

**Subject: Public Safety Civil Service Commission Employee Election**

Purpose:

Governing the administration of the election for the employee-elected member of the Public Safety Civil Service Commission

Background:

The Public Safety Civil Service Commission (PSCSC) is responsible for administrative rulemaking and ensuring the compliant operation of Seattle's mandated public safety service civil service system, as required by Washington law, Seattle City Charter, and the Public Safety Civil Service Personnel Ordinance (Seattle Municipal Code Title 4.08). The PSCSC develops and administers entry and promotional civil service exams for ranks in the Seattle Police and Fire departments, conducts hearings on sworn police and uniformed firefighter employee appeals of discipline and other civil service questions, and partners with stakeholders on public safety civil service-related policy and functions.

The PSCSC has three commissioners who each serve three-year staggered terms. One commissioner is appointed by the Mayor, one is appointed by the City Council, and one is elected by eligible voting employees.

Seattle Municipal Code 4.08.040 requires the City Clerk to administer regular elections for the employee-elected members of the PSCSC every three years, and to administer special elections if the position becomes vacant.

Elections for the employee-elected Public Safety Civil Service Commissioner shall be administered in such a manner as to ensure openness and fairness, and to encourage the broadest possible participation by eligible employees.

References:

- Seattle City Charter [Article XVI](#) Personnel System and Civil Service, Sec. 3
- [SMC 4.08](#) - Public Safety Civil Service
- [RCW 41.08](#) - Civil Service for City Firefighters
- [RCW 41.12](#) - Civil Service for City Police
- PSCSC [Rules of Practice and Procedure](#)

Definitions

Eligible voting employees - All regular and probationary employees who are members of the Public Safety Civil Service system are eligible to vote for an employee-elected Public Safety Civil Service Commissioner, SMC 4.08.040.C.

COB – Close of Business (5 p.m.)

Entities and roles

1. Office of the City Clerk (OCC)
  - a. Promulgate and regularly review and update election rules.
  - b. Work with PSCSC staff, City Attorney's Office, and other groups to make updates to the election ordinance as needed.
  - c. Set and publish the schedule for the regular elections and any special elections that may be necessary if an elected commissioner cannot serve out their full term.
  - d. The City Clerk may select and contract with an election vendor to conduct the elections online and by mail, in which case the OCC will:
    1. Provide contact information for eligible voting employees to the election vendor.
    2. Provide candidate information to the election vendor.
    3. Approve election materials prepared by the election vendor.
    4. Certify the results provided by the election vendor.
  - e. Notify eligible employees of the elections.
  - f. Create and distribute a Declaration of Candidacy form.
  - g. Host at least one information session with staff of the PSCSC for employees interested in running.
  - h. Accept declarations of candidacy from candidates.
    - i. If not contracting with an election vendor, conduct the election, including preparing, distributing, and counting ballots, and certifying election results.
  - j. Publish election results and place certification of election results into official Clerk Files in the OCC.
  - k. Notify candidates, eligible employees and department heads and unions of election results.
  - l. Retain election materials and documentation in accordance with retention requirements established by the City Records Management Program.
2. Election vendor, when applicable
  - a. Conduct the election, providing paper ballots and online voting information to all eligible employees.
  - b. Tabulate election results and communicate them to the OCC.
3. Seattle Department of Human Resources
  - a. Provide the OCC with a list of employees eligible to vote in the election, including their name, title, department, employee identification number, mailing address, and work email address.

#### 4. Candidates

- a. Obtain a declaration of candidacy form from the City Clerk, and submit their completed form to the City Clerk during candidacy declaration week.
- b. If so desired, provide to the City Clerk by the established deadline a written statement not to exceed 200 words, for inclusion in the voters' pamphlet. The statement should include candidate's name and department, which are not included in the 200-word count. Proper names such as the jurisdiction or department names count as one word towards the 200-word total.
  1. The statement may be provided to the OCC on paper or electronically
  2. If provided electronically, the statement shall be provided in the body of an email, or as a Microsoft Word, plain text, or rich text format document.
- c. If so desired, provide to the City Clerk a photograph of the candidate that meets established and announced standards, to accompany the candidate statement in the voters' pamphlet.
- d. File the candidate statement and photograph with the City Clerk no later than COB on the final day of candidacy declaration week. If candidates do not submit statements, the City Clerk will use candidate information from the declaration of candidacy forms.
- e. If they decide to withdraw their candidacy, notify the City Clerk no later than COB the final day of candidacy declaration week.
- f. If desired, appoint one representative to witness the ballot handling process. Provide notification of any such appointment to the City Clerk, in writing, no later than COB the Wednesday before the election week begins.

