

Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission Regular Meeting

October 2, 2024

The October 2, 2024, Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission (SEEC) Regular Meeting convened in Seattle Municipal Tower Conference Room 4080 and remotely. Chair Kristin Hawes was present. Vice-Chair Susan Taylor and Commissioners Zach Pekelis, Jonathan Schirmer, Richard Shordt, and Chalia Stallings-Ala'ilima participated via Webex. Commissioner Bobby Forch was absent. Executive Director Wayne Barnett and staff members Fedden Amar, Cliff Duggan, Polly Grow, and Renée LeBeau were present. Staff Chrissy Courtney and Randal Fu participated via Webex as well as Assistant City Attorneys Joe Levan and Gary Smith.

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:01 p.m.

Discussion of Written Public Comment

A letter dated September 27, 2024, was received from People Powered Elections Washington to the Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission. The letter was supportive of the Democracy Voucher Program and urged full funding of the Program going forward.

Final Action Items

1. Adoption of July 31, 2024, Commission Special Meeting minutes

The Chair asked if there were any corrections to the July 31, 2024, Commission Special Meeting minutes. Hearing none, the motion to adopt the minutes as written was made by the Vice-Chair and duly seconded.

[It was noted that Commissioner Pekelis had joined the meeting.]

The Chair called for a vote on the adoption of the July 31, 2024, SEEC Commission Special Meeting minutes. The motion passed unanimously with five ayes.

2. Appeal of Executive Director's Dismissal of Complaint

The Director received a complaint on August 20 alleging the Seattle Office of Police Accountability Executive Director misused City funds and deliberately leaked non-public information to the press.

After the Director's dismissal, an appeal was made to the Commission to overturn the Director's ruling. The Commission considered funds being used for public speaking training to the media an appropriate function for a senior City staff person.

Commissioner Pekelis asked if there was a dispute of fact as to whether the non-public memo was leaked to the media. The Director responded there was no evidence to that effect and stated that the Commission is not tasked with policing alleged leaks.

The motion confirming that the Commission will not review the Executive Director's dismissal with respect to this complaint and will not participate or grant the request for the appeal was made by Commissioner Pekelis and duly seconded. The motion carried unanimously with five ayes.

3. Request to renew contract with City of Kirkland

The City of Kirkland is seeking a renewal of the 2016 Independent Ethics Program Agreement Between the City of Kirkland and the City of Seattle. The Executive Director stated that the previous contract did not yield any work. (The original request was preceded by the Democracy Voucher Program.)

[It was noted that Commissioner Stallings-Ala'ilima had joined the meeting.]

Commissioner Shordt made the motion to decline the renewal of the Commission's contract with the City of Kirkland. The motion was duly seconded. The vote to decline renewal was unanimous with six ayes.

4. **Authorization to attend COGEL conference**

The Director requested Commission approval to attend the Council on Governmental Ethics Law (COGEL) Annual Conference December 8-11 in Los Angeles. The Director will also be attending a separate Public Financing Roundtable.

Commissioner Schirmer made the motion to approve the Director's attendance, and it was duly seconded. The Chair called for a vote on approving the Director's attendance to the December 8-11 COGEL Annual Conference. The motion passed unanimously with six ayes.

5. **Recommendation on Democracy Voucher Program levy**

The Director said the main area the Commission reviews every year is if the Program continues to lead to more candidates and more contributors. The Chair mentioned the discussion at the previous Commission meeting regarding the role of the Commission to make a letter of recommendation to the City Council with respect to funding the Democracy Voucher Program going forward.

The Chair requested a motion. The Vice-Chair made a motion that the Commission recommend to the Mayor and City Council to provide full funding of \$4.5 million to the Democracy Voucher Program for the next ten years. The motion was duly seconded. The motion passed unanimously with six ayes.

Discussion Items

1. **Democracy Voucher Program report**

a. **2023 Participation and Representation Results DVP Report**

Ms. LeBeau presented the *Participation and Representation Results from the Seattle Democracy Voucher Program in 2023* external report written by Jennifer A. Heerwig, PhD and Brian J. McCabe, PhD.

2. Executive Director's report

a. October 17 “3 Big Ways Democracy Vouchers Changed Seattle’s Elections”

The Executive Director reported that Jen Heerwig will be in Seattle on October 17 to discuss “3 Big Ways Democracy Vouchers Changed Seattle’s Elections” at the Seattle Town Hall.

b. December 6 City of Seattle Boards and Commissions Appreciation Reception

A Boards and Commissions Appreciation Reception is scheduled for the evening of December 6 at City Hall. An invitation will be sent in November. Please RSVP to Cliff Duggan.

The Director stated that the Mayor’s 2025-2026 Proposed Budget did not make the kinds of cuts in the Commission's budget that many other departments experienced.

Since there was no further business, the October 2, 2024, SEEC Commission Regular Meeting was adjourned at 4:36 p.m.