



## King County

### CITIZENS' ELECTIONS OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE (CEOC)

July 20, 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, Hanna Floss, Linda Grez, Tyson Hartman, Stuart Holmes, Julie Kang, Kathy Sakahara, Stanley Tsao, and Mathew Patrick Thomas

**Absent:** Maya Manus and Nanette Sullivan

**Special Guests:** King County Councilmember Jeanne Kohl-Welles, Secretary of State Steve Hobbs, and Clara Manahan

**Elections Staff:** Elections Director Julie Wise and Kendall LeVan Hodson

**Council Staff:** Tom Goff, Mac Nicholson, Sherrie Hsu, and Tania Santiago Pastrana

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

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

#### 2. **Approve May 18, 2022 minutes**

Vice Chair Jayson Morris moved approval of the minutes of the May 18, 2022 meeting. Member Mathew Patrick Thomas seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

#### 3. **Update from Secretary of State Steve Hobbs**

Chair Vixie welcomed Washington State Secretary of State Steve Hobbs.

Secretary Hobbs shared his professional background and experience working on election issues. Governor Inslee appointed Secretary Hobbs to replace Kim Wyman. One of the reasons Governor Inslee appointed Secretary Hobbs was because of his experience with cyber security. When Secretary Hobbs first started as Secretary of State, he submitted a new budget proposal based on the new threats and discussions with the Department of Homeland Security. His budget doubled which now allows his office to support the 39 counties run their elections. He also created a division that works on disinformation and voter election education.

When Secretary Hobbs first started his tenure, there was a grass roots effort of disinformation regarding the use of Albert Sensors being tied to George Soros. Albert Sensors tracks data to where it's going and provides network security alerts in the event there are connections to suspicious IP addresses. The Department of Homeland Security advocates for all government and private agencies to use Albert Sensors. The disinformation campaign was so effective that in one county three Commissioners voted to remove Albert Sensors without first talking to constituents, the auditor or their IT staff. Secretary Hobbs had to involve the FBI and various other stakeholders to help explain to these counties how Albert Sensors work.

One of Secretary Hobbs' priorities is community outreach to get the vote out. On 4<sup>th</sup> of July, Secretary Hobbs partnered with King County Elections to have newly naturalized citizens take their oath. It reminded him of his mother's experience getting naturalized. More outreach needs to be done for immigrants eligible to vote including getting voting materials translated. This is an issue for some counties including Skagit County due to funding issues.

Secretary Hobbs recently met with Hispanic Chamber of Commerce members in Eastern Washington to discuss voter outreach. Secretary Hobbs especially wants to educate youth about civic engagement and voting so that they are fully engaged by the time they turn 18. For him, it's frustrating to hear when people state they want more transparency in voting because it's already happening. Education and outreach is key.

Secretary Hobbs also noted that Washington state uses the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC) System to make sure people don't vote at various locations.

**Member Thomas:** Can you give us any information regarding the Secretary of State Archives building update?

**Secretary Hobbs:** Archives is near and dear to my heart. We are trying to build our new library and going through permit issues. Shovel in the dirt should happen sometime next year. Our current building has flooding and mold issues. We are attempting to move out of that building as soon as possible.

**Vice Chair Morris:** Where can we find information about the ERIC system?

**Secretary Hobbs:** Stuart Holmes will email information and one pager?

**Member Holmes:** The website is [ericstates.org](http://ericstates.org)

**Vice Chair Juárez:** Can you tell us the role your office plays regarding rank choice voting?

**Secretary Hobbs:** If it happens we will fully support it. Outreach is important. I am very concerned about rank choice voting. It's hard enough to get people to vote. I'm also concerned that someone could attack the algorithms used for rank choice voting. Another concern is people like my mom who is from another country. Now they come to this county and English is not their main language and we need to explain the new system. We have to think about them. I urge us to pause and think about the effects this could have. Pierce county tried it and stopped. My son has cognitive issues. It's simple for me to explain to him to vote for one person. It'll be hard for people like my son who may struggle. I am urging all of you to take a pause and think about both the operations and education that'll have to be done. But I will support whatever counties choose.

**Vice Chair Juárez:** I think if we teach immigrants any system, they will understand. I appreciate your thoughtful response.

**Member Floss:** How are you going to combat voter intimidation?

**Secretary Hobbs:** I am working on some op eds. The legislature needs to take action. If you feel intimidated to vote in person, then vote by mail. I wish I could do more but my hands are tied.

**Member Sakahara:** Advisory votes are clogging up our ballots and they are confusing voters.

**Secretary Hobbs:** I'm going to encourage the legislature to get rid of advisory votes.

**Chair Vixie:** CEOC hasn't had an opportunity to discuss ballot printing stations. Can you comment on ballot printing stations?

