

TRIBUNE-REVIEW

Westmoreland disabled voters to get wireless alert system

By Rich Cholodofsky

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Some Westmoreland County voters with physical disabilities will be able to ring a bell to get help at the polls this fall.

County commissioners last week authorized the purchase of a \$38,000 alert system that will be placed in the parking lot of selected polling locations throughout the county.

Elections Bureau Director Jim Montini said the wireless alert system will be in place for the Nov. 3 general election.

Sixty-nine of the county's 303 precincts will be outfitted with the device, which will allow voters who need assistance to ring a bell in the parking lot of the polling place. A precinct worker will be dispatched to help bring the voter into the polling place.

While the alarm system will help get voters into the polling place, precinct workers will not assist with the voting. And ballots will not be taken to voters, Montini said.

The Americans With Disabilities Act requires polling places, along with other public facilities, to be accessible. Several of the county's polling places have steps and steep ramps, making it difficult for disabled voters to cast ballots.

"We need to keep up with the (federal) guidelines, and a lot of our polling places don't meet the ADA requirements," Montini said.

During the past several years, the county has systematically replaced polling places that do not meet ADA requirements. That work is ongoing.

"We try our best to find accessible polling places, but it's a difficult task," Montini said.

The wireless call system will help.

Montini said the alarm from Inclusion Solutions of Chicago, will be paid for using federal grant money.

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