



City of Seattle

Seattle Renters' Commission

TBD, Chair

SEATTLE RENTERS' COMMISSION MINUTES

Monday October 2, 2017

6:00 – 8:00 PM

Seattle City Hall, Boards & Commissions Rm, L280

Approved November 6, 2018

Commissioners Present:	Beverly Aarons, Jack Barker, Clifford C. Cawthon, Sherry Collier Jessie Jacobs, Calvin Jones, Daniela Lopez, David Mooney, Christiana Obey Sumner, Michael Padilla Ocampo, Laurie Rocello Torres Jessica Westgren
Commissioners Absent:	L. Curtis Blankinship
Commission Staff:	Maureen Sheehan, Department of Neighborhoods
Guests:	Jenna Smith, Ethics and Elections Commissions

Seattle Renter's Commission meeting minutes are not an exact transcript, and represent key points and the basis of discussion.

Introductions

Ms. Maureen Sheehan opened the meeting and review of the agenda. Brief introduction by Commission members were followed. She noted that Ms. Kathy Nyland of the Department of Neighborhoods will not be able to attend the meeting.

Democracy Voucher Program

Jenna Smith, Ethics and Elections Commission

Ms. Smith presented an overview of the Democracy Voucher Program.

- Seattle voters passed the citizen-led initiative in November 2015 to change the way campaigns are financed for Seattle candidates. The program is funded for 10 years. The Ethics & Elections Commission are not involved at this program. Their role is an impartial administrator. The program is funded by property tax dollars, and there is no additional cost to use the vouchers.
- These are four paper certificates that come in the mail valuing \$100 in total. The vouchers will come automatically via mail to registered voters. If you are not a registered voter, you can apply to the

- program. To use the voucher, you must be a resident of the City of Seattle, at least 18 years old, and either a U.S. citizen, a U.S. national, or a green card holder. You do not have to be a registered voter.
- The vouchers can be used for to support participating candidates running for Seattle City Council and City Attorney. The program will expand to include the Mayor's race in 2021.
- The program is optional for candidates. If a candidate participates, they agree to a spending limit on their campaigns, smaller maximum contributions per person, and attend three public debates or forums for both the primary and general elections.
- The goal of the program is to involve more participation from the Seattle community in the political process, more interaction between candidates and City of Seattle residents, and see more candidates run for office.
- There are still many people that have not heard about the program and Ms. Smith encouraged this Commission to communicate this information as well as suggestions and ideas.

Commission Discussion

- A commissioner raised a question about the status of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and the concerns about undocumented immigrants that are weary of providing their information to the application. Ms. Smith answered that they are aware of the issue and they worked with the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project on how to fill and participate in the program. They are also looking to the community for assistance on how to provide messaging and accurate information. She added that some people may choose not to participate due to privacy concerns or other reasons.
- A commissioner commented about any specific barriers especially to the renter's community. Ms. Smith commented that she does not know of any barriers that exist since she is not looking it through a renter's lens. Barriers in general include a steep learning curve about the program and how it is being communicated although it is being translated to 14 different languages.
- A commissioner commented about people that do not have access to mail or email especially the homeless population and those that do not have a permanent address. Ms. Smith commented that they reached out to United Way and are working with Ms. Alison Eisinger, executive director of the Seattle King County Homelessness Coalition for advice and feedback about the application and outreach to the homeless population. She added that they are also working with the City through the Neighborhood Service Centers on where to return the vouchers.
- A commissioner asked about involving community partners and how the Office of Ethics and Elections go about their outreach once they become partners. Ms. Smith noted that there is an advisory committee comprised of many different organizations such as the Asian Counseling and Referral Services, Win-Win Institute, Latino Community Fund, Seattle Public Library, LGBTQ Allyship, etc. They are working closely with the Department of Neighborhoods (DON) and their community liaisons on community events. They are also working with media outlets such as the Seattle Channel, Ethnic Media and the Office of Immigration and Refugee Affairs (OIRA). They reached out to Urban League to do a presentation about the material. She noted that they are open and take recommendations from different organization to ensure that the program works well with their communities and neighborhood.
- A commissioner suggested they reach out to universities and colleges about the program. Ms. Smith commented that they are working with different colleges and universities these past couple of months to promote the program.

