

SEATTLE REDISTRICTING COMMISSION

MINUTES

Thursday, October 21st, 2021

11:45 AM – 1:15 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: Candidate Patience Malaba: Housing Development Consortium, Candidate Naheed Aaftaab: King County Elections and Ethics and Language Access, Ariel Schneier: City Attorney’s Office, Gary Smith: City Attorney’s Office,

(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

- This Seattle Redistricting Commission 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 11:50am once the Redistricting Commissioners were all present.

II. Welcome & Housekeeping

- Land Acknowledgment – Acknowledged that we are on indigenous land
- Reading of the agenda, welcome

III. Questions from Commissioners

- **Staff EBB:** Do any commissioners have any questions or comments about the interview comments, or anything that they want to change?
- No one had any comments or changes, so we moved to the next portion of the meeting.

IV. Public Comment

- No one from community was present for public comment or registered via our website beforehand, so we are moving on to the next part of the meeting.
- Staff Explained and made note on how there will be always a time for public comment during commission meetings

V. Seattle Redistricting Commission Candidate Interviews

Candidate Interview #1: Patience Malaba - 11:50am

- **City Staff EBB:** Introductions and overview (public meeting, Recorded. We have 20 minutes for 4 questions)
- **Commissioner Eliseo Juárez:** Please tell us about your professional and personal experiences that you believe prepare you to serve as a member of the Redistricting Commission: Why do you wish to serve the city in this capacity?
 - o **Candidate Malaba:** Thank you EJ I appreciate this question. I am Patience, my pronouns are she/her. I've lived over the past years in the South of Kenya, and recently moved here and really appreciate this neighborhood. In terms of my personal experience, I am an immigrant to this country, I moved here in 2015 and have been here over the years. When I landed in Seattle, some areas of work that I started really focusing on was the issue of climate change, which I believe is a shared global issue that affects us all. Having worked at that intersection of the climate change issue and recognizing how it overlaps really extensively with housing issues with transportation planning with policies was very involved with the club for many years and building from that time on have continued to build on that work. Not only working with immigrant organizations like One America that I was very much immensely working on in the first few years of being here in Seattle, working on advancing immigration reform issues and working closely with immigrant communities and helping them integrate into the communities here in Seattle. Beyond that, I worked with a labor organization that really expanded my understanding of the experience of not only immigrant people, but also low-income people who work in service jobs and what it means for low wage workers to leave this region where they cannot afford to be able to work in the same place and still live in the same area as well. So my experience having worked with those communities and transitioning from there to work full time in affordable housing policy space really helps me bring not only my personal lived experience, but also the shared experience of having worked with my communities and bringing forward policies that help address many of the issues that I've shown just now in the population growth rates that we see in the city and the rates of issues that we also continue to see being exacerbated in not only in housing, but also homelessness, but also climate change are issues at the center of that as well.
- **Commissioner Greg Nickels:** You have had an opportunity to review basic commitments for service on this Commission (*at a high level*)-are you able to commit the time required for service and full participation? Please tell us about your philosophy about engaging in this process as a commissioner. What are your top considerations when guiding decisions and setting potential boundaries/maps?
 - o **Candidate Malaba:** Yes, I am able to commit and fully participate.
 - o **Candidate Malaba:** Thank you for that question Mayor Nickels, it brings me back to first talk about my work currently. I serve as the Director of Government Relations and Policy at the Housing Development Consortium where that intersectional work that I talked about on housing climate. Equity is really my everyday work where I am applying my

values in shaping an advocacy agenda that gets us to a place where we help address the affordable housing needs, but also support sustainable and equitable neighborhoods. Beyond that and really at the center of that is the systems change work that needs to happen. That's been why I am interested to serve in drawing the lines of districts in Seattle, because I recognize that the districts that we have in terms of, how to elect people who represent them to address the pressing issues they have in community really lies that at this foundational table. And incorporating voices in an equitable manner begins at asking who is at the decision-making table earlier on now to get into a point where to process also brings along the voices of community members in shaping what becomes of the districts. So, my philosophy is recognizing that here is an opportunity for us to really shape systems level change by drawing the lines in a way that gives power to our communities, that gives power to people being able to have representation. That is really powerful and shaping eventually policy solutions and program solutions that address the ever-growing challenging issues that we are facing as a growing city.

