



Community Involvement Commission (CIC) July 2025 Minutes

July 21, 2025

5:00 – 7:00 pm

Webex Meeting & Seattle City Hall Room 370

Commissioners present: Julio Perez, Heidi Morisset, Marisol Beas, Hunter Camfield

Co-chairs: Heidi Morisset

Commissioners not in attendance: Rachelle Olden, Ahoua Kone

City of Seattle Staff present: Staff liaisons Alvin Edwards, Sonny Nguyen, Fedden Amar, Rene LeBeau (Democracy Voucher Program)

Public Comment: No public comment was received.

Transcriber's Note: The notes shown below are summaries of statements provided. They are not transcriptions and have been shortened and edited to include the major points raised. Full comments are retained in the files in the video recording and available upon request.

Meeting Called to Order

Meeting called to order at approximately 6:00 PM by Staff Liaison Alvin Edwards. Due to the presence of guest presenters, the agenda was restructured to accommodate the Democracy Voucher Program presentation before establishing quorum.

Agenda Items

1. Seattle Ethics and Elections - Democracy Voucher Program

Presenters: Fedden Amar (Public Relations Specialist) and Rene LeBeau (Program Manager)

Program Overview

The Democracy Voucher Program, administered by the Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission, was established through Initiative I-122, passed by Seattle voters in 2015 for a ten-year period. The program is funded by a \$3 million annual voter-approved property tax.

Program Structure and Goals

Primary Goals:

1. Increase the number and diversity of candidates who can run for office by creating more accessible funding sources
2. Increase Seattle residents' ability to support local campaigns by expanding the donor base

How the Program Works

- **Funding:** \$25 in democracy vouchers mailed automatically to registered Seattle voters in February/March of election years
- **Eligibility:** Seattle residents over 18 who are citizens, legal permanent residents, or US nationals
- **Distribution Methods:**
 - Paper vouchers (mailed)
 - Online portal
 - Campaign replacement forms

2025 Election Cycle Statistics

- **Total Set Aside:** \$9 million for candidate funding
- **Candidates on Ballot:** 25 candidates qualified, 20 participating in Democracy Voucher Program
- **Qualified Candidates:** 13 candidates have qualified to receive funding
- **Vouchers Issued:** Over \$2 million (80,000 vouchers) to over 22,000 unique individuals
- **Vouchers Returned:** Over 100,000 vouchers have been returned, representing more than 27,000 unique donors

Program Requirements for Candidates

- **Spending Limits:** Vary by position (e.g., mayoral candidates eligible for \$900,000 throughout the election year, maximum \$450,000 before primary)
- **Contribution Limits:** Reduced individual contribution limits compared to non-participating candidates
- **Debate Participation:** Must participate in three public debates before primary, plus general election debates if advancing
- **Qualification Requirements:** Collect minimum signatures and \$10 donations from Seattle residents

Outreach and Accessibility

- **Language Support:** Materials available in 20 languages
- **Community Contracts:** \$300,000 budgeted for community partnerships with grants up to \$30,000
- **Media Outreach:** General market and ethnic media outlets, bus advertisements
- **Candidate Resources:** Free translated candidate introductions and training programs

Program Outcomes

- **Electoral Success:** 10 of 11 current elected city officials previously used democracy vouchers
- **Demographic Impact:** Donor base now more closely resembles voter demographics across all districts
- **Participation Growth:** Over 106,000 unique Seattle residents have used democracy vouchers across program history
- **Donation Patterns:** Reduced out-of-city donations to single digits, increased number of smaller individual donations

Commissioner Questions and Responses

Q (Commissioner Beas): Demographic breakdown of voucher users?

A: Academic study shows democracy voucher users align more closely with voter demographics than traditional cash donors across race, age, and income categories.

Q (Staff Liaison): Process for replacing lost vouchers for immigrant/refugee families?

A: Multiple options available: phone calls, email to democracyvoucher@seattle.gov, or online application form available in multiple languages.

Q (Staff Liaison): Security measures for voucher misuse?

A: Signature verification through King County Elections using same process as ballot verification, with outreach for signature discrepancies.

Q (Staff Liaison): Community outreach partnerships?

A: RFP process for community organizations, providing funding, training, materials distribution, and ongoing support, particularly valuable for green card holder registration.

Q (Staff Liaison): Potential CIC collaboration opportunities?

A: Interest in external task force pending program renewal legislation; open to future partnerships given CIC's experience with community engagement process improvements.

Program Renewal

The current ten-year authorization expires in 2025. Program renewal will be on the primary election ballot. Regardless of renewal outcome, a limited program will operate in 2026 for the district 5 special election.