Meeting Protocols

Commissioners discussed and listed the following meeting protocols:

1. Move up/Move up
2. Assume best intent
3. Acknowledge impact
4. Oppression exists

5. Calling in rather than calling out
6. Make space for dialogue
7. Be an adult
8. Be yourself
9. Be self-aware and self-assess
10. Use plain language
11. Keep it simple/plain
12. Acknowledge the story – intersectionality
13. Be open and aware to the room
14. Operate from a place of teamwork
15. Never be afraid to ask for clarification
16. No one knows everything – together we know a lot more
17. Exercise your democratic right – speak up
18. Be proactive – have ideas
19. Stay action oriented and on task
20. Remember our purpose
21. Be present
22. Take care of yourself and each other

Housekeeping/Announcements

Ms. Sheehan provided an update about the goal and objective of the Commission:

- Commissioners need to come together and establish a work plan, goals, objectives and deliverables, and provide advice and counsel to the City of Seattle.
- This Commission relies on the attendance of its Commissioners. Notify Ms. Maureen Sheehan of any absences.
- Commissioner suggested to have a caller line available for those who are unable to attend the meeting but do a call-in instead.
- The Commission need to select a Chair and Vice-Chair. The role of the Chair is to run the meeting, set agenda, sign letters and there maybe time spent outside of the regular meeting. The role of the Vice-Chair is to step up if the Chair is unavailable or absent.
- Working Groups: The goal of the working groups is to figure out the goals and objectives of the Commission. These groups can meet outside the regular meetings and then share their information to the Commission. Decisions are made at the regular Commissions meeting.
- Three initial working groups to be formed:

Working Group #1 – establish criteria to recruit, and review applicants.

Working Group #2 – interview applicants and make recommendations.

Working Group #3 – establish, and identify Commission's bylaws.

- Commissioner suggested a Policy and Advocacy Group that can bring and share “hot” topic issues to the Commission, identify and gather issues and different laws that affects renting, a legal resource. This was tabled until the goals and objectives have been developed.
- Commissioner suggested to have a mailing listserv for Commissioners to communicate to one another. Correspondence and communication can be sent to Ms. Sheehan and she can share the information among the Commissioners.
- Ms. Sheehan noted the different departments and programs within the City of Seattle. She will invite presenters from these different City Departments to provide an overview about their department and how will they relate to the Commission. These include the Seattle Department of Constructions & Inspections (SDCI), Office of Civil Rights (OCR), and the Office of Housing (OH).

- Commissioner suggested inviting presenters from other departments including King County (Health, Community, Homeless) services and federal (HUD), Labor Standards.

Public Comment

1. Mr. Devin Silvernail of Be: Seattle expressed his appreciation of having this body. Mr. Silvernail is a renter in Seattle and grew up in King County and currently resides in Capitol Hill. His organization organizes and advocates tenant right's education all over the City. He is also applying to one of the open Renter's Commission position.
2. Mr. Sean Martin of the Rental Housing Association of Washington (RHAWA) commented that his association is comprised of small independent landlords and not corporate owners. Their association's primary focus is to provide landlord's education. He offered to be a resource if there are any questions or issues regarding the rental housing industry.

Meeting schedule

- Calendar/Meeting schedule: Identify a regular meeting schedule each month that works with all.
- Commissioners requested to have a doodle poll survey sent to them to identify schedule and availability.
- Ms. Sheehan noted that she will work on having a working conference line available for the commissioners not able to attend the meeting.

Adjourn

- No further business being before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 7:55 pm