- **Commissioner Neelima Shah:** How would you make sure that the districting process is open and transparent: What needs to be done to ensure that district lines are drafted and adopted in a way that maximizes fairness and equity in the new district map?
 - o **Candidate Malaba:** I truly appreciate that question Neelima, and full disclosure, I am a 2020 Bullitt foundation awardee and have really been honored to serve in that capacity and receive the foundation in terms of how I would ensure that the process is equitable, and the voices are incorporated throughout the process was your question. I think the starting place is looking at number one, who is part of this decision making table as I mentioned earlier, bringing in that equitable representation of voices throughout the process, making sure that we are really upholding and committing to the public meetings commitment that the charter fully describes as a commitment of this commission to say, there will be public meetings, they will be listening to the voices of community and that's one key trait that I bring or a skill set that I bring to this table that I am an open person who has done community organizing work and have extensive experience in not only engaging and listening to community, but working in collaboration with community and being able to translate their feedback into a fully reflected action in the way that I do now and I commit to doing that in the process of redistricting commission work as well.
- **Commissioner Rory O'Sullivan:** Being on any board can be challenging, Commissioners may disagree, community members might be critical and decisions could be difficult. Please describe your experience facilitating or participating in a public forum or other challenging group dynamic.
 - o **Candidate Malaba:** This is another chance for me to indicate at the governing boards that I've served on. I do currently sit on the city planning commission as the chief, and the housing and neighborhoods committee. I also, in my capacity working at the Housing Development Consortium, facilitate road diverse stakeholder conversations, so in terms of facilitating or having conversations where we can build consensus and really come to a place where our voices are not only representing who we are at this table, but also incorporating community voices at the same time. I do have the experience of being able to recognize that diversity of thoughts and getting us to a place where I

facilitate and help bring along the voices to a point of agreement. And in terms of your question, I'm not sure if I'm getting to it at this point Rory, if he could ask the last part of the question again?

- o **Commissioner O'Sullivan:** I think you answered the last part of the question but maybe talking more about where commissioners may disagree and community members might have criticism and how you deal with that.
- o **Candidate Malaba:** Well, most recently we have been working on anti-displacement work within the planning commission. And anti-displacement strategy is not always one that anyone can claim to be fully an expert of. It's a learning curve for all of us, and when we've not agreed we've brought to the table all options that we have and explore what is the collective of the next step that we can get to, in terms of how community views that I think in the next advisory capacity, it's very different that when you are shaping a map as a district commission in terms of experience. The critique offers an advisory commission would likely be different, or the attention that's paid to that work may not be to the extent that a district commission would have. So, in terms of how I would handle that, I believe that there would be a learning curve working with this commission and getting to that place. But I've also done a lot of work within the Housing Development Consortium, where there's not only a community partnership but there are areas where sometimes we're not in agreement with coming into partners. But we work to a place where we seek to facilitate conversations that really get us to a place of consensus.
- **Commissioner Eliseo Juárez:** Do you have any questions for us?
 - o **Candidate Malaba:** I was wondering what is going to happen in terms of the timeline, specifically for selecting the Districting Master.
 - o **Commissioner O'Sullivan:** Very fast, it's our top priority and we're going to do it as quickly as we come to agreement on the candidate that we want to select.
 - o **Candidate Malaba:** For my second question, I saw that the charter says November 30th, 2022, while the timeline online says November 30th, 2021. Would anyone be able to clarify this, so I know what to expect in terms of that timeline?
 - o **Commissioner O'Sullivan:** I can answer this, we got notified by the City Attorney's office that the charter's timeline is actually not accurate to this process because the State of Washington's timeline for redistricting work moved up the due dates. While it is encouraged for us to finish selecting the Districting Master by November 30th of this year, we are not mandated to do this legally.
- **Staff EBB:** Went over next steps and thanked Candidate Malaba for her time and let her know that they will be in contact within the next few hours to let her know the outcome of the appointment process.

Redistricting Commission took a five-minute break, discussions on using Zoom possibly at the next meeting took place, and City Attorney's office staff were asked about what Commissioners should do with their handwritten notes. City Attorney's office staff advised that they hold onto those notes in a secure location until we can go over OPMA and PDR guidelines for storing documents.

