

# VEMS User Group Meeting Minutes

i)September 27, 2002



a. Board Room - 60 Empire Drive, St. Paul

**Chairperson:** Kathy Sibbel - Project Manager (OSS)

**Attendees:**

Michelle DesJardin (Hennepin Co.)	Kim Carlson (OSS)
Morli McNally (Dakota Co.)	Scott Simmons (OSS)
Gary Poser (Anoka Co.)	Linda Becker (OSS)
Diane Teff (Anoka Co.)	Bill Batcher (OSS)
Stephanie Iverson (Ramsey Co.)	Joann Swanberg (OSS)
Irene Meier (Anoka Co.)	Luci Botzek (MACO)
Judy Wertheimer (Washington Co.)	
Cindy Kerr (Dakota Co.)	
Patty O'Connor (Blue Earth Co.)	
Karen Myers (Blue Earth Co.)	
Laurie Braun (Rice Co.)	
Marie Clare (Dakota Co.)	
Deb Tappe (Waseca Co.)	
Annette Peters (Rice Co.)	
Christine Plaza (Isanti Co.)	
Jim Myers (Ottertail Co.)	
Dennis Distad (Freeborn Co.)	
Tom Ferber (Washington Co.)	
Joan Manthe (Waseca Co.)	
Mary Kay Kes (Scott Co.)	
Karen Ruehling (Sibley Co.)	
Patty Hansen (Hennepin Co.)	
Susanne Griffin (City of Mpls)	
Dawn DiMartino (City of Mpls)	

**Other Presenters:**

Lisa Kramer (OSS)  
Robin Anthony (election.com)

**1. Introductions, Meeting Structure and Agenda Review (Kathy Sibbel)**

Refer to the attendee list above and to the meeting agenda.

**2. Election Results System (Lisa Kramer)**

On Primary Election night the Help Desk received 4 calls.

The Election Division received calls concerning:

- Abstracts timing out – a modification is being made to fix this
- Local election uploads had issues. Codes have been corrected.

Election Division is working on:

- Additional local election and reports
- Adding write-ins automatically

- 7AM summary stats weren't entered. They used the sum of all the voter races. Will add 7AM totals for the text download.
- Additional proofing.
- Next tests will be conducted Oct. 17 & 24.
  - 14 counties are piloting with local and state information
  - ERS Advisory Group will meet after the VUG meeting today
- Public website -
  - Public website will be enhanced. Sort options will be added.
  - Had 2.9 million hits (a hit is considered a page)
  - Had 20,000 hits to the poll sites

Counties will be able to see Abstracts during the tests.  
 Ramsey Co. is still experiencing connectivity problems.

**3. VEMS System Performance (Bill Batcher and Robin Anthony)**

Bill explained database "locking" issues within VEMS and how it affects performance. System and database monitoring tools have been installed to help troubleshoot performance issues. An election.com technical representative has identified areas where election.com can adjust or "fine tune" the code to enhance performance. Election.com is investigating the Absentee Balloting module.

Robin and an election.com developer were on-site in early September to observe VEMS performance at the OSS and at Washington Co. They witnessed slow response time.

The next week, Robin was on-site during a controlled "Production" test.

Election.com is working in partnership with the OSS to enable MN to be its "top" customer, and to roll out MN's modifications to other customers.

Kathy and Robin will review the Efficiency List to incorporate MN's suggestions into the upcoming .NET version.

System problems:

- Daily Activity Report is CPU intensive. Discussed the need to have it processed overnight as a batch job. But, VEMS is not designed to run batch jobs.
- Num Lock – Counties said that they are still having problems with losing the num lock feature. Also, Anoka reported having their entire keyboard freeze and needing to reboot.

Note: When you experience a problem in VEMS, such as an ODBC error, slow response time, num lock, etc. be sure to call the Help Desk so they can capture the information, and report it to election.com. The Help Desk will issue a ticket for all related problems.

