

Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission Regular Meeting

October 3, 2018

The regular scheduled meeting of the Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission convened on October 3, 2018 in Room 4080 of the Seattle Municipal Tower, 700 Fifth Avenue.

Commission Chair Brendan Donckers called the meeting to order at 4:01 p.m. Commissioners Charlene Angeles, Nick Brown, Eileen Norton, and Hardeep Singh Rekhi were present.

Commission Vice-Chair Vickie Rawlins joined the meeting by telephone. Commissioner Bruce Carter was not in attendance. Executive Director Wayne Barnett was joined by staff members Polly Grow, Rene LeBeau, Marc Mayo, and Annie Tran. Assistant City Attorneys Jeff Slayton and Gary Smith were also in attendance.

1) Public Comment

Alex Tsimerman and Marguerite Richard gave public comment.

Action Items

2) Minutes of September 5, 2018 Regular Meeting

Commissioner Norton moved to approve the minutes from the September 5, 2018 regular meeting, Commissioner Brown seconded the motion. The minutes from the September 5, 2018 regular meeting were approved 4-0, with Commissioners Angeles and Rekhi abstaining.

3) Request for Administrative Dismissal: Case No. 17-2-0721-1

The Director said that the Commission deadlocked 2-2 at the September meeting, and decided to hold the matter over until the October meeting. He renewed his recommendation that the Commission administratively dismiss the case because of the criminal resolution of the matter.

The Chair suggested going into executive session to receive legal advice on this quasijudicial matter. At 4:15 the Commission went into executive session. The Chair estimated that the executive session would last for half an hour.

The Commission returned from executive session at 4:40.

Commissioner Brown asked the Director about the prior referral to the County prosecutors, and the factors that go into a decision to refer a matter to the prosecutors. The Director said that the egregiousness of the alleged conduct and the potential harm to the public trust are the key factors.

In response to another question from Commissioner Brown, the Director said that he believed that any future candidate who saw what happened to Ms. Secrest would be deterred from trying to break the rules of the program.

Commissioner Brown renewed his disclosure that he had a prior professional relationship through the bar with Ms. Secrest.

Commissioner Rekhi asked about the prospect of settling the matter, and the Director said he did not see a path to a settlement.

Commissioner Brown made a motion to administratively dismiss, and Commissioner Angeles seconded. Commissioners Angeles, Brown and the Chair voted in favor of the motion. Commissioners Norton, Rekhi and Vice Chair Rawlins voted against the motion. It failed on a 3-3 vote.

Commissioner Angeles then made a motion to hold the matter over so that all seven commissioners could participate in the decision. Commissioner Brown seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

4) Settlement in Case No. 18-1-0620-1 (Employee misused City position and resources)

The Director introduced the settlement, under which the employee acknowledged misusing his City position and City resources for his private benefit, and agreed to pay a \$500 penalty. The settlement involved the purchase of ham radio equipment for use in the employee's personal capacity, when the vendor thought the employee was acting in his official capacity.

Commissioner Norton made a motion to adopt the settlement, and Commissioner Angeles seconded the motion. The Commission voted unanimously to adopt the settlement.

5) Candidate introductory statements

Democracy Voucher Program manager Rene LeBeau asked the Commission to approve funding for up to 50 candidates to have up to 150 words for Candidate Statements or Introductory Statements (name subject to change). The statements would then be translated into 14 additional languages, to be available online. This is meant to help address the request for early information regarding the candidates and to try to help overcome language barriers. It would be optional for all candidates running, and as each candidate registers, this opportunity would be made available to them.

The 150 words is a standard statement length that is proposed to strike a balance between a meaningful communication and the cost of making statements available in fifteen languages. The initial budget proposal is for 50 candidates, based on the 2015 year when nine city council district seats were on the ballot. The Commission requested an increase in the potential budget to make sure that all candidates can be supported by this measure, in case there are more than 50 candidates.

Discussion Items

6) I-122 status report

Annie Tran shared with the Commission a Candidate Brochure developed to explain the Democracy Voucher program, and encourage people to run for City Council. The brochure is primarily meant to alert Seattle residents that they have seven city council district positions on the ballot in 2019, that they can use the Democracy Vouchers for their campaign funding, and letting them know that one-on-one training is available for those who are interested in running for office. Information is provided regarding how the program works and includes a timeline outlining the key dates important for potential candidates; the first date to enter the program, when the Democracy Vouchers are launched and available, candidate filing week, and the last day to enter.

The Candidate Brochure is being used in the outreach efforts currently under way. Outreach with community groups and boards will continue until December 2018, and the hope is to reach around 20 different groups, including the already completed outreach programs for the API Coalition, The Capitol Hill Community Council, and the Washington State Convention Center Board.

Staff is also looking to produce a Resident Brochure, a smaller pamphlet than the Candidate Brochure, that will explain how to apply for Democracy Vouchers, with the key information that the Vouchers will be available February 12, 2019. There is also a “How To” live action video being developed, about 60 seconds long with subtitles, providing detailed instructions on how to fill out the Democracy Vouchers. The video is being developed based on feedback from last year that some people were not sure exactly how to use the vouchers, so this video is aimed at helping to address that need in a fun way.

Ms. Tran then updated the Commission on efforts underway to get new voices to the table on the voucher advisory committee.

She closed by letting the Commission know that work was underway with the PDC to conduct ORCA trainings in Seattle. (ORCA is the electronic filing system that campaigns use to file reports with the state and the city.)

7) Executive Director's report

The Director noted that Shannon Leung had begun her work as the office's web developer and was making an immediate contribution.

He said that the process for identifying an administrative support person had begun, and that the plan was to pay the person with half voucher funds and half general funds.

The Director added that the Mayor had announced her budget proposal and that the Commission's budget was not cut.

The regular Commission meeting for October 3, 2018 adjourned at 5:20 p.m.