

Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission Regular Meeting

March 6, 2013

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission convened on March 6, 2013 in Room 4080 of the Seattle Municipal Tower, 700 Fifth Avenue. Commission Chair Bill Sherman called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. Commissioners Brad Axel, Bruce Carter, Lorena González and Kendee Yamaguchi were present. Commissioner David Mendoza joined via telephone. Vice-Chair Rich Cohan was not in attendance. Executive Director Wayne Barnett and staff members Bob DeWeese, Polly Grow and Kate Flack were present. Assistant City Attorney Jeff Slayton was also in attendance.

1) Public Comment

Four individuals signed up to comment on public financing. The Chair asked the speakers to hold their comment until the Commission took up the issue, and the speakers all agreed to do so.

Action Items

2) Approval of minutes of February 6, 2013 meeting

The Executive Director told the Commission that the draft minutes for the February meeting had yet to be finalized.

***) Adoption of Rule establishing list of employees required to file 2012 Financial Interest Statements**

The Executive Director apologized for not including this agenda item on the published agenda.

He explained that every year employees who meet certain criteria under the municipal code are required to file financial interest statements with the City. Under the code, departments identify those individuals, and the Commission adopts a rule establishing who is required to file.

Commissioner Carter moved to adopt the 2012 list of filers, and Commissioner González seconded. The vote to adopt the rule was unanimous.

3) Public financing of City elections

Estevan Munoz-Howard, a Fair Elections Seattle steering committee member, was the first to give public comment. Mr. Munoz-Howard said that his organization shared the Commission's priorities, specifically as it pertained to the "super match" proposal, having grass roots support, and allowing a minimal number of donors to qualify for funding.

Mr. Munoz-Howard questioned, though, whether a candidate could run an effective campaign with \$125,000 in public funds. Commissioner Axel asked Mr. Munoz-Howard if there was a specific amount he had in mind. Mr. Munoz-Howard said that he could not speak for Fair Elections Seattle, but was comfortable saying that he believed that more than \$125,000 would be a step in the right direction.

John King, Washington Public Campaign's president, spoke in favor of creating a viable and robust program.

Jean Carlson, from the League of Women Voters read a brief statement in support of public financing.

Rory O'Sullivan of Fair Elections Seattle was the last to give public comment. Mr. O'Sullivan said that public financing could contribute to more competitive Seattle elections. He said that there had been a number of different studies by different academics that have come to different conclusions, but said that public financing can decrease the margin of victory, increase competitiveness, and broaden the debate.

Commissioner Axel said that the Commission needed to make sure they were crafting a program that would be attractive to both challengers and incumbents.

Commissioner Yamaguchi said that in jurisdictions with public financing, studies showed that many women utilized the programs, which she felt was another positive effect of public financing.

Commissioner Axel said that he wanted the Commission to vote on whether or not to craft a proposal for the City Council. He said that there were still details to work out, and that if the Commission wanted to send something to the City Council, it should be prepared to reconvene again in March.

Commissioner González asked whether a 6 to 1 match accomplished the goal at hand more effectively than a 4 to 1 match. She wanted to hear more information about the spending cap.

The Commission discussed whether to match contributions from registered voters or Seattle residents. There was a consensus to match contributions from Seattle residents, because such a program would be more inclusive.

The Commission scheduled a March 22 meeting to make their final decisions on public financing.

Discussion Items

4) Executive Director's Report

There was no Executive Director's Report.

The Regular Commission meeting for March 6, 2013 adjourned at 5:50 p.m.