

Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission Regular Meeting

May 6, 2026

The May 6, 2026, Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission (SEEC) Regular Meeting convened in Seattle Municipal Tower Conference Room 4080 and remotely. Commission Vice-Chair Vivian Vassall [Vice-Chair] and Commissioner Evan Smith were present. Commissioners Bobby Forch, Anita Khandelwal, Andrea Lino, and Kai Smith participated via Webex with Commissioner Zach Pekelis joining the meeting in progress at 4:09 p.m. Commission Chair Jonathan Schirmer was absent. Six Commissioners present constituted a quorum for the adoption of a rule and conducting business. Executive Director Wayne Barnett [Director], staff members Fedden Amar, Cliff Duggan, Randal Fu, Mamadou Jawo, and René LeBeau, and Assistant City Attorneys Joe Levan and Gary Smith were present. Staff members Chrissy Courtney, Amanda Francke, Polly Grow, Jennifer Martinez, and Neelam Shaw participated via Webex.

The Vice-Chair called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m.

Call to Order

Newly appointed SEEC Commissioners Anita Khandelwal, Andrea Lino, and Evan Smith were introduced.

Discussion of Written Public Comment (if applicable)

An email dated March 23, 2026, to Director Barnett regarding Democracy Vouchers for Washington State Address Confidentiality Program participants was discussed. The Director responded to the person that the substance of the email would be shared with the Commission. The Director stated that total transparency regarding campaign contributors has been a

foundation of campaign finance laws. The Director said to satisfy this person's concern would require a change in the law and the Seattle Municipal Code. Built into the Democracy Voucher Program that the Program is the require that every voucher user be identified.

Final Action Items

1. Confirmation of New Staff Member

The Director introduced Mamadou Jawo as the new SEEC Ethics and Whistleblower Advisor, Trainer and Investigator. Jawo graduated from the University of Wisconsin Law School. He has worked in the Seattle Office for Civil Rights for a number of years and with the King County Department of Public Defense prior to that.

Under Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) Subsection 3.70.100.G, the Commission confirms staff appointed by the Director. Commissioner Khandelwal made the motion to confirm the Director's appointment of Mamadou Jawo, and it was duly seconded. The motion passed with six ayes.

2. SEEC F-1 Annual Modification Request

The Commission has the authority to grant SEEC F-1 Annual modification requests on the same grounds as is granted by the Washington State Public Disclosure Commission. Erica Evans, City Attorney, has asked the SEEC for a continuation of their address protection for 2026. The original request was granted by the SEEC at the May 7, 2025, Commission Regular Meeting. Commissioner Evan Smith made the motion to grant Erica Evans' annual modification request for 2026, and it was duly seconded. The motion passed with five ayes; Commissioner Kai Smith recused himself.

3. Appeal of Director's Dismissal of Case No. 25-2-1029-1

Assistant City Attorney Smith provided an overview regarding Paul Chapman's complaint alleging that former Director of the City of Seattle Office of Economic Development, Markham McIntyre, violated the Elections Code. Mr. McIntyre sent a City email to his fellow executives asking for their personal email addresses. He followed that by sending an email from his personal account requesting assistance to the Bruce Harrell 4 Seattle campaign. Mr. Chapman also filed the complaint with the Public Disclosure Commission (PDC).

The PDC initiated an investigation. The Director deferred further consideration of the SEEC complaint until the PDC completed its investigation and determination. The PDC ultimately concluded while it appeared there might have been a minor violation of the Elections Code that the violation did not warrant further investigation or enforcement proceedings. Based on that, the Director dismissed the complaint that had been submitted to the SEEC. The SEEC dismissal by the Director has now been appealed by Mr. Chapman.

The SEEC Commission must now determine whether to affirm the dismissal, reverse the dismissal, or modify the decision. The appellant and the Director were given ten minutes total to present their cases. Based on the information presented, the Commission will go straight to a vote or go to a closed session if it is determined as a quasi-judicial matter or if City legal advice is sought.

Mr. Chapman thanked the Commission for hearing an appeal of these matters. On January 22, 2026, the Director told Mr. Chapman that the complaints were being investigated. The Director confirmed that the SEEC administers the Seattle Elections Code. The PDC had assured Mr. Chapman that the PDC investigates only violations of state law and that the SEEC investigates violations of City of Seattle law.

On February 26, the Director dismissed the complaint without providing any evidence of investigation beyond reading the PDC's letter concerning the case. The PDC administers state law; the PDC does not investigate City of Seattle law.

In the Director's dismissal, the second reason given was that Mr. McIntyre was no longer a City employee and that Bruce Harrell lost his Mayoral bid for reelection. Mr. Chapman summarized that one, Mr. McIntyre used City resources to benefit Bruce Harrell's campaign. Two, Mr. McIntyre used his position for the private benefit of the Harrell campaign. Three, Mr. McIntyre asked for e-mail addresses that would be used by the campaign to solicit campaign contributions.