#### 5. Eligible voting employees

- a. Keep current and correct mailing address on file with Seattle Department of Human Resources.
- b. Look out for election notices and voting materials.
- c. Read and follow instructions distributed with voting materials.
- d. Reach out promptly to the designated OCC contact person with questions or concerns.
- e. Vote online or mail paper ballot before the close of election week.
- f. Vote only once.

#### 6. Public Safety Civil Service Commission staff

- a. Consult with OCC on the conduct of the election.
- b. Attend the OCC information session and respond as needed to questions from voting employees and potential candidates. Commission staff may host additional information sessions to address questions about commissioner responsibilities, if needed.
- c. Publicize elections and information sessions to eligible voters.
- d. If possible, secure the attendance of a sitting Commissioner at the candidate

information session.

- e. Communicate with labor relations staff about election-related matters (election notices and call for candidates, election results), for them to share with bargaining units.
  - f. Confirm voting eligibility of employees who inquire about their civil service status.
  - g. Answer questions from voters and candidates about the activities of the Commission and the role and responsibilities of Commissioners.
7. City departments, bargaining units, and employee affinity groups
- a. Post notices of election and election rules on department bulletin boards and/or send to email distribution lists.
  - b. If desired, each department, union or affinity group may appoint one representative to witness the ballot handling process. Provide notification of any such appointment to the City Clerk, in writing, no later than COB the Wednesday before the election week begins.
  - c. Unions or affinity groups choosing to endorse a PSCSC candidate are encouraged to review materials from all candidates before doing so.
  - d. To preserve the independence of the Commission, no member of the Mayor's office, the City Council staff, the Public Safety Civil Service Commission staff, elected official, head of a City department, or Public Safety Civil Service-exempt City employee shall endorse a candidate or otherwise attempt to influence the election.

#### Process and timeline

1. Announcement of election
  - a. OCC announces the upcoming election, issues a call for candidates, and provides the election rules using a variety of media, including but not limited to online postings, and announcements distributed to eligible employees.
2. Information sessions
  - a. The candidate information sessions, hosted by the OCC and attended by PSCSC staff, are an opportunity for potential candidates to meet PSCSC staff and ask questions about the role of commissioner and the conduct of the election before deciding whether to run.
3. Candidacy Week
  - a. In an election year, candidacy declaration week begins at 8:00 a.m. on the first Monday of October, and ends at close of business the following Friday, or, if a City holiday falls during candidacy declaration week, COB

the following Monday.

- b. Candidates must file their declaration of candidacy with the OCC no later than COB on the final day of candidacy declaration week.

4. Mailing of voting information

- a. Paper ballots and individualized information on voting electronically are mailed by the OCC or the election vendor..

5. Election week

- a. The regular election is held during the week that begins with the first Monday of November in an election year.
- b. Election week runs for five business days, typically Monday through Friday. If a City holiday falls during an election week, the election week will extend from a Monday to the following Monday.
- c. During election week, eligible voting employees cast their electronic votes or mail their paper ballots.
- d. Online ballots must be cast no later than midnight PDT on the last day of election week. Paper ballots must be postmarked no later than the last day of election week and received by the election vendor within seven days of the last day of election week.
- e. In the event that only one eligible person has declared candidacy during the designated week, the election/voting process described in SMC 4.08.040.F. and in this rule will be foregone and the City Clerk will verify that candidate as the employee-appointed commissioner.

6. Results, recounts and runoffs

- a. The votes shall be tabulated using ranked choice voting, allowing eligible voters to rank candidates in the voters' order of preference.
- b. Votes for any candidate not listed on the ballot will not be counted.
- c. In the event that the difference in votes received by the top two candidates is less than .5% of the votes cast, the ballots will be recounted. The candidate with the greater number of votes in the recount shall be the winner.

Special elections

1. Vacancies occurring in the office of the employee-appointed Commissioner shall be filled at a special election to be called for such purpose by resolution of the City Council. Such special election shall be held as soon as practicable.

Revision history

- Updated 2023 to:
  - Update rule format

- Eliminate matters moved to the employee elections ordinance
- Incorporate electronic voting and election vendor information
- Specify the tabulation measure for votes (ranked choice voting)
- Establish a threshold for recounts
- Establish a procedure for withdrawing candidacy
- Address the eventuality of a candidate running unopposed

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