

Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission Regular Meeting

March 1, 2023

A regular meeting of the Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission (SEEC) convened in Seattle Municipal Tower Conference Room 4080 and remotely. Chair Zach Pekelis called the meeting to order at 4:04 p.m. The Chair, Vice Chair Kristin Hawes, and Commissioners Hardeep Singh Rekhi, Richard Shordt, Chalia Stallings-Ala'ilima, and Susan Taylor attended remotely. Executive Director Wayne Barnett and staff members Fedden Amar, Cliff Duggan, Randal Fu, and Renè LeBeau were present. Staff member Polly Grow, and Assistant City Attorneys Gary Smith and Joe Levan joined remotely.

The Chair opened the meeting with Mr. Smith introducing Mr. Joe Levan, who will be the new Assistant City Attorney advising the Commission's Executive Director. Mr. Smith will be in the role of advising the Commission. Mr. Smith commented on Mr. Levan's experience in municipal law, most recently as Bainbridge Island City Attorney and prior to that as head of the legal unit at Municipal Research Services Center.

Mr. Levan said that he is very pleased to be working with the Commission. The Chair welcomed Mr. Levan and is looking forward to working with him.

Final Action Items

1. Approval of minutes from February 1, 2023, Commission Regular Meeting

Commissioner Taylor made the motion to approve the February 1 Commission Regular Meeting minutes which was seconded by Commissioner Stallings-Ala'ilima. The Commissioners unanimously approved the February 1 minutes.

2. Adoption of CY2022 Financial Interest Statements Rule

The Chair opened discussion of adopting the 2022 Financial Interest Statements Rule pursuant to [Seattle Municipal Code 4.16.080.B](#). This provision requires certain city officials and employees to file financial interest statements. The Commission is charged with adopting a rule that lists the specific officers and employees who were identified. The Public Hearing Notice on this rule was circulated and published.

Upon hearing no questions or comments, the Chair requested a motion be made. Commissioner Singh Rekhi made a motion to adopt the rule identifying City Officers and Employees required to file financial interest statements; Commissioner Shordt seconded. The Commissioners unanimously approved the rule.

The Director stated for the record that a notice of the Commission meeting's public hearing was published in *The Daily Journal of Commerce*. No written public comments were received nor was anyone present at the meeting to give an oral public comment.

3. Modification Request of Alexandra Hudson (District 3)

The Chair inquired if Item 3 was still a viable agenda item. The Director said that it was not and explained that the candidate is in discussions with the Public Disclosure Commission. While the candidate's reporting obligation is being sorted out, this item will be paused.

Due to a prior commitment, Commissioner Shordt was excused from the remainder of the meeting as a quorum was still present.

Discussion Items

4. Democracy Voucher Program report

Ms. LeBeau displayed the Democracy Voucher packet mailed on February 21 to 460,000 registered voters. Each envelope includes four \$25 vouchers, Program Q&As, and a postage-paid return envelope. The voucher and Q&A sheets have quick response (QR) codes allowing the individual to check the current participating candidate list and/or to use online vouchers.

Ms. LeBeau also shared a recent DVP update listing a total of 32 candidates showing interest in the seven City Council district seats. Of that number, 27 candidates have applied to the DVP and three have already completed the qualification process. In response to a question from the last meeting, a comparison of the 2019 and 2023 election cycles around the time period showed the 2019 election cycle had 50 candidates with 41 candidates applying to the Program. Four candidates had completed the qualification process. (NOTE: The 2019 election cycle numbers reflect a voucher mailing made a week earlier and a

Commission meeting held a week later than in 2023.)

On February 21, 56,000 postcards were sent informing people their voter status was inactive and explaining the need to take an action to receive vouchers. Also, over a few days, the office began email notifications to about 19,000 voters who assign their vouchers through the Online Portal. Most people have received their vouchers. The office will start issuing vouchers to voters who did not receive them or requested them by email.

Commissioner Stallings-Ala'ilima mentioned a recent podcast containing criticisms of the Voucher Program; this was something the Commissioner had not heard before. The Commissioner would like to be better informed of other opinions about the Program and suggested it as a future meeting discussion item. The Director said he was aware of the critique and can start a discussion during the April Commission meeting.

5. Executive Director's report

The Director announced that Chair Pekelis and Commissioner Taylor were reconfirmed by the City Council for their positions on the Commission. The two remaining vacancies are for the positions held by Commissioner Winmill and Commissioner Singh Rekhi.

Congratulations to René, Randal, and Fedden for doing great work in getting this year's program launched. The Chair thanked the Director for his report and added his thanks to the staff.

The Chair announced the conclusion of the agenda and thanked everyone for their time. Upon hearing no other comments, the Chair adjourned the March 1, 2023, SEEC Commission Regular meeting at 4:29 p.m.