

Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission Special Meeting

March 9, 2018

A special meeting of the Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission convened on March 9, 2018 in Room 4096 of the Seattle Municipal Tower, 700 Fifth Avenue. Commission Chair Brendan Donckers called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m. Commissioners Charlene Angeles and Eileen Norton were present, and Commissioner Hardeep Singh Rekhi joined by telephone. Vice Chair Vickie Rawlins and Commissioner Bruce Carter were not in attendance. Executive Director Wayne Barnett was joined by staff members Rene LeBeau, Polly Grow, and Marc Mayo. Assistant City Attorneys Jeff Slayton and Gary Smith were also in attendance.

1) Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Action Item

2) Minutes for February 9, 2018 Special meeting

Commissioner Norton moved that the minutes from the February 9, 2018 special meeting be approved. Commissioner Angeles seconded. The minutes for the February 9, 2018 special meeting were unanimously approved.

Discussion Items

3) Executive Session briefing to receive legal advice on the Democracy Voucher Program

The Chair asked his fellow Commission members if they had any issues with allowing staff to be in the room for the executive session. Hearing no objection, the Chair invited staff to remain for a 45-minute executive session.

At 3:52, the Chair announced that the Commission was back in session.

4) 2017 Election report

The Director shared with the Commissioners the 2017 Elections Report, prepared by Campaign Finance Auditor Polly Grow and IT Professional Bob DeWeese. The Director noted the huge increase in the contributor base, resulting from the Democracy Voucher Program.

Commissioner Angeles used the City Council race from 2013 as a comparison, and noted the dramatic drop in the contributions that came from outside the City of Seattle.

The Director also directed the Commission's attention to the fact that the average contribution in the Seattle City Council races fell to levels which hadn't been seen since around 1991. He said that coincided with the drop in the contribution limit from \$700 to \$500. He also said that Independent Expenditures continued to grow exponentially.

The Chair said that this was the first year since 2003 in which most contributions were less than \$100.

5) Democracy Voucher Program report

The Director then shared with the Commission the first biannual Democracy Voucher Program report. He said the highlight of the report is the dramatic increase in the number of contributors that came about as a result of the program. He pointed out that the budget summary was on the final page of the report.

6) Democracy Voucher mailing

The Director said that staff had followed up with King County Elections on the process by which a registered voter moves from active to inactive status. The County reported that a voter only becomes inactive when (1) a piece of mail from King County Elections is returned as undeliverable, or (2) the United States Postal Service provides information to King County that a

change of address form has been submitted. He reported that vouchers were mailed to approximately 55,000 inactive voters in 2017, at a cost of \$34,000. The number of inactive voters who returned vouchers was 29, meaning that the program spent more than \$1,000 on those 29 inactive voters. He said there are three options: (1) Continue mailing the full voucher packet to inactive voters, costing approximately \$34,000, (2) Mail a postcard to inactive voters, costing approximately \$21,000, or (3) Stop mailing to inactive voters. The Executive Director continues to recommend that the voucher program only mail to active voters, and those who have opted into the program.

Commissioner Norton believed that a lot of money was spent, and there wasn't very much return on the investment, so she would be in favor of halting mailing to inactive voters.

Chair Donckers indicated he was inclined to agree with Commissioner Norton.

7) FIS status report

The Executive Director shared with the Commission that for calendar year 2017 approximately 1,800 City employees would be required to file Statements of Financial Interest. He reported that 701 employees had filed to date.

8) I-122 status report

Rene LeBeau updated the Commission on the selection of Berk Consulting to conduct an independent assessment of the voucher program. She described the surveys that BERK would be conducting. She said that the Commission could expect a final report by the middle of April.

Commissioner Angeles asked why BERK Consulting had won the contract. The Director reported that BERK is a local business that has been in existence for 30 years. They have a good reputation and have done work for other City agencies. Notably, they are working for the

Department of Education and Early Learning on a similar assessment right now, and DEEL gave them high marks.

9) Executive Director's report

The Director updated the Commission on the search for a new Commissioner. Mayor Durkan had shared some names with her staff, and they were reaching out to candidates.

The Special Commission meeting for March 9, 2018 adjourned at 4:34 p.m.

DRAFT