

Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission Regular Meeting

December 7, 2022

A regular meeting of the Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission (SEEC) convened in Seattle Municipal Tower Conference Room 4080 and remotely. Vice Chair Zach Pekelis called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. The Vice Chair and Commissioners Richard Shordt, Chalia Stallings-Ala'ilima, and Susan Taylor attended remotely. The Chair and Commissioner Kristin Hawes were absent. Executive Director Wayne Barnett, staff members Fedden Amar, Chrissy Courtney, Cliff Duggan, Randal Fu, Polly Grow, and René LeBeau were present, with Assistant City Attorney Gary Smith joining remotely.

Final Action Items

1. Approval of minutes from October 11, 2022, Commission Special Meeting

The motion to approve the October 11, 2022, Commission Special Meeting minutes was made by Commissioner Taylor and seconded by Commissioner Shordt. The Commissioners unanimously approved the October 11 minutes.

2. Approval of minutes from November 2, 2022, Commission Regular Meeting

The motion to approve the November 2, 2022, Commission Regular Meeting minutes was made by Commissioner Taylor and seconded by Commissioner Shordt. The Commissioners unanimously approved the November 2 minutes.

3. Merit Leave Determination (Executive Session)

At 4:05 p.m., the Vice Chair called for an Executive Session to discuss the performance of a public employee, Director Wayne Barnett. The Regular meeting was reconvened at 4:10 p.m.

Commissioner Shordt commented that it had been another interesting year, and the Director's stewardship of the Commission has been fantastic. The Commissioner is very glad that

the Director is running the Seattle office, and he supports an award of six merit days.

Commissioner Taylor said that Seattle is very lucky to have the Director. The Commissioner noted the Director's combination of skill and knowledge in addition to the ability to lead the team with enthusiasm and support, as well as a willingness to guide the Commissioners.

Commissioner Stallings-Ala'ilima said that as the newest member on the Commission she appreciated the Director's grace in introducing her to the Commission and its work. Vice Chair Pekelis voiced his appreciation of the Director's expertise and immersion into ethics and elections issues, his willingness to teach with patience and grace, and his willingness to engage and debate.

Commissioner Stallings-Ala'ilima made a motion to award at Level 3 six merit days to Executive Director Wayne Barnett. Commissioner Taylor seconded the motion. The Commissioners voted unanimously to award Executive Director Wayne Barnett six merit days in 2023. The Director thanked the Commission and agreed that 2022 had been another strange year. The Director acknowledged that the support of the team made it a good year and thanked everyone for their grace.

Discussion Items

4. Democracy Voucher Program report

Ms. LeBeau reported that the 2023 election cycle Democracy Voucher Program production is on track for the February mailout. Democracy Voucher Outreach Fund contracts were finalized with the Community-Based Organizations. Individual training times are being set up with the newer organizations. Work has begun with BERK Consulting to review the process for those not registered to vote to apply to become Democracy Voucher users. To date, there are five candidates who have announced an intention to run in the 2023 City Council elections. The candidates were informed that changes in the District boundaries take effect January 1 of next year.

Ms. LeBeau reported that on November 8 the City of Oakland passed a “Democracy Dollars” measure (The Fair Elections Act). The Oakland program, based on Seattle’s Democracy Voucher Program, will be in effect for their 2024 election. Ms. LeBeau mentioned that they are in contact with Oakland’s program administration and its advocates to provide appropriate documentation and assistance with the program implementation.

On November 22, the Democracy Voucher Program staff met with Kim Nam-II, Deputy Director of Korea’s National Election Commission, to discuss Democracy Vouchers. The Korean legislative body is interested in looking at different funding tools to use with their elections.

Vice Chair Pekelis asked if there are other groups to engage with regarding Democracy Vouchers. Ms. LeBeau responded that non-registered voters applying for vouchers are easily tracked as they do not have a voter ID. Their numbers tend to be small; however, their usage rate is high. These people filled out the application, opted into the Program, and are very responsive. This also applies to applicants who request translated Program information. Concerning the number of eligible Green Card holders in Seattle, the application numbers are still low. Working with CBOs helps to identify outreach challenges and how to overcome them.

Vice Chair Pekelis then inquired if there was a way to be pro-active regarding Democracy Vouchers with Seattle’s pre-registered voters (17-year-olds who turn 18 by the General Election). Ms. LeBeau shared that this is protected information as they are underage. The goal of the Democracy Voucher Program is how to get voucher information out sooner to all the new people – starting in February of 2023.

Commissioner Shordt asked about the five current candidates and what can be expected in next year’s elections. Ms. LeBeau said there were many participating candidates (41) in the 2019 District Council races and expects the same if not more to run in 2023. Ms. LeBeau commented

that the current five candidates are providing good practice for when the number of candidates ramps up.

5. Executive Director's report

The Director made the announcement that Chair Hardeep Singh Rekhi's term expires at the end of this year, and that the Chair is interested in rotating off the Commission. Chair Rekhi will continue to serve until his City Council-appointed replacement has been selected. The Director is currently looking for Commissioner recommendations to bring to the Council President for two openings. The Director reiterated his request for the Commissioners to share any contacts or candidate leads.

The Vice Chair noted that this concluded the agenda and thanked all for attending. The Vice Chair wished everyone a happy holiday. The Vice Chair adjourned the December 7, 2022, SEEC Commission Regular Meeting at 4:31 p.m.