**4. Primary Election Debriefing (Kathy Sibbel):**

Topic/Issue	What went well?	What can be improved
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<p>Redistricting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Wandering the returned RNCs</li> <li>❑ Making changes to the voting districts</li> <li>❑ Redistricting would have been tough in either system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Steps used were not clear to users. Expectations of utilities; voters did not move when expected; training</li> <li>❑ Remove all Precinct Splits from the system prior to starting.</li> <li>❑ Practice needs to be available.</li> <li>❑ Keep county users informed of when Practice is available.</li> <li>❑ Block Range Utility changed to be MCD specific in addition to county wide</li> <li>❑ RNCs – data included, spacing, information cut off (email, 2<sup>nd</sup> line of instructions to voters, correspondence message)</li> <li>❑ RNCs – Purged Felons and Guardians received cards.</li> </ul>
<p>Election Setup</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Instructions were clear</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Include instructions for producing the MN – Polling Place List and Polling Place List Reports</li> <li>❑ Efficiency List – remove sort by wards, and message pertaining to “no voters” on report, two “precincts” listed as sort options</li> <li>❑ Improve polling place reports to include addresses of contacts, etc. VEMS User Group needs to review reports and improve enhancements.</li> </ul>

<p>Rosters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Schedule</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Roster Production – mailing, delivery and web site</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Posting History – bar codes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Received them</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Judges liked them</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Font was improved</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Several counties had rosters that were 99% scanable.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Scott Co. received one without punches</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Not received in precinct order</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Pages had jagged edges</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Option to pick up vs. shipped</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Enhancement – need a final summary page of 7 am voter counts for each precinct/precinct split/election, include the precinct description</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Include roster mail dates on web site and update it on a daily basis</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Barcodes looked good but were not always scanable</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Guns worked better than wands.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> VEMS tip on installation of wands and include in documentation</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> NR pages need to reflect 1-300 not 1-5, 1-5.</li> </ul>
<p>Reports – Master Lists, Mail Ballot labels, Public Info Reports</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> ML - enhancement add page break between precincts</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> ML - burn data to CD Rom</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> ML - did not reflect the exact voter names as the rosters.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> MBL- only received one label</li> </ul>
<p>VR Cards – Cut off</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 4 days to print rosters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Print rosters at county – pilot it.</li> </ul>
<p>Wrong Polling Place Letters</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The letter is not available in VEMS. However, a label is produced.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Letter will need to be manually changed for each voter.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Instructions to county users on entering EDRs to trigger the WPP letter.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The letter needs to be available NOW.</li> </ul>
<p>Notice of Ineffective Registration</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Under 18 voter received letter – working with election.com</li> </ul>
<p>Training</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Update Manuals</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> More Training classes especially when new functions are added to the system</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Web based classes</li> </ul>

**Bar Code “Gun” Scanner – (Holly Gustner):**

The Roster bar code scanning was sporadic using the wands. Some counties had no problems, some could scan some and others could hardly scan any bar codes.

Holly found that using a less sensitive scanning “gun” worked on all the bar codes. **It is recommended that if a county has other departments that use scanning guns, that they should test the scanners to see if they read the Roster bar codes.**

**Also, when using the wands, be sure to plug it into the keyboard and not the mouse.**

Holly investigated some scanning guns and demonstrated one at the meeting. Her recommendation was based on the scanner being lightweight, its ease to hold, no button to push, and consistency of reading all bar codes.

She is working with Enpoint Technologies on a state contract to purchase the scanners. The price will be based on quantities purchased:

- 1 to 100           -\$163.00 Each
- 100 to 250       -\$153.00 Each
- 250 +             -\$135.00 Each

A memo will be sent to all counties to determine the interest in purchasing the scanners, so a price can be set.

Cindy Kerr volunteered to give OSS information on the scanners used by Dakota Co.

#### **5. Absentee Balloting - (Linda Becker):**

Linda demonstrated the Absentee Ballot Process Wizard module. Features included:

- Generate labels for a "future" election. To qualify, the voter must have an approved application and a ballot record on which the Date Ballot Sent and Date Vote Recorded fields are blank. In addition, the voter must meet the user-defined selection criteria entered at runtime.
- Generate labels for "mail ballot" precincts. Labels will generate for all Active and Inactive (Valid) voters in the entire precinct. The only two exceptions are related to the Felons and Guardianships. These exceptions must be specified in the interface.

OSS plans to have the AB Process Wizard into VEMS Production by 10/3. It is currently in VEMS QA. VUG members will be given access to VEMS QA and asked to help test the Wizard. A memo will be sent to the members along with documentation on how to use the Wizard.

Election.com provided extra non-MN Voter Status/ Voter Status Reason codes in the new build. Other election.com customers use the codes. The codes are:

- IPQ = Inactive – Question
- IPR = Inactive – Postal Return

Be sure not to use them. MN OSS does not support them since they were not set up for MN use.

