

# VEMS User Group Meeting Minutes

i) November 21, 2002



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

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

**Attendees:**

- |                                   |                              |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Michelle DesJardin (Hennepin Co.) |                              |
| Morli McNally (Dakota Co.)        |                              |
| Mary Schwendig (Dakota Co.)       | Linda Becker (OSS)           |
| Gary Poser (Anoka Co.)            | Bill Batchter (OSS)          |
| Diane Teff (Anoka Co.)            | Luci Botzek (MACO)           |
| Irene Meier (Anoka Co.)           | Robin Anthony (election.com) |
| Judy Wertheimer (Washington Co.)  |                              |
| Cindy Kerr (Dakota Co.)           |                              |
| Patty O'Connor (Blue Earth Co.)   |                              |
| Karen Myers (Blue Earth Co.)      |                              |
| Carol Leonard (Dakota Co.)        |                              |
| Marie Clare (Dakota Co.)          |                              |
| Jim Myhre (Ottertail Co.)         |                              |
| Tom Ferber (Washington Co.)       |                              |
| Patty Hansen (Blue Earth Co.)     |                              |
| Rachel Larsen (Ramsey Co.)        |                              |
| Andrew Lokken (Ramsey Co.)        |                              |

**Other Presenters:**

Jim Lawliss (OSS)

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

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

**2. VEMS System Performance (Bill Batchter)**

Bill demonstrated the logging and tracking tools that he and his staff are using to monitor the VEMS application and server performance. OSS can turn on the tracking software when counties report ODBC and other types of errors occurring in the system.

A performance chart of the servers was shown to the group. Bill and Linda demonstrated processing the Daily Activity Report, and how the tracking tools reflected the use on the servers.

ODBC errors occur when the server "flat lined" on the chart. The spikes indicated the taxing of the server. It was discovered that producing specific reports created major "hits" on the servers. OSS may contact counties when they see that an individual user is doing something that is taxing the server.

OSS has four older servers and two newer servers (Viking and Woodtick). The newer servers are much faster. OSS is currently working on a budget proposal that will replace the four older servers. This will help the performance issues. A new build of the system was installed on October 9<sup>th</sup> and this improved the absentee module performance.

Steps OSS Computer Services has taken for improved system performance:

- Added two new VEMS servers: Viking and Woodtick.
- Consolidated three databases into one to increase processing speed.
- Changed code files to download on the users local session, which makes the screens come up faster.
- Reviewed specific reports. Many of the reports were built as a county report. The application was revised to accommodate those reports as a state report. This is evident in the Daily Activity Report.
- Reviewed and corrected Absentee Balloting Module performance and printing time.

It was suggested that OSS direct the heavy users of the system to a specific server, so it wouldn't affect everyone.

It was suggested that ERS & VEMS be on separate servers, because counties noticed that VEMS slowed down greatly during the testing of ERS. Bill would consider this. This problem needs to be resolved by September 2004.

A new VEMS build was implemented on October 9, which increased the enter time for VR cards:

- Voter registration applications processed on October 4<sup>th</sup> - 1,800
- Voter registration applications processed on October 9<sup>th</sup> - 2,700

Database Changes being made.

- Phase 1 –
- A database review will be done in December 2002. There are 700 to 800 indexes altogether in VEMS. Many of the fields have duplicate indexes. There are approximately 537 indexes that could be removed which will decrease the system from 18 gigabytes down to 11 gigabytes.
- Phase II – More database changes will be implemented in January 2003:
  - Clustering Indexes
  - Compound Indexes – are being added and are county specific
  - Removing select stars
  - Dropping unused objects (No more than 20)

Reports Engine:

- Many of the reports are too big to be run over a wide area network (WAN). OSS will be piloting some counties to print their own rosters and master lists for the upcoming elections. The goal is to have this completed by next spring. The counties would download the data and then generate the report in house.

Fine Tuning:

- When ODBC errors occur, OSS frequently calls counties to find out specifically what they are doing in the system. Counties are encouraged to continue sending OSS e-mails when errors are received.
- The logging function helps to target issues in order to get them fixed. The logging and tracking function can be turned on and off by OSS.

#### **4. Primary and General Elections Debriefing (Kathy Sibbel):**

Issues from the Primary election are in “black”.

Issues from the General election are in “red”.

