

Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission Regular Meeting

November 4, 2015

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission convened on November 4, 2015 in Room 4080 of the Seattle Municipal Tower, 700 Fifth Avenue. Commission Chair Bruce Carter called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m. Vice-Chair Brad Axel was in attendance, along with Commissioners Charlene Angeles, Brendan Donckers, Eileen Norton and Bill Sherman. Commissioner Rich Cohan was not in attendance. Executive Director Wayne Barnett and staff members Anthony Adams, Polly Grow and Steve Townsend were present. Assistant City Attorney Jeff Slayton was also in attendance.

1) Public Comment

Alex Tsimerman and Queen Pearl both addressed the Commission.

Action Item

2) Widely shared financial interests and the City's Ethics Code

In reply to a question from Commissioner Sherman, Jeff Slayton explained the way that the King County Council handles conflicts of interest for County Councilmembers.

The Vice-Chair said that he liked the County's emphasis on disclosure, especially with the move to District elections. He was concerned about disenfranchising voters. Commissioners Sherman and Donckers concurred.

The Chair asked how many times this issue has come up in the past for Councilmembers. The Director said that on landlord/tenant issues it has been a serious issue.

Commissioner Sherman moved to recommend to the City Council that the Ethics Code be amended to make it so that conflicts of interest for Councilmembers needed to be disclosed but did not disqualify a Councilmember from voting. Commissioner Donckers seconded, and the motion was unanimously approved.

The Director agreed to circulate the legislation before it was transmitted to the City Council.

3) Request for consideration of possible Elections Code amendments

The Executive Director asked the Commission for their thoughts on the memorandum from Councilmember Licata. Commissioner Donckers asked how the Commission would have jurisdiction over the conduct described in the memorandum. Commissioner Norton agreed, saying that she thought claims of extortion were better addressed to other law enforcement agencies.

The Director said that his reading of the law as it exists today is that the Commission does not have jurisdiction over the conduct described.

The Chair expressed caution over the Commission policing conduct that amounted to extortion. He questioned whether the Commission had the tools available to properly investigate allegations such as these.

The Commission asked the Director to invited Councilmember Licata to the next Commission meeting to discuss his proposal.

4) Review of candidates for Commission-appointed position on the SEEC

After some discussion, the Commission elected to invite all four candidates to the December meeting to be interviewed for the position.

Discussion Items

5) Executive Director's report

The Director gave a brief overview of the work that lies ahead for the Commission in implementing I-122. He said that the tax levy would go into effect in 2016.

The Regular Commission meeting for November 4, 2015 adjourned at 4:54 p.m.