#### **6. Updates - (Scott Simmons):**

- a. Ballot Bulletin – Let Scott know of any topics you would like to have addressed in the bulletins.
- b. Status on Federal Legislation

Still pending in Congress is the election administration reform bill. Although it has passed both the House and Senate, it is stalled in conference committee. Reports on its status vary, but in the event it passes before adjournment, it is likely to contain provisions mandating DREs for blind voters in all precincts. It would also require states to assemble plans for the expenditure of federal dollars for programs and

equipment. The plans would require the input from the public as well as counties and other jurisdictions. Where there is funding, it will likely be distributed to the states based on a formula that considers voting age population (VAP). Each state would receive a minimum based on a percentage of VAP. The OSS will notify counties about the highlights when and if the bill becomes a law.

c. DRE – Direct Recording Election Devices

OSS received authorization to conduct a county pilot using the touch screen and audio devices. They will assist:

- Blind voters
- Absentee voters.

The devices are targeted to be used in municipal 2003 elections and all 2004 elections.

d. Military Internet Pilot –

This involves Internet voting for military and oversea voters. The goal is to have states with over 200,000 voters to pilot. Scott will talk with Secretary Kiffmeyer about security issues and to see if she is in favor of being a pilot.

**7. Open Questions & Answers:**

Large voter population counties expressed concern that they would not be able to meet the Roster Production deadlines defined in the schedule sent out from the OSS on 9/20. They stated that they would not be able to enter all their Voter Registration cards by Oct. 16.

Therefore, the OSS will revise the schedule to allow as much time for the large counties to enter VR cards to ensure they have complete rosters, and for OSS to provide rosters in a timely manner.

**Next Meeting:**

November 21, 2002

60 Empire Drive – Room 106

**Agenda Items for next meeting:**

Debriefing on:

- Rosters
- Absentee Balloting
- Duplicate Voters
- Wrong Polling Place Letter
- Reclassification

**Meeting Evaluation**

A. What did you like about the meeting and want to continue doing?

- a. No timekeeper
- b. Good discussion – lots of time for discussions
- c. Bill attended entire meeting and provided technical information.

B. What didn't you like and want to discontinue doing?

- a. E-mail minutes to all counties. (Minutes are on the web, too.)
- b. Invite all counties to attend. (Would need an RSVP to “manage” the group.)

C. What would you like to change for the next meeting?

- a. Nothing

**Parking Lot**

- No items this meeting.

## **Action Items:**

### **Bill Batcher:**

- Work with Ramsey Co. to correct ERS connectivity problems.
- Ensure that "shadowing" works for Help Desk.
- Deploy drivers for printing (Diane – Anoka Co.)
- Print a Master List from a CD
- Ensure VUG members have access to VEMS QA for testing the AB Process Wizard.

### **Lisa Kramer:**

- Send ERS handout to Kathy to be distributed with the meeting minutes.

### **Joann Swanberg –**

- Direct Help Desk to issue a ticket for all VEMS ODBC errors and reports of slow system response time.

### **Kathy Sibbel –**

- Send memo to counties to call in problems. Include a question list (template) to use to report their problems.
- Send memo to counties regarding the scanning gun to determine the interest in purchasing the scanners, so a price can be set.
- Send memo to counties regarding Wrong Polling Place Letter. It will contain instruction for printing voter labels and a template to be used as the letter.
- Add additional sort options to MN-Polling Place Location List, since it currently only sorts by ward. Submit request to election.com.
- Talk with election.com about changing the Vote Method "IHD" to "AB." IHD = In-house Dymo.
- Add Jim Myers (Ottetail Co.) to VUG distribution list.
- Discuss and communicate revised Roster Production schedule.

### **Article I.Linda Becker & Kim Carlson:**

- Test county report for voters who voted in multiple counties.
- Send a memo to VUG members along with documentation on how to use the AB Process Wizard, so they can test the Wizard in VEMS QA.
- Test to ensure that non-MN codes IPQ and IPR messages do not print on the Rosters if they are accidentally used. The voter should appear on the Roster, but not the code description.
- Delete Underage 18 (U18) voters from getting Letter of Late Notification.

### **Cindy Kerr:**

- Send Kathy information on the scanners used by Dakota Co.

### **All Counties:**

- Contact Help Desk with any VEMS ODBC errors, slow response times or Num Lock issues.
- Notify Scott of any topics you would like to have addressed in the Ballot Bulletin.