

Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission Regular Meeting

July 7, 2021

A regular meeting of the Ethics and Elections Commission (SEEC) convened remotely. Commission Chair Richard Shordt called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m. and Vice Chair Hardeep Singh Rekhi, and Commissioners Kristin Hawes, Zachary Pekelis Jones, Susan Taylor, Judy Tobin, and Jeff Winmill were present. Executive Director Wayne Barnett was present and was joined by staff members Chrissy Courtney, Randal Fu, Polly Grow, René LeBeau, Neelam Shah and Annie Tran, along with Assistant City Attorneys Teresa Chen, Gary Smith, and Aaron Valla.

Action Items

1. Minutes for June 2, 2021 regular meeting

The Chair introduced the agenda and moved to the first item on the agenda and asked if the commissioners had any comments or questions, and there were none. Commissioner Tobin moved to approve the minutes and Commissioner Taylor seconded the motion and the motion was approved unanimously.

Discussion Items

2. Democracy Voucher Program report

Program Manager René LeBeau sent an update to the commission and shared her screen to display her memo to the commission. The update showed 36 total candidates, and 23 of the candidates have chosen to use the vouchers. There have been nine candidates qualified to date and two more campaigns are currently pending qualification. Ms. LeBeau noted that just under \$1.5 million had been distributed so far, and there were a couple of campaigns who have already reached the total number of vouchers they can receive for the primary and one who has received

the maximum number of vouchers for the entire election. As of the update 93,000 vouchers have been returned from 24,940 residents.

The 25-34 age range has increased participation, and the online vouchers represent 24%, and campaign forms represent 26% and paper vouchers make up the remaining 50%. The new replacement forms seem to be working well, and there have been no complaints from the campaigns regarding the form redesign and new gathering requirements.

The Chair asked if there was a breakdown of how many of the campaign forms are online vs in person, and Ms. LeBeau said no, but that was something that could be done for a future meeting. The Chair said that yes, for future meetings, he would like to know whether the changes to the forms were being utilized online or in person. Commissioner Tobin said she ran into someone who had developed a tremor and he got his voucher signature rejected, and she asked how they are able to get a new signature on file. Ms. LeBeau said there are a number of things that could be done, when the signature was challenged by the county, program staff sends the resident a new opportunity to send a signature. King County Elections can also send a signature update form to make certain that the person's ballot and their vouchers will be counted in future.

Commissioner Taylor said the increase in the younger category was great, especially given the reporting from last time that skewed towards older people and asked what the success could be attributed to. Ms. LeBeau said that it was likely the slate of candidates, what is going on in the world, there are a few of the contracted community based organizations (CBOs) that are dedicated to youth engagement, and online usage. Commissioner Taylor said that she agreed, it was likely a combination of different things.

Commissioner Pekelis Jones asked if there was data on the per district voucher usage and would like that in the next update. Ms. LeBeau said that participation was still skewed towards Districts 2 and 3 in terms of voucher activity, and that breakdown will be added to future reports.

Ms. LeBeau noted that there had been several outreach activities, both from the office and through the contracted community organizations. In addition to utilizing the program's social media channels, there was a \$4,000 paid media budget, 60% of which was spent with ethnic and local media, with a variety of advertisers. The office also worked with the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs (OIRA) to make sure there was an updated list of supported languages. Commissioner Pekelis Jones asked about the social media presence and whether there were sponsored and boosted posts or normal posts. Ms. LeBeau answered there were both and Commissioner Pekelis Jones asked if Facebook was letting the boosted posts go through or if they were being flagged as political advertisements. Annie Tran, Senior Communications Specialist, said that for this election year it had been more difficult to get ads approved by Facebook and Instagram, but the city social media accounts were working to get the accounts recognized as governmental, rather than a political ad content that would be filtered out.

Ms. LeBeau said that there was also a page advertising the Democracy Voucher Program in the voter pamphlet and there was a sample for the primary pamphlet. There was also a mid-year report with the CBOs and the contracted organizations have conducted 171 outreach activities and reported 81,043 interactions, and there were examples of the CBO provided outreach images displayed. Ms. LeBeau noted that the organizations were collaborating as well, while still trying to navigate the issues around Covid and the re-opening.

Commissioner Hawes asked how many CBOs there were this year vs past years. Ms. LeBeau answered that there were eight this year and ten last year. The Director noted that in the

first year of the program there were none, but this was an improvement made after the first election cycle analysis. Commissioner Hawes asked what the budget was allocated to outreach. Ms. LeBeau answered that there were both internal and external spending. \$225,000 was provided for the CBOs as contracted amounts. Commissioner Winmill asked if a list of the CBOs could be circulated. The Director said that list was sent around when the contracts were awarded, but staff would be happy to send that back around. Ms. LeBeau stated that there was a summer announcement of the request for proposals (RFP), and then they gave organizations time to craft their responses and then staff asked for an RFP review panel which included staff as well as other city residents. Annie Tran then provided the following link to the list of CBOs: <http://www.seattle.gov/democracypoucher/info-for-organizations/democracy-voucher-outreach-fund>. Ms. LeBeau asked if there were any other data points requested, and there were none. The Chair thanked Ms. LeBeau and moved to the next item on the agenda.

3. Executive Director's report

The Director stated that the office was continuing to onboard their new staff members, and this time of year was all hands on deck with the election season and next week the Video Voters Guide will go up for the primary, which will be available on the Seattle Channel. There were two-minute statements recorded by candidates for the various Seattle offices, and the Director gave a huge thanks to Polly Grow and Chrissy Courtney for coordinating that with Seattle Channel. Not today, but soon, they will be able to talk about in person meetings, the Governor's guidance means that meetings are still remote, but there are allowed to be in person components. The Director would recommend that the SEEC meetings continue remotely for now, and there should be a better sense by August whether to meet in person.

The Chair indicated that he would like to switch the last two items on the agenda since Commission Tobin needed to leave the meeting at 5 p.m. and asked the commissioners to provide a quick introduction sharing their background and why they joined the commission, since there were so many new commissioners.

4. Commissioner introductions

Each commissioner provided a brief introduction.

5. OPMA/PRA training for commissioners

Assistant Attorney Smith provided training to the commissioners on the Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA) and Assistant Attorney Aaron Valla provided training to the commissioners on the Public Records Act (PRA).

The Regular Commission meeting of July 7, 2021 adjourned at 5:56 p.m.