

SEATTLE REDISTRICTING COMMISSION

MINUTES

Wednesday, October 13, 2021

12:00 – 1:30 PM

WebEx Meeting

Approved on November 2nd, 2021

Commissioners Present: Eliseo EJ Juárez, Former Mayor Greg Nickels, Neelima Shah, Rory O’Sullivan

Commissioners Absent: N/A

Commission Staff: Elsa Batres-Boni: Department of Neighborhoods, Logan Drummond: Department of Neighborhoods

Guests: Ariel Schneier: City Attorney’s Office, Gary Smith: City Attorney’s Office, Andres Mantilla: Director of Department of Neighborhoods

(Transcriber’s Note: Seattle Redistricting Commission meeting minutes are not an exact transcript and represent key points and the basis of discussion. The recording of the meeting is available upon request.)

Meeting Minutes:

I. Call to Order

- The Seattle Redistricting Commission’s first meeting was held virtually through WebEx. This meeting was open to the public and was advertised through appropriate channels. The meeting was called to order at 12:20pm once the Redistricting Commission met quorum.

II. Welcome & Housekeeping

- Land Acknowledgment – acknowledge that we are on indigenous land
- Reading of the agenda, welcome and orientation.

III. Brief Meeting Orientation from City Attorney’s office: Ariel Schneier

- Ariel Schneier will be the main point person advising the commission on all legal matters from the City Attorney’s office. Today we also had Gary Smith from Government affairs.
- Open Public Meetings Act
 - (OPMA) Since this meeting and commission are subject to it.
 - Once final commissioner is selected, and the commission is fully formed, we will touch base with a more in-depth OPMA training.
 - Key principles between today and next meeting:
 - Any collective discussion, action, exchange involving a majority of the commissioners, about the commission’s business, constituting quorum needs to be an open public meeting.
 - This includes emails, texts, etc. Exception in the OPMA are emails that are strictly sent to share information. However, Ariel recommends to go to Elsa to distribute this information to the group.

- Limit discussion with other commissioners as much as possible, and do not hit “reply all”.
- **Purpose of the meeting**
 - Today, we will only talk about selecting the fifth commissioner for the Redistricting Commission.
 - The City of Seattle charter states that the selection process of the fifth commissioner is up to the four commissioners here, two of whom have been selected by council and two whom have been appointed by the Mayor’s office, by majority vote
 - Timeline: in conjunction with the Seattle Redistricting Interdepartmental Team lead by the Department of Neighborhoods we have proposed a timeline that respects the City Charter provisions about Redistricting while also reflecting the deadlines established by State law.
 - Based on that timeline, the fifth commissioner needs to be appointed by the end of October 2021.
- Simple majority vote will get this commissioner appointed.
 - **City Attorney office Schneier:** Asked if there were questions.
 - **Commissioner Nickels:** Asked about access to candidate files to view the list. What was the process by which these names were derived? Was this application process open to the public?
 - **Staff EBB:** The applicant’s pool that people that you all should have access to (sent to email) includes everyone who was first recruited by council and the mayor and all other applicants from the community. We have organized the list based on Council and Mayor Review as well as Staff recommendations to the Mayor.

IV. Commissioners Introductions

- **Welcome from Department of Neighborhoods’ (DON) Director Andres Mantilla** – Thank you to everyone on the Redistricting Commission. DON is excited to partner with the commission not only with Elsa Batres-Boni and Logan Drummond, but also bringing the full force of our community relationships and connections to help you make your decisions and not only through our department, but as it was mentioned before, through the connections an expertise of some of our colleagues from our Interdepartmental Team such as some of our colleagues from the Office of Planning and Community Development and our colleagues at IT. Please consider DON as a resource and we are here to help wherever we can be helpful. We recognize that there are concrete timelines and deadlines to keep. We are also approaching this as a continuation of how we started to do our work for Census over the last couple of years. Elsa was a point person on that work, and also as part of our continue Civic Education work of how community can access data and be involved in how they are represented, first with the Census and now with the Redistricting process.
- **Commissioners Introductions**
 - **Eliseo EJ Juárez (goes by EJ):** Resident of West Seattle and most recently with the Group health foundation and going to work with Dept. Of Natural Resources. Excited to join this body because of the unequal growth in the city is academically fascinating and seeing how community is moving while ensuring that this is a fair, equitable process.

- **Former Mayor Greg Nickels:** Coming to this commission from the perspective of a practitioner. Spent twenty-two years and originally worked on the King County council and dealing with a heavily gerrymandered district in federal way north of Lincoln Park in West Seattle. Very respectful of the idea of contiguous districts that don't stand in the way of folks getting equal representation. My interest came to this commission because the Mayor asked me to serve, and I am looking forward to finding out community concerns about how the districts have been shaped and how we can adjust them based on things like growth rates. Thank you to the staff working to get us up to speed on this and look forward to working with you. I am retired and co-chair the West Seattle Bridge task force to reconnect to the City of Seattle. Have five grandchildren and we appreciate meeting virtually until they can be vaccinated.
- **Neelima Shah:** Senior Program Officer at the Bullitt foundation. Excited to be on this commission for the reasons folks have said. Wanting to ensure that the council districts are drawn equitably and fair. I was called upon by the mayor and answered the call to serve. I didn't get the prepping emails, so I didn't get the applicant list ahead of time.
- **Rory O'Sullivan:** Served as an administrative law judge for the office of administrative hearings. I have been interested in elections and campaign finance like Washington Public Campaigns later named Fix Democracy First, and in 2015 I was one of the authors that created the Democracy Vouchers program. I have been interested in equity and campaigns for a long time and I'm excited to work with everyone who is a part of this.

