

**Citizens Election Oversight Committee  
August 9, 2017**

**MINUTES**

**Members Present:** Ellen Hansen, Marilyn Knight, Monica Tracey, Sheryl Moss, Bruce Huang, Sven Kalve, Frank Radford and Emily Willoughby

**Excused:** Kristina Swanson and Linh Thai

**Elections Staff:** Julie Wise, Nate Valderas, Kendall Levan-Hodson and Janice Case

**CEOC Staff:** Hiedi Popochock

**Special Guest:** Paul Berry

**1. Call to Order**

Chair Hansen called the meeting to order at 11:30 am.

**2. Meeting Minutes**

The minutes of June 14, 2017 were approved.

**3. Director's Report**

Director Wise provided CEOC members with materials that summarized information relating to voter turnout, ballot drop box ballot returns, ballot drop box location tiers, the mobile accessible voting center turnout for the Primary election and information pertaining to the General election.

*Primary Election*

Director Wise stated that Elections forecasted a 38 percent turnout for the Primary election. The actual turnout for the Primary election was 34 percent. She indicated that she was pleased with the turnout since the last odd-year Primary election had a turnout of 26 percent. The City of Seattle had a 41 percent turnout rate, respectively, for the Primary election. Director Wise stated that approximately 443,000 ballots were returned with nearly 52 percent returned via U.S. mail and nearly 48 percent returned by a ballot drop box. Director Wise highlighted that Elections posted election results at 8:02 p.m. utilizing the new tabulation system. She also indicated that approximately 434,000 ballots had been scanned. Some ballots have not been scanned because they were returned too late by U.S. mail – the ballots had a postmark date after Election Day. Also, some ballots have been challenged (i.e., signature) so those ballots have not been scanned.

*Ballot Drop Boxes*

Director Wise discussed the number of ballots returned by each ballot drop box location. She highlighted that 121,000 ballots were returned on Election Day. She mentioned that

the Ballard drop box continues to have the highest volume of ballots returned compared to the other drop box locations. Elections is trying to gauge where voters are coming from that utilize the Ballard drop box. Elections is exploring ways to reduce the congestion at the Ballard location by potentially adding a drop box in Blue Ridge, Greenwood or Crown Hill. Director Wise indicated that the Muckleshoot Tribe drop box had a low volume of ballots returned however, it is important to have a drop box at that location. Elections will continue to monitor the volume of ballots returned for the drop boxes.

### *Ballot Drop Box Processes*

Ms. Case described Elections' ballot drop box tier process which identifies drop box locations that require security or traffic control.

Tier One Plus – This tier is specific to Elections' headquarters due to the high volume of ballot returns, traffic issues and election activities. Ballard may be added to this category.

Tier One – This tier of locations have the highest ballot return rates (top 5 or 20) and have two or more traffic issues, including the need for traffic control or it is a drive-up location. This tier requires security at the drop box and traffic control for high volume turnout (70 percent or higher) elections and all general elections. There are 12 locations in this tier.

Tier Two – This tier of locations have two or more traffic issues and require traffic control for high volume turnout (70 percent or higher) elections. This tier requires traffic control during high volume turnout elections. These locations will not have security at the drop box. There are nine locations in this tier.

Tier Three – This tier of locations have one to two traffic issues and do not need traffic control. These locations do not require security at the drop box or traffic control. There are 22 locations in this tier.

There are 10 new drop box locations that have not been assessed to determine the traffic needs.

Chair Hansen mentioned that CEOC members were surprised that security was not present at the drop box locations for the Primary election. Director Wise recalled that she discussed security in a previous meeting. She stated that traffic control/security for the General election on Election Day in 2016 was over \$75,000 and there were no safety issues or concerns. Director Wise mentioned that it is difficult to hire security (law enforcement officers) for the ballot drop boxes due to law enforcement agencies' limited resources. Also, in non-presidential election years, voter turnout is not as high. For those reasons, Director Wise indicated that Elections is scaling back on security. She mentioned that Elections may have to hire a private security company that provides security for concerts, special events, etc. in order to have adequate security at the ballot drop boxes.

Director Wise reminded CEOC members that Elections does the “lock and leave” method for the ballot drop boxes. The lock and leave method allows Elections staff to lock the drop box then leave. The ballots in the drop box are retrieved by designated Elections staff who are responsible for picking up all the ballots in a large, clearly identifiable King County van, at a later time. She mentioned that the Washington Administrative Code allows a person(s) to lock the box and leave.