Candidate Interview #2: Naheed Aaftaab – 12:15pm

- **City Staff EBB:** Introductions and overview (public meeting, Recorded. We have 20 minutes for 4 questions)
- **Commissioner Eliseo Juárez:** Please tell us about your professional and personal experiences that you believe prepare you to serve as a member of the Redistricting Commission: Why do you wish to serve the city in this capacity?
 - **Candidate Aaftaab:** Yes, thank you for that question. I professionally currently work for the King County elections department where I am the community outreach and language services supervisor so elections and voting is very close to my heart. I also did some volunteer work with the census task force. When that was happening, pre-covid and during covid that level of representational democracy and how folks are counted and how their voices are heard is kind of my bread and butter. I've done a conference on the census when I was at UW, I have studied it and also the political implications of how we do representative democracy. I'm committed to Seattle and the area because this is home. I have been here for a long time, though I'm not originally from here. The more I look at what's happening in Seattle and King County and disenfranchised and equality, I feel like Seattle has such a big impact on the region as a whole, and not just like the boundaries of Seattle itself. So, I think that makes it even a much more significant space to have conversations around equity and access.
- **Commissioner Greg Nickels:** You have had an opportunity to review basic commitments for service on this Commission (*at a high level*) - are you able to commit the time required for service and full participation? Please tell us about your philosophy about engaging in this process as a commissioner. What are your top considerations when guiding decisions and setting potential boundaries/maps?
 - **Candidate Aaftaab:** Yes.
 - **Candidate Aaftaab:** My philosophy, I suppose in a way it starts very general and that's around equity and access. I do recognize that redistricting there is the hard science of the numbers and where they need to go, and there is sort of the softer side of sometimes you want to do something that feels right and ethical, but the numbers don't necessarily support that. I think that it's important for redistricting to be as unbiased as possible, though we always take that bias with us in whatever work we do, but we need to be conscious of those biases and how we draw the lines. I do think that it's important that there is whatever you want to define as diversity and that's a longer conversation. The boundaries should reflect the diversity and not be drawn in a way that favors one side over the other. The softer side is that I do having done that census work and then looking at the census because of the work I do for elections. I do think that being conscious of the fact that the count will may have looked very different had we not been in covid or have the census like the count would have you know, you don't know right? This is the numbers aren't showing that. But my suspicion is that we didn't count everyone, and I wonder then about population shifts since then. And have people left the sort of core areas and moved out more because they're not commuting to work so there's all kinds of things that we don't know. I don't know how we take that into account but to be conscious of those issues and to think through them perfectly.

- **Commissioner Neelima Shah:** How would you make sure that the districting process is open and transparent: What needs to be done to ensure that district lines are drafted and adopted in a way that maximizes fairness and equity in the new district map?
 - o **Candidate Aaftaab:** For the transparency part, I think that the process of having public comment and all that is a great step to take. I think that this process is kind of a very wonky process, and that not everyone is able to understand and give feedback. So having not been on the commission, I don't know how that feedback process is going and if you're hearing from folks, but I think it's important to recognize who you're not hearing from as much as possible and see if you can do a different kind of outreach to hear from folks. In terms of fairness, it goes back to what I was saying before, like the fairness can only go as far as your information. Recognizing that the information may not be full or complete, recognizing that you want to increase participation as much as possible, you want to increase access as much as possible, without bringing in your own biases as much as possible.
- **Commissioner Rory O'Sullivan:** Being on any board can be challenging, Commissioners may disagree, community members might be critical, and decisions could be difficult. Please describe your experience facilitating or participating in a public forum or other challenging group dynamic.
 - o **Candidate Aaftaab:** I feel like I'm very privileged to be amongst people that think similarly to me, though that is not always the case. I have a concrete example a couple of weeks ago of a very heated discussion in a public forum with a commissioner and without giving too much away, it was public, but not recorded, but I think that it's all that stuff like building trust and building relationships ahead of time and understanding where the other people are coming from so that you can have open dialogue and be able to communicate your priorities and see where your priorities can line up. But in a heated discussion, I think that in that moment at least what worked well was that the other commissioners were able to also step in and it didn't become personal. We did a discussion between two people where others felt isolated and were unable to, so I think that's not a good situation. I was able to sort of step back and stay quiet and allow the other commissioners to come in with their perspectives then the conversation could move further instead of the two of us being stuck on one point, and then we are going to have follow up conversations around that and conversations in different platforms. So, through writing thorough emails and not necessarily with other folks participating and not necessarily just the two of us right away. So, there's all kinds of ways to approach this, but in that moment that taking a step back and allowing others to jump in, seemed the right thing and it worked but in different moments it might look different.
- **Commissioner Eliseo Juárez:** Do you have any questions for us?
 - o **Candidate Aaftaab:** My understanding is that the draft is due in less than a month, is that November 15th? Do I have that right or where are you in the process and when is the deadlines that you need to meet.
 - o **Commissioner O'Sullivan:** I think the district map is due on November 15th of 2022, not 2021. We do certainly hope to make a lot of progress earlier than that.
 - o **Candidate Aaftaab:** Oh that's so much better, it just said November so I was panicking.