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> <li>❑ PVCs printed on green cards. Check with Intertech to see if there is any remaining stock. Investigate if can convert to normal blue cards and throw any remaining cards away.</li> <li>❑ InterTech is truncating the email web addresses. Also, second line of comment line on PVCs is truncated - create heat ticket and report to election.com.</li> <li>❑ Country instead of County on RNCs. Dakota sent email and has not received a response.</li> <li>❑ PVC processing – not processed in accordance with the timeframe communicated in last Help Desk email.</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> <li>❑ Training for entire election process and how it relates to election setup.</li> <li>❑ Precincts with no voters – ERS expects results in order to close election.</li> <li>❑ VUG recommends that MN OSS set up ALL elections.</li> </ul>

<p>Rosters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Schedule</li> <li>□ Roster</li> <li>□ Production – mailing, delivery and web site</li> <li>□ Posting History – bar codes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Received them</li> <li>□ Judges liked them</li> <li>□ Font was improved</li> <li>□ Several counties had rosters that were 99% scan able.</li> <li>□ <b>Terrific delivery service to Dakota County.</b></li> <li>□ <b>Precinct order</b></li> <li>□ <b>Banded</b></li> <li>□ <b>Barcodes are working with wand.</b></li> <li>□ <b>Font is easier to read</b></li> <li>□ <b>Liked names bolded</b></li> <li>□ <b>Numbers moved outside of name field</b></li> <li>□ <b>Packing list had the 7 am numbers.</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Scott Co. received one without punches</li> <li>□ Not received in precinct order</li> <li>□ Pages had jagged edges</li> <li>□ Option to pick up vs. shipped</li> <li>□ Enhancement – need a final summary page of 7 am voter counts for each precinct/precinct split/election, include the precinct description</li> <li>□ Include roster mail dates on web site and update it on a daily basis</li> <li>□ Barcodes looked good but were not always scan able</li> <li>□ Guns worked better than wands.</li> <li>□ VEMS tip on installation of wands and include in documentation</li> <li>□ NR pages need to reflect 1-300 not 1-5, 1-5.</li> <li>□ <b>Washington County experienced missing voters on rosters. OSS &amp; Washington are investigating.</b></li> <li>□ <b>Apt. numbers not appearing on roster.</b></li> <li>□ <b>Dakota reported that one voter should have been reported on roster but did appear on master list.</b></li> <li>□ <b>Several voters with “Active” status did not appear on roster.</b></li> <li>□ <b>Xs put at the end of names. Confused election judges.</b></li> <li>□ <b>Need to know what reports are going to look like in July for the upcoming election. No last minute changes to items such as the rosters and master lists.</b></li> <li>□ <b>Packing slip to include the numbers by school district (by precinct split).</b></li> </ul>
<p>Reports – Master Lists, Mail Ballot labels, Public Info Reports</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ <b>Master List on CD was tested at Washington County – it was extremely helpful.</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ ML - enhancement add page break between precincts</li> <li>□ ML - burn data to CD Rom</li> <li>□ ML - did not reflect the exact voter names as the rosters.</li> <li>□ MBL- only received one label</li> <li>□ <b>Didn't match the 7 am numbers on the rosters.</b></li> <li>□ <b>Bill to look into printing master lists with the same data as the rosters.</b></li> <li>□ <b>Multiple copies, better paper instead of green bar.</b></li> <li>□ <b>Voter ID number should be on ML.</b></li> <li>□ <b>PI Lists – candidates need faster than 10 days processing time.</b></li> </ul>
<p>VR Cards – Cut off</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ 4 days to print rosters</li> <li>□ <b>Group voter change could be used to change all the voters that were mistakenly entered with reg. date after cutoff period.</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ Print rosters at county – pilot it.</li> <li>□ <b>Email too late regarding backdating registration date.</b></li> <li>□ <b>VR Card – F7 search press the Find button to reveal list of streets. Different counties see different results.</b></li> </ul>