#### *Mobile Accessible Voting Pilot*

Director Wise discussed the outcome of the Mobile Accessible Voting Center pilot. There were a total of 191 ballot returns. The locations included: Elections office, Washington Talking Book and Braille Library, Kingsgate Library, Seattle Central Library, Black Diamond Library, Bellevue City Hall and Seattle Union Station. The majority of the ballots were returned at Seattle Union Station (95 ballots) and the Elections office (69 ballots).

#### *General Election*

Director Wise stated that there will be 334 offices, 137 districts, 493 candidates and 9 ballot measures on the ballot. She mentioned the key dates for the General election.

August 15 – Primary certified

August 28 – General election ballot build

September 22 – UOCAVA ballots mailed

October 9 – Deadline for mail/online voter registration and transfers

October 18 – Ballots mailed, drop boxes open

October 30 – Deadline for in-person registration

November 7 – Election Day

#### *Comments from the Secretary of State Representative*

Ms. Moss indicated that there will be no initiatives, amendments or constitutional amendments on the ballot. The state will have three advisory votes on the ballot however, there is litigation to have five advisory votes. The number of advisory votes on the ballot may change depending on the court’s decision.

#### *Petitions*

Director Wise indicated that there is an initiative on the ballot for the General election pertaining to the City of Burien and would repeal its “sanctuary city” status. She stated that Elections is processing King County’s Initiative 27 petition which would ban safe injection sites. Elections received nearly 65,000 signatures that must be verified.

#### **4. Primary Election Observation Debrief**

##### *Newcastle City Hall – Mr. Huang*

Mr. Huang indicated that the new Newcastle ballot drop box location was not in the voters’ pamphlet. Voters who utilized the box were pleased to have one in Newcastle.

##### *Elections Headquarters, Valley View Library, Burien (Town Square Park) and Tukwila Community Center – Ms. Willoughby*

Ms. Willoughby provided an overview of her observation notes from Election Day/Night and during regular work hours. She subsequently e-mailed an electronic version of her notes to CEOC members and Elections staff on August 10<sup>th</sup> (see below).

Observation notes provided by Ms. Willoughby.

Folks dropping off ballots for the (apparently) first time had problems finding out where to insert the ballot: I suggested maybe an arrow pointing to slot might help after the last observation. Apparently some assistance is needed.

Signage at Tukwila Community Center was not easy to see but folks seemed to figure out where the box was as they slowly drove around. There was not much traffic while I was there, so there were no problems with having to move over into left hand lane to drop off ballots.

**Renton Election HQ:** There were 3 new folks working this location. They seemed quite pleased to be there and the lady taking ballots was very much thanking folks for voting. There were a few problems in closing up the box: Times were correctly called but slot was covered while there was at least one car properly arrived with occupant filling out ballot, (another looking for their ballot which they could not find). Box was sealed before they were allowed to deposit ballot. It was kept separate and later added to countable ballots.

Signs which indicated this was a voting location were not taken in at box closing time. They were not taken in until next morning when I arrived to observe and noted signs still out, I reported it to the ladies in check-in and signs were removed. However this may have added to problems of folks trying to drop off ballots late and there were several of those.

Ballots were not taken in at box closing time, which was previous routine at this location. When I was inside observing the ballot return process I inquired when they would be taken in. Janice Case checked the list of box pick-ups and apparently this was when it was first noted that the box at Elections HQ was not listed for pick-up of ballots. Two folks went out (I accompanied them) to get the ballots at 9:15PM. There were a few folks still driving in to drop off ballots. (Signs were still up.)

There was no ballot box cover for this location, while it wasn't raining, if someone had driven up and been able to throw their ballot into the box (possible) it could have put the entire box of ballots into jeopardy. Also if it were raining, the ballots would have become wet.

I heard from Vicki Welch, a lady in check-in, that several folks dropping off ballots mentioned they had heard that one could drop off ballots until midnight. Also, the door to the main building was not locked to incoming traffic on election night at 8:00PM, this was reported and door was locked, but I don't know what time that occurred.

