**San Francisco Elections Commission**

**Special Meeting**

**May 27, 2020**

**In attendance:** Lucy Bernholz, Chris Jerdonek, Charles Jung, Viva Mogi, Jill Rowe

Roger Donaldson joined late

**Deputy City Attorney** Jenica Maldonado

**Director** John Arntz

**Minutes by** Lucy Bernholz

**The meeting took place remotely:** https://ccsanfran.webex.com/ccsanfran/onstage/g.php?MTID=e7fb722081f7d6bc9785a59b4978c95f7.

1. **Call to Order and Roll Call**

President Mogi called the Meeting to order at 3:02 pm.

Commissioner Donaldson joined late, excused absence.

1. **General Public Comment**

Natalie Zohuri called in. Thanks for allowing me to join. Great job on getting it up and running.

1. **Planning for November 2020 Election in Light of Covic-19 Health Emergency**

Director Arntz – waiting for Governor to set second executive order which will describe in-person voting requirements. Order is expected by Saturday May 30. Legislature may step in.

Department is moving operations to Bill Graham Auditorium (BGA). Also examining in-office operations so staff can social distance. People and equipment will move to Bill Graham Auditorium. Ballots will arrive at City Hall for signature verification. Are laying out pathways and spacing at the auditorium; PPE for managers and employees; Figuring out if/how to have SF City Hall voting center. Will also need to design polling places appropriately for workers, voters. Involves managing lines of voters. Planning for voting centers is on hold till executive order (SF State will be closed in the Fall)

Public comment: Britta Gustafson – happy to hear there will be some form of in-person voting. She’s a poll worker.

Commissioner Jerdonek asked about the Board of Supervisors potential actions. How might this interact with Governor’s Order. Also, does Director Arntz have a sense of what the Board is thinking?

Director Arntz: Governor’s Order will set requirements for in person. BOS might increase the requirements.

Commissioner Jung: Director’s report reflects an extraordinary amount of planning. Thank the Director for leading the effort. Encourages the public to take a look at the report. Also notes City’s deficit and departmental reduction – recognizes how difficult this will be in light of additional demands on the 20-21 budget and the appropriations for open source systems.

Director Arntz: Costs have already increased by about 1.7 million. Costs for November likely also to rise. His concerns are for January – there’s no scheduled election which might make department ripe for proposed cuts. Open source funds most likely to be used for the costs of this election – they’ll be applied to rent at BGA and for outreach.

Commissioner Jerdonek: Has there been thought about consolidating off year election (2023) with 2024? How much would it save? Would it be charter amendment issue?

Director Arntz: No, there’s been no such planning yet. It might save 5-7 million for each such consolidation.

Deputy City Attorney Maldonado: Thinks it’s a charter issue. Will report back next month.

President Mogi: Thank you Director Arntz. Amazing amount of thought and work. Question about polling place – any idea of number of polling places? Please clarify role of BGA – that’s where ballots will be processed and/or as replacement for SF City Hall voting center?

Director Arntz: Everyday it looks different. Right now Dept is planning have full complement of polling places as would normally occur. There’s been no guidance to have fewer polling places. Ballot processing will move to BGA; voting will still take place at City Hall with appropriate protection for voters in line.

Commissioner Jung: Please remind us as a commission – what can be achieved locally to reduce polling place numbers? Is this local or state decision. Trying to understand what decision making can be done locally, not to step outside state rules but to account for city’s budget issues and anything learned locally about planned use of polling places, voting centers, and Vote By Mail. Has the city sent any opinions or advice to the Governor.

DCA Maldonado: City/County has a lot of control over number of polling place (as a charter city). We would need to analyze any decisions in regard to Governor’s order. The Voters Choice Act applies, which might allow the reduction of polling places by using voting centers, although these are designed to attract more people to a single location.

Director Arntz: All counties have been providing input to Secretary of State who then provides that input to the Governor. So much information – he’s waiting for Governor’s order expected on Saturday.

DCA Maldonado: clarifying Commissioner Jerdonek hypothetical – consolidating an off year election (2023) to a general election would require a charter amendment.

