



## King County

### CITIZENS' ELECTIONS OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE (CEOC)

January 19, 2022 Meeting | 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. | Zoom Conference

### MINUTES

**Members Present:** Chair: Kyle Vixie, First Vice Chair: Eliseo Juárez, Vice Chair: Jayson Todd Morris, Hillary Coleman, Allison Feher, Linda Grez, Stuart Holmes, Julie Kang, Maya Manus, Quynh Pham, Stefan Sharkansky, Nanette Sullivan and Stanley Tsao

**Absent:** Jeff Manson

**Special Guests:** Paul Graves, Washington State Redistricting Commissioner and King County Districting Committee member

**Elections Staff:** Director Julie Wise, Deputy Director Janice Case, Will Cavecche, Naheed Aaftaab and Kendall LeVan Hodson

**Council Staff:** Erin Arya, Tom Goff and Sherrie Hsu

#### **1. Call to Order**

CEOC Chair Kyle Vixie called the meeting to order at 11:31 a.m.

#### **2. Approve November 17, 2021 minutes**

Member Sharkansky moved approval of the minutes of the November 17, 2021 meeting. Vice Chair Jayson Morris seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

#### **3. Director's Report (with Legislative Priorities)**

Director Wise provided the Director's Report to the CEOC. She shared that she is co-chairing the legislative committee for state auditors with the Chelan County Auditor. Director Wise testified in the state legislature last week on two bills including HB 1562 which would allow conservation districts to move their elections on to the general ballot and HB 1716 updating electioneering rules around official vote centers. Director Wise also provided a high-level overview of the following bills: HB 1618 prohibiting weapons in election facilities, SB 5440 moving the primary election to May and the candidate filing deadline to February, SB 5597 concerning the Washington Voting Rights Act, and SB 5584 regarding ranked choice voting.

Member Sharkansky offered that he likes odd year elections and would suggest abolishing the spring elections with low turnout and move them to the general election. He also suggested focusing on finding alternatives to signatures for voter verification.

Director Wise shared that ballots were mailed for the February Special Election and they are projecting 32% turnout. This election covers nearly all of the county. In addition, the King Conservation District election began yesterday (1/18). Voters can submit their ballot online or print and return by mail.

#### **4. Approve Annual Report to Council**

Chair Vixie noted there were two drafts of the annual report distributed to the Committee and that proposed changes were sent earlier today. The proposed changes include in-language ballot data for the General Election as requested by Member Kang, a change to page 8 to directly reference the PDC response to Member Sharkansky's complaint as requested by Member Sharkansky, and typo corrections.

Member Coleman proposed an additional amendment on page 9 of the report to strike the sentence: "She also stated that she was not aware of KCE's current year guidance to VEF grantees regarding ballot measure advocacy." She also disclosed that she used to work for VEF grant recipient, Seattle/King County Coalition on Homelessness (SKCCH).

The Committee discussed the proposed edits. Member Sharkansky objected to Member Coleman's proposed change. The Committee endeavored to arrive at compromise language. Member Sharkansky offered to check the recording for a verbatim transcript. Chair Vixie asked Member Sharkansky if he is recording the meetings. Member Sharkansky answered it is a public meeting and later clarified that he had only recorded the presentation by Ms. Eisinger (of SKCCH). Vice Chair Juárez asked staff to request legal review of the legality and ramifications of recording the committee and guests without their knowledge. Member Sharkansky expressed his support for all meetings to be recorded.

Member Coleman moved that after the sentence that ends with "objective" they strike rest of paragraph and insert:

*"KCE provides the information related to nonpartisan voter education to grantees as part of trainings this year during which Eisinger herself was not present but other staff from SKCCH and other funded organizations were present. Further conversations about VEF will continue in 2022."*

Member Grez seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Member Grez moved approval of the annual report as amended. Member Sullivan seconded the motion. Member Sharkansky asked for clarification if dissenting commentary will be included in the report. Chair Vixie clarified the Committee would vote on that issue after it votes on the annual report. The motion passed with member Sharkansky voting nay.

Member Sharkansky moved to add a minority opinion section to the report. Member Grez seconded the motion. The Committee discussed the meaning of dissenting opinion. The motion failed with the following vote: 1 yea (Sharkansky), 9 nays

(Coleman, Feher, Grez, Juárez, Kang, Manus, Morris, Sullivan, Tsao), 2 abstentions (Pham, Vixie) and 1 excused (Manson).