Wrong Polling Place Letters		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ The letter is not available in VEMS. However, a label is produced.</li> <li>❑ Letter will need to be manually changed for each voter.</li> <li>❑ Instructions to county users on entering EDRs to trigger the WPP letter.</li> <li>❑ The letter needs to be available NOW.</li> <li>❑ <b>No labels for the polling place.</b></li> </ul>
Notice of Ineffective Registration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ <b>Worked for the general election. Voters under 18 did not receive a letter.</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Under 18 voter received letter – working with election.com</li> </ul>
Training		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Update Manuals</li> <li>❑ More Training classes especially when new functions are added to the system</li> <li>❑ Web based classes</li> <li>❑ <b>Overall training for election setup needed</b></li> </ul>
Other		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Num lock</li> <li>❑ <b>Keyboard loss in AB module (using the right arrow key) (Gary)</b></li> </ul>
AB Module	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ <b>Manuals were useful</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ <b>AB training not offered and trickled down to county staff</b></li> <li>❑ <b>Absentee Balloting – latest release too late before the election.</b></li> <li>❑ <b>System needs to be complete by February 2003</b></li> <li>❑ <b>DYMO margin set up on EVERY application.</b></li> <li>❑ <b>Speed of system, response time</b></li> <li>❑ <b>Can DOB be added to the AB search cycle?</b></li> <li>❑ <b>F6 search several voters were not located when the AB module was used but did not find them.</b></li> <li>❑ <b>HNR created duplicates</b></li> <li>❑ <b>First label truncates voters name and address (sheet labels)</b></li> <li>❑ <b>Laser sheets – margins for reg. Labels are right on the very left of the label.</b></li> <li>❑ <b>AB module does not allow you to go to another record to view it. (Judy).</b></li> <li>❑ <b>First label truncating zip code (sheet labels)</b></li> <li>❑ <b>Permissions for margins do not stick to .01, .01, .1, .01. (Pat Harp)</b></li> </ul>

ERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Local level results good idea if it works</li> <li>❑ Primary results showed results fast.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Abstracts – problems with repagination</li> <li>❑ Look into output other than html – .pdf preferred</li> <li>❑ Amount of time it takes</li> <li>❑ Possible to complete a batch job</li> <li>❑ Request a proofing report</li> <li>❑ Correct candidate codes were received too late</li> <li>❑ School district codes did not work</li> <li>❑ City codes were too late</li> <li>❑ Write In totals had to added manually for the entire county</li> <li>❑ 7 a.m. totals went back to zero</li> <li>❑ General results showed results much slower than Primary.</li> <li>❑ Alternative path for counties to verify results on Lindberg.</li> <li>❑ When calling with error, open the access to make the correction.</li> <li>❑ Counties were unaware of the County Statistics web page.</li> </ul>
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**Other Notes:**

Redistricting - Dakota expressed concern about the misspelling of the word “county” on the RNCs. Carol Leonard had asked if they would be reimbursed for these RNCs. OSS has gotten rid of the rest of the stock of RNCs that had the misspelling.

Election Setup - When asked if counties would be comfortable setting up their own elections:

- Blue Earth said it’s easier for the counties to check what the state has done instead of having the county set it up.
- Hennepin County said the school elections are very difficult to set up.
- Ottertail County thought some of the smaller counties could set up their elections themselves.
- Linda Becker explained that the problems with the rosters happened when new precincts were added and the state was not told they had been added. When the polling place is the same for 2 precincts it needs to be put in as two separate polling places.

When asked if it would be helpful to have training on election set up:

- Anoka said people need to know what information is needed to do the election set up.
- It was the consensus of the VUG that the state should set up every election. The counties could provide the information and the state will set up the election in VEMS.

Reports - Dakota County reported that several candidates had been frustrated that they could not get a public information report fast enough. Linda Becker said that there was a 10-day turn around time for those. Dakota County said the candidates complained that 10 days was too long. Bill Batcher said they are looking at having the counties provide this service in the future.

AB Module - It was reported that the F6 searches are not the same as it is in the find voter application. Hennepin and Washington Counties reported they had times that the voter did not come up as registered in the absentee module, but when they went into find voter the voter would come up. Hennepin County said they had to double check all of their non-registered absentees in Find Voter to make sure they were really not registered and this was a lot more work for them. The F6 search should work the same in all applications.

**4. Special Elections Process (Kathy Sibbel):**

Counties need to tell the state when they have entered their last VR card.

The Helpdesk web page has the Overview of Setting Up An Election. The page contains VEMS Election Setup Steps and Polling Place Handouts.

Reviewed the revised Election Notification and Request for Rosters form (ENRR). VUG suggested adding checkboxes for Master List and Precinct Finder requests onto the same form. Kathy will check with Production as to why they are separate.