**Secretary Hobbs:** Our office has received some complaints. I don't have the means to do anything about this. My personal feeling is that I don't like it when you have campaign materials so close to where you're voting. Some form of legislation is needed. My hands are tied.

#### **4. CEOC Member and Staff Introductions and Chair Election**

Chair Vixie Introduced the new members to the board, Hanna Floss (King County Democratic Party), Mathew Patrick Thomas (King County Republican Party), and Kathy Sakahara (League of Woman's Voters of Seattle-King County). Each new member was given a brief opportunity to provide to the board some brief background about themselves.

King County Council support staff to the CEOC, Tom Goff and Tania Santiago Pastrana, were introduced as well.

The Chair noted he was not seeking a new term due to increasing work obligations, he expressed appreciation to the members of the CEOC, Julie Wise (Director of King County Elections) and various County staff and noted several accomplishments of the CEOC during his time on the board.

The Chair also provided an overview of the election to replace his position. He noted that his term ends at the end of the month, that the first vice chair will assume the roles and responsibilities of the chair until the next meeting on September 21st, which at that point an election will be held to fill the position through the end of the year. The Chair Provided an overview of the process per the bylaws.

An election to fill the role for 2023 will be held in November.

#### **5. King County Council Chief of Staff Stephanie Cirkovich**

Stephanie Cirkovich has served as the King County Council Chief of Staff (COS) since April 2022. She was previously the Community Services and Planning Director at Washington State Ferries. COS Cirkovich is thrilled to be part of the Council and CEOC is at the top of her list. She has personal experience with election law, was a former board member of the Municipal League of King County, and was the President of KC League of Women Voters. In law school she wrote an article about elections and districting. The article sometimes get cited. She currently sits on the Canvassing Board.

## **6. King County Councilmember Jeanne Kohl-Welles**

Chair Vixie introduced Councilmember Kohl-Welles. She spoke to the importance of the CEOC and thanked members for their service. The Councilmember also noted the new ballot drop box in her district in the Uptown neighborhood and spoke about the general importance of drop boxes for elections.

Councilmember Kohl-Welles provided a brief overview of King Conservation District (KCD) and focused on the election processes that they use. Councilmember Kohl-Welles noted the process the Conservation Districts use have led to lower turnout and would like to increase transparency and turnout in their elections. The CM provided an overview of recent bills in Olympia regarding conservation district election in Olympia.

Conservation districts are important for our environment and to help fight climate change. Suggested the CEOC invite someone from KCD to come speak on the issue. Noted KCD members themselves are committed to election reform and their election process needs to be more understandable.

Committee Member Sakahara noted that the central issue for the KCD is the cost of the election, and this needs to be addressed. She also noted that King County did offer to put on the main ballot and not charge, but the law prohibited it.

Director Wise noted her agreement with Councilmember Kohl-Welles, that KCD elections need to be on the regular ballot. Director Wise also pointed out that legally the conservation election has to be on ballot in the first quarter, and if it were to be on the main ballot it would be around a million dollars, which is around 1/7 of their budget. Running these elections annually and in the first quarter makes it very difficult

Councilmember Kohl-Welles asked about the ratio of returned ballots during the last KCD election, how many arrived online versus via the mail.

Kendall Hodson, King County Elections Chief of Staff responded that fewer than one hundred voters returned their ballots by mail, almost all returned them online.

## **7. Director's Report**

Director Wise welcomed new members. She also thanked Chair Vixie for his leadership and service on CEOC.

Ballots were mailed out last Wednesday and voters should have received their ballots by Monday. 92.75% of ballots were delivered on Saturday. If someone did not receive their ballot yet, they should contact King County Elections at (206) 296-VOTE. When someone calls this number, a person will answer right away as there is no menu or hold. There are currently 76 ballot boxes across King County. More than 96% of voters live within 3 miles of a drop box. Each year, King County Elections adds new ballot boxes across the county. King County Elections is predicting a 45% turnout based on historical turnout data trends. Observer trainings have also been taking place. Satellite Vote Centers will open on July 31<sup>st</sup>.

King County Elections has had a busy summer doing petition verifying. With the exception of

unincorporated King County and recall petitions, they are done by local jurisdictions. Typically, there is an intake process done by a city clerk and King County Elections conducts a signature verification process. Signature verification is very time consuming because each voter's record is looked up. After the signature verification is complete, the legislative body needs to pass a resolution telling King County Elections to place it on the ballot. King County Elections has been asked to do signature verifications for four petitions this summer, two of which from the City of Seattle.

Regarding drop boxes, Director Wise recently sent CEOC members information about unauthorized ballot drop box signs in King County. As soon as Director Wise learned that signs were being posted, she immediately called Mathew Patrick Thomas. Mr. Thomas quickly told people to stop putting signs up but they didn't listen. Director Wise has heard back from the Prosecutors Office that these actions did violate federal and state laws. Elections staff have been directed to pick up all the signs. Director Wise has done various media interviews on the matter.