**Inside observations:** The circles to be filled in to vote are lined up on the ballot, that is the circles on the front are located the same places as those on the back, and if using

felt tip pen a vote for someone or some issue on one side of the ballot can appear as a vote on the other side of the ballot. This could result in an apparent double vote for a race, which would negate the voter's intent. It could also result in a vote where the voter intended not to vote for that issue or any candidate for the race. This has been noted and will be reported to the ballot printers so it should not occur again.

Adjudication personnel do not appear to have a set pattern for determining if they are reading from the same ballot which is displayed on the screen. I also noted one set of folks where the person who was checking the votes, ran ahead to the questioned ballot area rather than checking each vote.

The ballot reading machine makes a lot of noise; many of the adjudicators did not like the noise so the group was moved away from the machine. They were, for reasons of convenience, placed "inside", away from the glass onto the corridor where there are machines which show what is done to the ballot to anyone watching from the corridor. Therefore, anybody who was checking out the process had no way to do so. I did not see anybody checking from the corridor but there may be observers for future elections, especially major ones, and they should be allowed to see what is going on. On Monday 8/7, there was one pair of Adjudicators which were located at a window location but the rest were not.

The ballot representations on the screen may be easy to read for those who are making the corrections, but they are impossible for an observer to read. They are shown in green ink, the party (I presume that is what it is) is included in the printed info so the printing is quite small and virtually impossible for an observer to see. Therefore the ability of an observer to determine if the job is being correctly done is quite limited.

Dust from the paper ballots apparently builds up in the ballot reader, making the ballots unreadable. Don't know if this just required more cleaning of machine or better quality of paper for next election, since there will be more ballots returned.

*Redmond City Hall – Vice Chair Knight*

Ms. Knight indicated that the location of the ballot drop box makes it difficult for Elections staff to collect ballots from voters who are driving-up or on foot. Since some voters on foot or have parked have to cross the street to reach the drop box.

*Federal Way – Mr. Kalve*

Mr. Kalve mentioned that the closing process took a little more time than it did in previous years.

*Kingsgate Library (Kirkland) & Kirkland City Hall – Mr. Radford*

Mr. Radford stated that Kingsgate and Kirkland City Hall were uneventful and went well.

*University of Washington and Ballard – Ms. Tracey/Chair Hansen*

Ms. Tracey indicated that there were two large City of Seattle utility vehicles parked in front of the ballot drop box. The City of Seattle employees indicated that they were prepping the area for a project the following morning.

Ms. Case stated that she will make sure the University of Washington location is on the list for permanent parking.

At the Ballard location, Ms. Tracey indicated that the process to transfer the ballots from the bin inside the drop box to the tote can be potentially compromised. She stated further that one employee was training a new employee. Ms. Tracey suggested that Elections should have veteran employees assigned to this location.

*Greenlake – Chair Hansen*

Chair Hansen indicated that Elections staff were great. There were long lines to get to the drop box and to park. Chair Hansen suggested to block off the parking stalls at the entrance to the turnaround. She also stated that traffic control is needed at this location in the Primary and General elections.

**5. Ballot Tabulation System Process**

Mr. Berry provided an overview of the Tabulation System project oversight committee structure. He indicated that the process was inclusive and successful. He also stated that he was part of the project team. There are three components: Ballot Design, Ballot Access and the Tabulation System. Chair Hansen recognized Elections staff on the project team for their contributions to the project.

**6. Elections Performance Audit**

Ms. Popochock provided CEOC members with general information on the King County Auditor's performance audit process and its 2017-2018 work program. The work program includes a performance audit of Elections. Director Wise indicated that Elections will meet with the Auditor's Office this month to commence the process.

**7. Update on CEOC's Mission and Goals**

Chair Hansen indicated that the sub-committee has not met yet. The sub-committee will meet on Thursday, August 24<sup>th</sup> at 11:00 a.m. at Elections. The members of the sub-committee includes Mr. Radford, Ms. Knight, Ms. Tracey, Chair Hansen, Ms. Popochock, Mr. Berry, and Mr. Mike Alvine.

**8. Other Business/Good of the Order**

Chair Hansen indicated that the next CEOC meetings are on October 11<sup>th</sup> and November 15<sup>th</sup> (third Wednesday).

Director Wise stated that she will send CEOC members the legislative priorities to solicit feedback. She invited CEOC members to testify with her on different issues in Olympia.

**9. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 1:45 p.m.