

## **Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission Regular Meeting**

**February 5, 2014**

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission convened on February 5, 2014 in Room 4080 of the Seattle Municipal Tower, 700 Fifth Avenue. Commission Chair Bill Sherman called the meeting to order at 4:07 p.m. Commissioner Kendee Yamaguchi was in attendance. Vice-Chair Rich Cohan, Commissioner's Brad Axel and Bruce Carter joined via telephone. Commissioner's Lorena González and David Mendoza were not present. Executive Director Wayne Barnett and staff members Anthony Adams, Kate Flack, Polly Grow and Gary Keese were present. Seattle City Attorney Carlton Seu was also in attendance.

### **1) Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

### **Action Items**

#### **2) Special meeting minutes for January 8, 2014**

Vice-Chair Cohan moved to adopt the minutes from the January 8, 2014 Special meeting, Commissioner Axel seconded. The minutes from the January 8, 2014 Special meeting were unanimously approved.

#### **3) Special meeting minutes for October 30, 2013**

The Chair had two minor grammatical corrections added to the minutes. Commissioner Axel moved to adopt the minutes from the October 30, 2013 Special meeting as amended. Vice-Chair Cohan seconded. The minutes from the October 30, 2013 Special meeting were unanimously adopted as amended.

### **Discussion Items**

**5) Late-filing penalty for Seattle Fire Fighters Union Local 27 Voluntary PAC (\$750)**

In 2013, Seattle Fire Fighters Union Local 27 Voluntary PAC had reporting violations on independent expenditures in both the Primary and General elections. The Executive Director levied a fine of \$750, which was paid in full. The Commission had no questions.

**6) WBI 13-0603-1**

This was a complaint the Commission received about fee waivers at Parks facilities. The Executive Director was informed that certain individuals were allowed to utilize the facilities at no charge. The investigation did turn up evidence of fee waivers that didn't comply with Parks Department policies, but not Ethics Code violations. Commission staff alerted Parks so that they can address the violations of Parks Department policies.

Commissioner Yamaguchi asked if the violations were associated with athletics. The Director confirmed that all of the violations were directly associated with athletics.

### **Action Items**

**4) Rule designating employees required to file Financial Interest Statements for 2013.**

Commissioner Yamaguchi motioned to adopt the Rule designating employees required to file Financial Interest Statements for 2013. Commissioner Axel seconded. The Rule designating employees required to file Financial Interest Statements for 2013 was unanimously approved.

## **Discussion Items**

### **7) 2013 Election Report**

The Executive Director summarized the Elections Report for the Commission. The Commission discussed the rise in small contributions and the decline in large contributions, reversing trends that had emerged over the most recent election cycles.

### **8) Possible 2014 Commission-initiated legislation**

#### **a) Housekeeping update of Elections Code**

The Executive Director told the Commission it was his goal to make some housekeeping changes to the Elections Code before the 2015 election cycle was in full swing. The Commission urged the Director to present them with a proposal as soon as possible.

#### **b) Financial Interest Statement program**

The Director said it was his goal to have the Financial Interest Statements completed by fewer individuals, but to require more extensive information from those individuals. He would also like to see the forms electronically filed. Commissioner Yamaguchi encouraged the Director to research other jurisdictions to examine how their disclosure programs work

#### **c) Exemption for widely shared financial interests**

The Director said that the Commission had been asked to examine the exception to the Ethics Code permitting officers and employees to participate in matters in which they had a financial interest, so long as that interest was broadly shared. With the pending shift to district elections, staff will be examining the language and developing a proposal for the Commission's review.

## 9) Executive Director's Report

Staff members Kate Flack and Gary Keese gave a status report on the implementation of the new whistleblower training. Staff has been working closely with the Personnel Department to develop on-line training.

In response to a question from Commission Yamaguchi, Mr. Keese explained that staff was developing two on-line training modules, one for supervisors and managers and one for employees. The new Whistleblower Protection Code mandates that all employees be trained.

Staff cautioned the Commission that currently the City does not have software that can automatically track who has taken the training and who has not. The procurement process is underway, though, and the City hopes to purchase software in the coming months.

The Executive Director told the Commission that in the wake of their push last year for the City to produce a Video Voters' Guide in off-year elections, the Seattle Channel would be working with Commission staff to produce a Video Voters' Guide for ballot measures that go to the City's voters in 2014.

Finally, the Executive Director told the Commission that he had conducted trainings for staffs of the two new elected officials, Councilmember Sawant and Mayor Murray.

**The Regular Commission meeting for February 5, 2014 adjourned at 4:53 p.m.**