1. **Commissioners’ Reports**

Commissioner Jerdonek: TAC met in March just before Shelter in Place. Open Source Election System met with the TAC for about 1.5 hours (the organization that indicated they could create OS System). Also contacted Directors Arntz and Gerrull but that happened during shelter in place. Have not heard anything. That meeting is posted on YouTube. TAC’s members terms end next month. Need to take action to renew these.

President Mogi: followed up with San Francisco Foundation, meeting with them and Director Arntz in pursuit of matching funds for outreach to communities with typical low turnout. Department needs to submit a new budget to City in June or July. President Mogi is in favor or ramping up outreach and addressing potential community concerns. Vote by mail may not still turn out everyone who qualifies. She hopes that outreach will continue. She will report back after the meeting.

Public Comments: None.

1. **Director’s Report**

Director Arntz: Covered many of the items in questions up above. New budget deadline is in August. There is $250,000 in budget for grant money for outreach. Will use same selection process for nonprofit selection. They have to start now or won’t be able to select and train partners in time.

Adding 3 facsimile ballots for this election – refers to languages not already covered (Burmese, Thai, Japanese)

Vote by mail ballots already designed and do make it clear that these additional languages are available.

Ballots are already designed, currently at post office getting approval. Vendors are already on alert regarding number of ballot cards, envelopes, and processing expectations. POs and contracts in order.

Commissioner Jerdonek: Concerned about possibility of reduction in staff and its effects on voters. When was the last time we eliminated an off year election. And who led efforts to consolidate?

Director Arntz: 2013 or 2015. Doesn’t remember who led the effort to consolidate. Needs to check the regulations on what percentage turnout threshold enables consolidation. Typically SF surpasses the threshold and so holds off-year election.

Commissioner Jerdonek: Would department consider proposing consolidation as a way to prevent cuts in staffing or department budgets?

Director Arntz: Budget cuts not expected prior to the November 2020 election. Concern is afterwards. Offering savings for out years may not make sense to city which needs revenue now.

President Mogi: When cuts happened in previous years were employees able to be re-allocated, furloughed, or cut? Would like to avoid layoffs or having people work through the election and then lose their jobs.

For scenario of outreach – if there is an opportunity to increase funding amount does Department need to issue a new RFP or can additional funds be allocated within existing process.

Director Arntz: Hasn’t happened since 2008 or 2010. Some people lost their jobs. There is a process called ‘bumping” which moves employees across departments based on seniority. He thinks additional funds could fit into the existing process.

Commissioner Bernholz: What did you learn from survey of polling place owners

Director Arntz: Survey were sent to 588 sites, about 350-380 responded, most said they were still interested, about 25% said their space was dependent on Covid-19. Some said no. There’s always turnover, it might be higher and they’re planning for that. He’s concerned about second Covid-19 surge in November which would lead poll workers and polling hosts to pull out and voters to stay away.

Commissioner Jerdonek: What measures are you taking today? Are employees coming in?

Director Arntz: Can’t comment on anyone’s health. As time has moved on more people are coming in, today there were four people. Most has been about 8-10 per day. Usually 2-3 people in office. People whose job doesn’t allow for telecommuting are on paid furlough.

Public comment: None.

1. **Public Employee Appointment/Hiring: Class 1450 – Elections Commission Secretary**

The posting is open and up until June 5, 2020.

DCA Maldonado: Dept of Human Resources liaison Michael Cerles presented to commission

some months ago. The prior classification for the job was in an antiquated position. To

rectify this, Mr. Cerles requested DHR about reclassification. Commission President

authorized this and he obtained tentative approval to do this. It is not officially changed

until the budget is approved. The hiring freeze did not affect the posting of the position.

President Mogi encouraged all to share the posting.

Commissioner Jerdonek: Would this change position’s ability to start out working remote?

President Mogi: Yes, this can be a remote position for now and can continue as such.

Public Comment: None.

1. **Agenda items for future meetings**

* TAC reappointments
* Move back to regular schedule (3rd Wednesday of the month; time TBD depending on remote status)
* Budget to be submitted in July; full commission can hear it, no BOPEC needed.
* Planning for November election continued

Public Comment: None

Meeting adjourned 4:00 p.m.