V. Public Comment

Explained and made note on how there will be always a time for public comment during commission meetings

- Public comment period allows individuals to inform and advise the Commission about issues, problems, or concerns.
- Register to attend through the WebEx link provided for the meeting.
- During the meeting, the Chair will ask the public to use the Raise Hand function to be added to the public comment list. To use the Raise Hand function:
 - Online/Desktop App Users
 - Click the Participants button that sits at the bottom right corner of the window
 - Click on the hand icon that sits at the bottom right corner of the Participants List
 - Mobile App Users
 - Click the Participants button that sits at the top right corner of the window
 - Click Raise Hand that sits at the bottom right corner of the Participants List
 - Call-in Users
 - Press *3 to raise your hand
- Once called upon, you will be unmuted with a limit of 2 minutes to speak.
- Provide clear and concise comments.
- Avoid repeating comments already expressed by others.
- After speaking, Lower Hand by using the method to Raise Hand.

VI. Key decision points

- **Fifth Commissioner**

- **Staff EBB:** Had some trouble with delayed processes selecting the commissioners. Some applicants changed positions which impacted eligibility. Recruitment is still open for the fifth position, and we have the files of all previous applicants and we have organized them into groups that were selected by Mayor's Office, Council, and DON Staff. We need to start this process as soon as possible. We wanted to look this over as soon as possible, and we are open on next steps in the process. We also have candidates who applied in the last month as well, which is noted in the application files. We need to be quick to review them to organize interview times as well.
- **Commissioner Nickels:** We will need a bit of time to go through the names and their background information so we may need some time to do this quickly, given that we are making this choice by Halloween. What meetings do we have between now and then?
- **Staff EBB:** We will have a meeting on the 20th now, but we requested possibly meeting on Tuesday from 12-1:30 to go over this if that works for Commissioners and we can discuss applicants. Time on the 27th as well to meet about this.
- **Candidate's pool**
 - **Commissioner Nickels:** If a name would occur to me or to another commissioner, can we make those recommendations and have the opportunity to submit additional candidates between now and next week when we meet again?
 - **Commissioner O'Sullivan:** Shared top two choices with staff, and if it turns out there's strong consensus for the top two and Commissioners can provide their top two choices prior to the next meeting, we can see about inviting the last two to the next meeting or scheduling interviews in advance of that meeting.
 - **Commissioner Juarez:** Has scored my top two candidates as well. Open to meeting whenever to push this ahead in terms of process.
 - **Commissioner Shah:** How many are in the applicant pool?
 - **Staff EBB:** we have about thirty applicants, can someone talk about their experience selecting their top candidates?
 - **Commissioner O'Sullivan:** I focused my attention on applicants who have been recommended by staff already which expedited the review process.
 - **Commissioner Shah:** In terms of equity and the commission, we should focus on balance in terms of gender representation as well on this commission. I have a few ideas of potential commissioners.
 - **Staff EBB:** I will put together the application package details for you to send Commissioners to apply and let us know if they can send us the application by this date so everyone can review the applications to be reviewed.
- **Interview and Selection process**
 - How and when do we interview applicants? What does this process look like?
 - **City Attorney's Office Schneier:** Interviews should happen at an open public meeting; we can do a special meeting if needed.
 - **Staff EBB:** If by the next week you can have your top two choices, we can bring them back for interviews on October 27th and we can decide at that meeting so we can fulfill this deadline?

- **City Attorney's Office Schneier:** We will go over this more in detail at a future meeting with the full commission.
- **Staff EBB:** We were worried about the timeline as well, so approving the RFQ will be high on the list of priorities for the commission.
- **Commissioner O'Sullivan:** We all agree that we don't have the Nov 30th deadline to hire the districting master?
- **City Attorney's Office Schneier:** I would say that 2021 is still recommended, but not imposed by the charter to hire the districting master.
- **Staff EBB:** Commissioners and community members have asked us when the redistricting process starts, and who will be selected for this job. The Public can ask staff for more information on timelines and the hiring process.
- **Staff EBB:** We will start making an interested pool of applicants.
- **Commissioner O'Sullivan:** King County Redistricting has been far along so getting their feedback would be helpful.
- **Staff EBB:** Hoping to get King County Redistricting commissioners to give us some advice. We are lucky to get a longer timeline and we hope to get one of them to come speak to us at some point. Let me know if there's anyone you want to learn from to inform this process. For instance, we will have a session on redistricting data from OPCD so that they can go through the dashboard in depth.

VIII. Adjourn

- Next meeting is October 19th from 1-2pm. We will only send emails to Seattle.gov emails and will try to give a heads up through personal emails.
- Staff will trouble shoot access to City Email for Commissioners Nickels and Shah
- Staff will send information about Fifth Commissioner Position
- Staff will send out calendar invites for upcoming meetings
- Commissioners will send their top candidates to staff before the next meeting
- Questions and comments, please send them to Elsa.Batres-Boni@seattle.gov