03

specific asks that we should be accommodating that I haven't named?

2:35:08

Well, I think having Yeah, having a contact person so people don't have to name their reasonable accommodations aloud um so that they can contact would

2:35:15

be super great. investment practice as well.

2:35:21

We can do that.

2:35:27

Anything else that we've missed or can improve upon?

2:35:35

All right. Hearing none, we will be in a better state next next meeting. Um,

2:35:41

thank you all so much for staying on a little later. Um, and for this really good conversation. Um, I really

2:35:48

appreciate it. Um, I know this these topics are personal um, to many of us

2:35:54

and also um, not always the easiest to talk about and for some of us we have to

2:35:59

talk about it all the time. So, um, I really appreciate this dialogue and

2:36:05

everyone being here um, very much.

2:36:11

Thank you everyone. Nice to meet you all. Thank you.

2:36:19

I just want to say thank you. I really really appreciate you being here.