MN OSS needs to look at when it starts to overnight the VR cards and possibly start on Friday if not before. Columbus Day holiday also played a role in the delay.

Cindy Kerr from Dakota County brought in their new wandung gun for the members to review. Purchased price was \$95.

Revise the wording explaining the fee for reprinted rosters.

When counties send out the postal verification cards, they need to consider the postal delivery time.

Rosters will be delivered within 3 days of ordering them.

#### **5. Reports & Requirements - (Linda Becker):**

- a. Master Lists – Review for potential changes:
  - Add the Voter ID number to the left side of the report.
  - Insert the Voter ID column inside column.
  - Change “Status Reason” to “Status”.
  - Repeat the “County and Selected District” header on each page.
  - Place a page break between each “Selected District”. What you are setting as the selected district should bet the district that the pages break on.
  - Sort school district by school district number and not the sub-school district number (sub-school districts are school board districts with wards). The list needs to be able to be printed by alpha for the entire school district instead of breaking by sub-district.
  - Change the year of birth from 2 digits to 4 digits mm/dd/yyyy.
  - Truncate City and Zip to add room for the Voter ID number. Eliminate the state if needed to make room.
  
- b. SLA #16 – Contacts and Report
  - The contact information on the polling place screen would need to be added to the COUNTY code list.
  
- c. SLA #21 – Elected Officials and Reports
  - The ability to produce a report showing a specific voter’s elected officials.
  - Add the ability to allow the changes to the Elected Officials portion of the “Precinct” tab under Set Districts. The remainder of the “precinct” tab should be locked from user intervention.
  - Voter Name, ID – ability to produce a report for a voter with their Elected Officials names, etc.
  - An entire listing of all elected officials within the county

- Need the ability to sort both reports by county, voting district, elected officials name, office held, voting district, party affiliation, voter's name, voter ID number, etc.
  - Added offices of: Coroner, US Representative, Auditor-Treasurer and change Park & Recreation to Park Commissioner.
- d. SLA #5 – VR Summary Statistics – Report – field definitions
- **Activity Date** – Date the information was entered into the system
  - **Adds** – Voters that are new registrants to the system. If you perform a find (F6), the voter does not link to an existing record.
  - **Status Changes** – Status change for the voters who had their status code changed - inactive to active, etc. (within a county).
  - **Precinct Changes** – Voters who moved from one precinct to another within the county.
  - **Moved In** – Voters who moved into the county from another MN county.
  - **Moved Out** – Voters who moved out of the county to another MN county.
  - **Total** – Total actives for that day = Adds + Status Changes + Precinct Changes + Moved In + Moved Out
  - **Grand Totals** - Add each column from the first day of the month through the last day of the month.
- e. SLA #17 – DOH Filter
- Election.com needed clarification on two issues:
    - a. Confirm that there is an extra “delete” button.
    - b. What filters do we want in place?
      - i. Status – Active or inactive
      - ii. Last Name, First Initial and Date of Birth
      - iii. Ability to over-ride the county of registration vs. the county of death
      - iv. Duplicate records – both counties need to be notified.

## **6. Updates - (Kathy Sibbel and Linda Becker):**

- a. Need to schedule a last AB committee review
- Meeting is scheduled to occur after the VEMS User Group Meeting on Nov 21.
- b. Need to schedule a Duplicate Voter committee meeting – need committee members.
- Meeting will be scheduled for December 4<sup>th</sup>.
  - Michelle DesJardin volunteered to participate in the Duplicate Voter Task Force.
  - Committee membership will include: Judy Wertheimer (Washington Co.), Debbie Goble (Crow Wing Co.), Michelle DesJardin, Kathy Wuiff and Dory Connelly (Hennepin Co.), Linda Becker and Kathy Sibbel (MN OSS)
- c. Reclassification –
- MN OSS has conducted a “kick-off” meeting to begin preparing for the annual reclassification of voter's.
  - The name of the report will be changed from Purge to Reclassification.
  - The report can be sorted county wide or by city.
  - The group decided that they did not want to receive paper copies of the reports but rather a CD rom that could be opened in either Excel or Access. The group felt that they could sort the information according to their county's needs.