- o **Commissioner O’Sullivan:** The first deadline we’re meeting today is selecting the fifth Redistricting Commissioner, then the next item is to hire a Districting Master, hopefully be November 30th if possible.
- o **Candidate Aaftaab:** I’m also curious what the process will be and who you are bringing in to think through this process? Do you have statistician folks that are experts that are on the ground other than the commissioners?
- o **Commissioner Nickels:** After picking the fifth commissioner and fulfilling the body we will move on to selecting a Districting Master – We’ll hope to come up with a different name for that position if possible – Who will be expert in these areas and help guide us to a set of decisions around the boundaries.
- o **Candidate Aaftaab:** That is all of my questions, thank you.
- **Staff EBB:** Went over next steps and thanked Candidate Aaftaab for her time and let her know that they will be in contact within the next few hours to let her know the outcome of the appointment process.

City Staff EBB: Shares next steps: Commissioners will now meet in an Executive Meeting to discuss candidate qualifications and then will meet in the public meeting space to make a final decision. Candidates will be notified today after 1:15pm of the outcome and next steps.

Redistricting Commissioners invited City Staff Liaisons into the Executive Meeting through a WebEx Breakout Meeting. The Commission deliberated in the Executive Meeting for approximately 25 minutes, discussing only candidate qualifications during this time.

VI. Candidate Selection - 12:50pm

- The Seattle Redistricting Commission unanimously appointed Patience Malaba as the fifth Redistricting Commissioner to the Seattle Redistricting Commission. Commissioners noted that all the applicants they received were extremely impressive. DON staff will reach out to let her know and then go over next steps.
- **Commissioner O’Sullivan:** I motion for a vote to appoint Patience Malaba as the fifth Redistricting Commissioner.
- **Commissioner Nickels:** Second, we had two excellent finalists and was impressed with the 29-applicant pool from across the City of Seattle willing to give up their time to serve their city.
- **Commissioner O’Sullivan:** I echo Mayor Nickel’s comments and I’m excited to appoint Patience Malaba.
- **Commissioner Shah:** I echo the other Commissioners and I also vote to appoint Patience Malaba as our fifth Redistricting Commissioner.
- **Commissioner Juárez:** I will also echo everyone else and vote to appoint Patience Malaba. We had an excellent pool to review of members of the public, the two we interviewed today were exceptional and I’m excited to appoint Patience as a Redistricting Commissioner.
- **Commissioner O’Sullivan:** I will call for a vote now, all voting yes say Aye
- **All commissioners voted Aye, officially appointing Patience Malaba as the fifth Redistricting Commissioner.**

VII. Next meeting time and announcements

- Our next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday October 27th from 11:45am- 1:15pm

- **Staff EBB:** On Tuesday, October 26th from 12:00pm-1:30pm, the Department of Neighborhoods has an upcoming event around redistricting. The series is called I Love Census Data series and the event is called Redistricting 101, where we will go over basic redistricting data information. It is a community conversation session about data, and this is part of our outreach and engagement efforts. We plan on introducing the Redistricting Commission and what they will be doing, as well as some of the data and mapping tools that have come out around Redistricting from the 2020 Census. We will cover this and inform the public on why the redistricting process is important. We will be sharing data from OPCD from their maps and resources section. If anyone has any comments or questions this is a public education session that we are in charge of as well and we are looking forward to beginning the community education and engagement pieces at the same time that this commission is beginning to come together.

VIII. Adjourn

- Next meeting is October 27th from 11:45am-1:15pm.
- Staff will send an email letting the candidates know the outcome of the vote and will check in with Commissioner Malaba regarding her availability for the next meeting.
- Staff will send out calendar invites for upcoming meetings
- Questions and comments, please send them to Elsa.Batres-Boni@seattle.gov