## **5. State and County Redistricting**

Paul Graves, Washington State Districting Commissioner and King County Districting Committee Member, provided an overview of the Washington state and King County redistricting processes. He noted pride in the way we do redistricting. It keeps elected officials at an arms-length which is not the case in many other jurisdictions. He noted the commissions had six months fewer than past commissions to draw maps due to the Census data being so late. He also referenced that building timelines into the process is helpful.

## **6. Language Access Report**

Naheed Aaftaab and Will Cavecche with King County Elections presented an overview of the Language Access Report due to the Council this month (January).

Staff shared that in the report, Elections recommends adding Russian and Somali in-language ballots, information and services in the same manner it does for Chinese Korean, Spanish and Vietnamese. Staff noted at this time it is not legally required to add these two languages, but that they are working with incomplete data because of the Census delay.

Staff reported that KCE reviewed the following information in making a recommendation: American Community Survey 2019, King County Language Tiers, Voter Registration Data, community organizations, service providers and immigration trends.

Staff shared while they are not required to add a language at this time, Somali is the second most requested language for translation and interpretation. They also noted Census data does not parse out African languages and Somali was identified as a need by community partners. Russian is expected to meet the King County threshold for inclusion in the next five years. King County will require the top 6 languages to be translated across the county website. Staff shared the [link to county language maps](#).

Staff reported next steps are for the report to be submitted to Council for review and further discussion including ensuring a strong rollout for additional languages.

## **7. Signature Challenge Data**

Jerelyn Hampton and Will Cavecche with King County Elections provided an overview on signature challenges. Elections reconstituted a signature challenge work group in April 2021 comprised of staff serving various elections functions. The goals of the group were to reduce signature challenge rates, increase the cure rate, identify barriers faced by historically underserved communities and develop mitigation methods, create opportunities for voter education, and identify possible alternative methods for voter validation.

KCE sent out a survey to voters challenged in the August 2021 election. Roughly 3,000 surveys were sent out and they received roughly 600 responses. They learned that most respondents knew that they were challenged, but not the reason why or if it was resolved. Elections plans to send the survey out after each election.

In response to the survey results, Elections is making changes including: reviewing existing communications to see if they can improve explanations for challenges, updating challenge letters to more strongly emphasize the ballot tracker, adding a “receipt” to the challenge letter packet directing recipients to the ballot tracker, and reviewing challenge emails and the autoreply to ensure they emphasize the ballot tracker.

Member Kang expressed she would like to see if there is a way to get some of the information translated on the King County voter registration website so that our community organizers can “show” when there are increased concerns about the need to update voter registration forms.

Elections shared they provided high-level training on the signature verification process to voter education fund partners and have encouraged them to help voters update their signatures on file.

Staff noted that in 2021, KCE increased social media posting regarding signatures and advertising related to ballot tracking. Soon they will have interactive data visualization tools related to challenges on their website.

Staff also shared that in the next few months KCE will launch the signature update project by mailing out signature update letters to request an updated signature from all active voters in the county. They are hiring staff to do data entry and add new signatures to voter records.

Member Kang requested an in-language overview be posted on the website to help with understanding the reason why and fostering trust among those who might be hesitant. Staff noted they are working on a website refresh and will make sure everything gets translated.

Member Manus asked about VEF partner education related to updating signatures at any time. Staff answered this has been a focus of the training as well as letting partners know it is coming.

Member Sharkansky asked about analysis related to internal quality control. Staff answered that they do checks on the first few batches of the initial challenges and plan to do more random batch checks to help better understand how each staff person is doing and if additional training is needed. KCE conducts Anti-Bias Training for those reviewing the signatures.

**8. Campaign Ballot Printing Stations**

Due to time constraints, this item was deferred to a future meeting.

**9. Survey Review**

Due to time constraints, this item was deferred to a future meeting.

**10. KCC Staff Updates**

Due to time constraints, staff will send updates to members by email.

**11. New Business and/or for Good of the Order**

None.

**12. Adjournment**

Vice Chair Morris moved to adjourn the meeting. Member Kang seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned unanimously at about 1:00 p.m.