- d. Wrong Polling Place Letter
  - MN OSS is in the process of writing the specs to provide to election.com
- e. Print Drivers
  - Anoka County's print drivers for their Ricoh printer were installed. The drivers however caused problems with the Dymo printer drivers and had to be uninstalled. The Ricoh print drivers are not compatible with VEMS. Diane had spoken to the company and the person from Ricoh would be willing to visit with the state about this problem. She has the telephone number for them. Bill said they are looking at a totally different method of printing at the local level so then this won't be a problem in the future.
- f. County participation responsibilities at meeting
  - Luci Botzek spoke to the group about county participation and making sure that all counties are represented when decisions are made. The VUG county members stated that they are only representing their individual county at the meetings, and not state-wide counties.
  - Luci suggested that the next meeting be held during the annual MACO conference the week of Jan. 14-17 at Double Tree.
- g. Naming Standards
  - Need to reconvene the Name Standardization Sub-Committee, so system users aren't entering data several different ways. For example, under MAPPER you could not use an apostrophe or have spaces in last names.
  - Original members were: Judy Wertheimer (Washington Co.), Cindy Kerr (Dakota Co.), Scott Simmons, Linda Becker and Kathy Sibbel (MN OSS)
  - Gary Poser will compile a list of name standards used in the past, and Kathy will review the list with Scott Simmons.

**7. Open Questions & Answers:**

None

**Next Meeting:**

TBD - Tentative – during MACO meeting January 15 or first Thursday in Feb. – Feb. 6.

The Board Room has been reserved for the first Thursday of each month through July 2003.

It was suggested to tell the counties attending the MACO meeting what the VUG has done, what needs to be done and the schedule of the upcoming meetings. This could be sent out prior to the January MACO meeting to all the counties. Kathy could start the e-mail and send it to the VUG and then each person could add to it and send it to the next person. This e-mail would then be sent to the other counties in the state prior to the January VUG meeting being held at the MACO conference.

**Agenda Items for next meeting:**

VUG progress to-date  
Reclassification

**Meeting Evaluation**

- A. What did you like about the meeting and want to continue doing?
  - a. Having materials emailed before the meeting.
  - b. Keep debriefing items in the minutes.
- B. What didn't you like and want to discontinue doing?
  - a. We ran out of pizza. Need to order more.

- C. What would you like to change for the next meeting?  
a. Nothing

**Parking Lot**

- No items this meeting.

**Action Items:**

**Bill Batcher:**

- Follow up on ERS Abstract and VEMS housed on the same server. Why are they housed on the same server if they cause contention and show down response time?
- Investigate printing master lists with the same data as the rosters.
- Follow-up with Pat Harp regarding DYMO label settings
- Set up alternative path for counties to verify ERS results on Lindberg.

**Kathy Sibbel –**

- For the next election, OSS needs to allow time for mailing VR cards to counties so they can enter them during the last week before cutoff. Talk with Holly Gustner and mailroom staff about possibly over-night the cards sooner.
- Contact InterTech to discontinue printing PVCs on green RNC forms. Follow-up with Secretary and Sheila Reger on using up the extra cards. Background - Gary Poser said he had his regular PVCs printed as the Redistricting Postcards (RNCs). Kathy explained that the elections division said they would use up the RNCs rather than using the PVC stock. This was done to save money. Anoka County said that it confuses the public when the RNCs are used in place of the regular PVCs.
- Follow-up with InterTech on truncated email address on PVCs. Full address shows in VEMS, but the PVC truncates the address (Washington Co.)
- Revise the wording explaining the fee for reprinted rosters.
- Investigate with Production why Master List and Precinct Finder requests are separate from the ENRR Roster request form.
- Review naming standards list with Scott Simmons.
- Discuss MACO meeting with Luci Botzek.

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

- Test school district subgroup.
- Have IT applications create a report of the school district subgroups – xxx and xxxx.
- Check the “Active” code selection.
- Create a HEAT ticket to election.com on the F7 “apartment” find. Linda to shadow Anoka County.
- Investigate why sheet labels -the first label (outgoing)-truncates but the second label does not. This only happens for registered voters and is okay for the non-registered voters. This could possibly be corrected by changing the settings. The first label also truncates zip codes on the sheet labels.
- Create heat ticket to election.com, regarding second line of comment line on PVCs that are being truncated.

**Gary Poser:**

- Document naming standards used in previous voter system. Send to Kathy to be used as a “straw man” in developing new standards.