**Member Floss:** My understanding is that it was a grassroots group of people that were trying to prevent people from collecting multiple ballots and putting it into the drop box. There hasn't been press explaining that it's okay for someone to turn in a ballot for someone else. Maybe that needs to be advertised more.

**Director Wise:** That's a great point. I did say that in a KIRO and KING 5 interview but they didn't include that clip when the interview aired. We'll continue sharing that information, especially in writing.

**Member Floss:** Share the RCW so people can read it and understand it.

**Member Wise:** Yes! It is legally allowed in Washington to decide who gets to turn in your ballot. With 2000 Mules and the ballot surveillance issues, we want to make sure people know the accurate information.

**Chair Vixie:** CEOC does have a role to play in observation. For example, if a lightbulb goes out near a drop box or there is a drain issue, we can notify Elections.

**Vice Chair Morris:** One thing that makes chess such a beautiful game is that both players agree to the rules. When people think of government, we think of following the rules and being ethical. That's why we volunteer. Playing by the rules is important to me and a theme that I like to advocate for.

**Vice Chair Juárez:** I appreciate your comment, Mathew. I don't want that to get lost in the conversation. My question is because of the proximity of the drop boxes to legally classified sensitive sites like schools, it heightens the danger of mixed status families. Given the careless thought of violence to these families, who have family members that are eligible to vote, will you charge the person who did this?

**Director Wise:** I want the people responsible to be prosecuted because they have broken election laws. I want there to be an understanding that we aren't going to play around with this in King County. No intimidating or compromising our voters in anyway. I am hopeful that

with the Executive, Sherriff and Prosecutor's Office we have people who recognize how important this is. I want them to be held accountable. I will leave it in their hands and respect their decision.

**Member Sakahara:** Can I quote you?

**Kendall LeVan Hodson:** Yes

**Director Wise:** I appreciate Mathew Patrick Thomas for his leadership. This is about an individual going rogue. Mathew had courage and fabulous leadership on this.

## **8. Special Purpose District Election Process**

Will address at a later meeting.

## **9. New Member Recruitment Update**

CEOC is recruiting for five vacancies including: one registered King County voter, one representative from an academic institution who has knowledge of elections, one representative from the Vietnamese speaking community, one representative from a nonpartisan organization active in King County that evaluates candidates and ballot measures, such as the Municipal League, and one representative from a nonpartisan organization in King County that promotes equality and the advancement of blacks or African Americans, such as the Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle. The Municipal League and the Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle have both confirmed that they will be nominating representatives.

Advertisements to promote the vacancies were placed in the Seattle Times, Seattle Medium, and the NW Asian Weekly. In addition, Council District Offices were given a graphic and application details to share with constituents. Staff also connected with the Vietnamese Bar Association to promote the vacancies.

The application deadline is July 29, 2022. Applicants are expected to be interviewed at the August 23<sup>rd</sup> Employment and Administration Committee. If motions pass out of committee, they will be tentatively placed on the September 6<sup>th</sup> Council meeting. CEOC members are encouraged to share the application information with their networks. Details can be found on the main page of the CEOC website.

**Hanna Floss:** Have you reached out to the University of Washington (UW)? Should I reach out to my contacts at UW?

**Staffer Santiago Pastrana:** We encourage all board members to share the information with their networks. We reached out to professors from universities and colleges across King County. We specifically emailed professors we thought maybe interested in serving on CEOC based on their research interest or classes they teach.

**Municipal Relations Director Goff:** As Chair Vixie mentioned earlier, today is his last CEOC meeting as a committee member. On behalf of the County Council, I would like to take a moment to express our thanks and gratitude for Chair Vixie's service on the CEOC. Serving as Chair for a volunteer board is not easy and takes a lot of time and commitment,

but this role is vital to maintaining public confidence in elections. Thank you, Kyle, for your leadership on the CEOC.

#### **10. KCC Staff Update**

N/A

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

**Member Thomas:** Question what does the CEOC do, makes changes, advise the process...?

**Chair Vixie:** We advise, provide oversight, communicate issues and concerns to the council, if you have questions follow up with me after the meeting.

**Vice Chair Juárez:** We are going to look at rank choice voting and will have a conversation about representation on the board, specifically about the partisan seats, and plans to have a discussion about the work plan for the body itself, these are all pieces that will get presented to council at some point in time.

**Chair Vixie:** There is an annual report as well and a presentation to the county council.

#### **12. Adjournment**

Vice Chair Morris moved to adjourn the meeting. Member Grez seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned unanimously at about 1:01 pm.