Mr. Chapman stated that the Director's dismissal addresses only the first complaint that Mr. McIntyre used City resources for the benefit of Bruce Harrell's campaign without doing any investigation beyond what the PDC did. Mr. Chapman believes the Director's dismissal has no rational basis because it is not rational to dismiss a case without investigation. It is not rational to dismiss a case without regard to the violations alleged in it. It is not a rational basis to dismiss a case beyond a lack of employment as the Ethics Code does not make a provision about continued employment.

It is not a rational basis to dismiss a case based on the fact that a candidate lost. It is not a rational basis to agree that a violation has occurred but to dismiss the case. A functioning Ethics and Elections Department could have had at minimum issued a letter to the employee and the candidate reminding them that any use of City resources for a campaign is against the law. It could also, at minimum, send a reminder memo to City staff that City resources are not to be used for a campaign.

In addition, Mr. Chapman lodged an ethics complaint against the Director for his perceived inaction. By not investigating whether Mr. McIntyre and Bruce Harrell violated Seattle Ethics and Elections laws, Mr. Chapman believes the Director has violated the very law he has been entrusted to administer.

The Director said that Marc Mayo, former Ethics Investigator, and Ms. Grow had done some investigation on the case. The Director stated he did not fine Mr. McIntyre or advise him that he could not use City resources as Mr. McIntyre was no longer Director of the Office of Economic Development. The Director said that this is not a case that warrants further public resources. The City has a budget crisis and resources need to be used wisely.

Mr. Chapman responded that the Director's argument is that if a person leaves City employment or loses an election, that person can get away with violating the law. Mr. Chapman believes that is not a rational basis for a healthy legal environment.

The Director pointed out that one of the reasons Mayor Harrell lost the bid for reelection was because of allegations like the one being discussed now. The Director feels that in a healthy political system, the voters decided the ultimate punishment. He did not feel a need for SEEC involvement; the SEEC's role is to step in when the political process is not working. The Director did not see a role in giving warnings to people who were no longer in a position to use public resources or do other performative things.

Commissioner Lino asked the Director what steps were taken after receiving the complaint. The Director explained that he was briefly not allowed to take part in matters related to the Mayoral race as the Director's spouse had interviewed for a job with Mayor-elect Wilson. The Director gave the complaint to Ms. Grow and Mr. Mayo. They were in charge of investigation and made the conclusion that was conveyed to Mr. Chapman.

Mr. Chapman asked, according to the Seattle Ethics and Elections law, what basis is the Director empowered to dismiss an investigation of an agreed-upon violation of the law based upon the fact that the individual is no longer employed or the candidate lost the election? Employees who were impacted by these violations may still be working at the City. The Director countered that there may be very few of them; they were peers of Mr. McIntyre. If Mr. McIntyre had been ‘punching down’ asking his staff for their information, that would be very different from asking fellow directors.

For his rebuttal, Mr. Chapman said the issues are Bruce Harrell and Markham McIntyre violated the law and that the Director has invented law stating that if somebody is no longer employed or has lost the election or is pressuring their peers, there is no need to worry about violations of law. This creates basically a situation in which bad actors are emboldened to take the risk. Fundamentally, the Director is stepping outside the bounds of what the Ethics and Elections laws have empowered him to do. This goes again to Mr. Chapman’s further allegation that there needs to be an investigation of the Director himself and his application of Seattle Ethics and Elections law.

The Commissioners entered a closed session at 4:51 p.m. to discuss and deliberate on the appeal. The Commissioners returned to the open session at 5:09 p.m. The Chair said the sole question before the Commission was whether there is a rational basis for the dismissal of this appeal. The Vice-Chair made a motion to have each Commissioner either affirm, modify or reverse the Director’s decision to dismiss the complaint, and it was duly seconded. The motion to affirm the Director’s dismissal passed with six ayes with Commissioner Kai Smith abstaining. The Vice-Chair requested Assistant City Attorney Smith to provide remarks. Mr. Smith said that during the proceeding, Mr. Chapman made reference actually against the Executive Director

related to this issue. Mr. Smith mentioned that they had postponed further action on that until there was a potential person in a position to consider that. Mr. Smith assured Mr. Chapman that it was not being ignored. It is a consideration to be determined with the City Attorney's Office for resolution.

4. Adoption of March 4, 2026, SEEC Regular Meeting minutes

The Vice-Chair made the motion to adopt the March meeting minutes and it was duly seconded. The March 4, 2026, SEEC Regular Meeting minutes were adopted with six ayes and Commissioner Kai Smith abstaining.

Discussion Items

1. DVP Levy Workgroup

The Democracy Voucher Program Levy Workgroup was created per City Ordinance 127204. The purpose of the workgroup is to obtain recommendations from candidates, campaign staff, professional elections consultants, good government advocates, and members of the SEEC.

Democracy Voucher Program report

All three of the candidates for the D5 Special Election have signed up for the Democracy Voucher Program. Two of the candidates have already qualified for the Program.

2. Executive Director's report

The annual mandatory financial interest statement process is drawing to a close. The last identified City employee (out of 2,173) submitted their completed form May 6.

At the next regular meeting, Assistant City Attorney Smith will conduct training with the Commissioners on the Open Public Meetings Act.

Hearing no further comments for the good of the order, the May 6, 2026, SEEC Commission Regular Meeting was adjourned at 5:22 p.m.