2. Roll Call and Quorum Establishment: Roll calls were conducted at approximately 6:00 PM. Quorum established with four commissioners present.

3. Approval of Meeting Minutes: July 16, 2025 minutes were unanimously approved.

4. Subcommittee Reports and Work Planning

Events and Engagement Subcommittee

Members: Commissioners Perez and Beas, with Commissioner Morisset participating in planning

Purpose: Manage community events and feedback, increase commission visibility

Goals and Structure:

- Monthly reporting on upcoming events and activities
- Proactive outreach to community organizations
- Each commissioner to attend one community event per quarter with written report

Implementation Plan:

- **Phase 1 (Months 1-2):** Conduct commissioner interest survey, build community list-serve, create six-month event calendar
- **Phase 2 (Months 3-8):** Execute engagement calendar, track attendance and participation
- **Phase 3 (Month 9):** Evaluate engagement metrics and commissioner participation

Deliverables:

- Commissioner interest survey and network mapping
- Six-month community engagement calendar
- Organization engagement roster
- Generic email invitation template for community organizations
- Commissioner talking points for community events
- Annual engagement event planning

Meeting Schedule: Thursdays before commission meetings at 5:00 PM

Co-Leadership: Commissioners Beas and Perez to serve as unofficial co-chairs

Research and Assessment Subcommittee

Members: Commissioners Kone and Camfield (Commissioner Camfield present)

Purpose: Measure current community engagement with city services and identify improvement opportunities

Initial Data Collection Focus:

- Democracy Voucher Program participation by district
- Commission meeting attendance (non-appointed participants)
- Voting participation by district
- Find It, Fix It service requests
- Potential expansion to include grant participation, transit usage, library data, community center usage, and city council testimony

Implementation Strategy:

- Automated email system for commission leaders to track meeting attendance
- Compilation of existing city engagement data
- Analysis of participation patterns by demographics and geography
- Development of recommendations based on data findings

Timeline: Initial data compilation and analysis by August 2025 meeting

Community and Communications Subcommittee

Members: Commissioner Olden (not present) **Note:** Staff liaisons will coordinate separately with Commissioner Olden to develop a work plan for this subcommittee.

5. New Commissioner Recruitment Update

Staff Liaison Edwards reported on ongoing recruitment process:

- **Interviews Conducted:** 10 candidates interviewed
- **Remaining Interviews:** 8 additional candidates
- **Total Positions:** 10 new commissioner seats available
- **Committee Review:** September 11, 2025
- **Anticipated Start Date:** September 21, 2025 meeting
- **Decision Deadline:** August 1, 2025

Commissioner Transition: Discussion of process for current commissioners who wish to continue serving in appointed positions rather than Get Engaged positions.

6. Staff Liaison Updates

Veterans, Seniors, and Human Services Levy Outreach

Staff Liaison Edwards presented to the Veterans, Seniors, and Human Services Levy organization regarding CIC mission and potential collaboration opportunities.

Levy Overview:

- Six-year King County property tax measure approved in 2023 with 71% voter approval
- Rate: \$0.10 per \$1,000 assessed property value, capped at 3.5% annual increases
- **Service Areas:**
 - Veterans and service members: mental health counseling, case management, affordable housing
 - Seniors and caregivers: 39 senior centers, social programming, facility upgrades

- Resilient communities: gender-based violence support, affordable housing, shelter services

Next Steps: Potential future presentation to CIC and collaboration opportunities under consideration.

Upcoming Community Events

Mayor's Public Safety Forums:

- District 3: August 7, 6-8 PM, Garfield Community Center
- District 1: August 13, 6-8 PM, Delridge Community Center
- District 6: August 21, 6-8 PM, Green Lake Community Center
- District 5: August 28, 6-8 PM, Meadowbrook Community Center

Community Tabling Opportunities:

- Lake City Summer Festival and Parade: August 2, 10:30 AM-5:00 PM
- Othello International Festival: August 10 (partnering with Neighborhood Matching Fund)

Commissioners encouraged to attend and support community engagement efforts.

Commission Retreat Planning

Proposal: Move annual retreat from September to October 2025 to include newly appointed commissioners in team-building and strategic planning activities.

7. Future Planning

Subcommittee Leadership Structure

Decision: Current subcommittee members will serve as unofficial co-chairs to provide continuity and leadership for incoming commissioners, maintaining momentum on established work plans.

Work Plan Development

All subcommittees to finalize work plans and submit to staff liaisons for compilation and distribution to incoming commissioners.

Motion Adjourned: 7:00 PM

Next Regular Meeting: August 18, 2025