

ELECTIONS COMMISSION
City and County of San Francisco

Christopher Jerdonek, President
Jill Rowe, Vice President
Charles Jung
Richard P. Matthews
Rosabella Safont
Winnie Yu



John Arntz, Director of Elections

MEETING MINUTES

San Francisco Elections Commission
Wednesday, February 18, 2015
6:00 p.m.
City Hall, Room 408
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, California 94102

1. Call to Order & Roll Call

President Jerdonek called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. Present: Commissioners Jerdonek, Jung, Rowe, and Safont. Commissioner Yu arrived at 6:05 p.m. during item 4. Excused absence: Commissioner Matthews. The Board of Education seat is currently vacant. Also present: Director of Elections John Arntz and Deputy City Attorney Joshua White.

2. General Public Comment

None.

3. Approval of Minutes for previous meeting

Moved by Commissioner Safont and seconded by Commissioner Jung to approve the draft minutes of the January 21, 2015 Elections Commission Meeting. No public comment. The vote was UNANIMOUS to approve.

4. Commissioners' Reports

President Jerdonek named Commissioner Rowe as Chair of the Budget and Oversight of Public Elections Committee and thanked her for her willingness to serve.

President Jerdonek reported on the hiring process for the Commission Secretary. The Department of Human Resources is screening resumes for minimum qualifications. They are expected to finish in the next week or so. President Jerdonek stated that he plans to follow a process similar to the process used last Spring. He will work with one or two other Commissioners to conduct brief interviews with some of the candidates to decide on finalists. The Commission will then interview the finalists as a group,

probably during a Special Meeting. President Jerdonek reported that in the meantime he will continue to take care of the secretarial responsibilities.

President Jerdonek reported that he has not yet received from Commissioner Matthews the correspondence and information about past legislation initiatives.

President Jerdonek reported on the Commission vacancy to be filled by the Board of Education. The Rules Committee of the Board of Education is interviewing applicants at their meeting this evening and is expected to recommend a candidate to the full Board. The Board may make their appointment at their meeting next week.

President Jerdonek reported that he will be attending the second day of a 2-day conference in Sacramento tomorrow that is organized by the Future of California Elections (FOCE), a group that is working on improving California's elections system.

President Jerdonek described a grant opportunity he learned about called the Knight News Challenge to “better inform voters and increase civic participation before, during and after elections” (<https://www.newschallenge.org/>). The Knight Foundation is awarding a total of \$3 million over many possible winners. The contest is open to anyone including election officials and governments. He referenced a one-page document that he circulated to the Commission.

5. Director's Report

Admin Division: The City has asked each Department to set up an archive process. Information that the Department maintains will be listed on a web site maintained by the General Services Agency (GSA). The Department has started creating the index.

The Department finished hiring an 1822 classification in the Precinct Services Division. The Department is in the process of filling nine more positions spread over five divisions. Half of these positions have a language requirement.

The audit by the Controller's Office will begin on March 3. This is a normal annual review to ensure that the Department is following standard accounting procedures.

Director Arntz visited Pier 70 last week as a possible new Warehouse location. It will probably be too expensive. Director Arntz stated that it is likely that vehicle operations will need to be in a location separate from other Warehouse operations if the Warehouse remains in San Francisco.

Ballot Distribution: The Department is in communication with nearby counties to learn about their canvass procedures and the delivery of polling place equipment. Alameda and Contra Costa counties are having an election on March 17. Department employees will observe their processes during that election.

Campaign Services: The Department is in communication with the Ethics Commission to see if that Commission might be able handle the two forms of campaign filings that the Department has traditionally been responsible for out of the six possible types. This way filers would not have to deal with two different Departments, which can be confusing for some.

Campaign Services is also looking into putting more information (e.g. information about local measures) into the Department's election management system (EMS), which is called DFM's Election Information Management System (EIMS). This would let the Department export that information into an open data format like XML for posting on the Department web site. They are also looking into posting scanned copies of the paperwork associated with local initiatives alongside that open data.

Outreach: The Outreach Division is preparing information to provide outreach to people about the addition of Filipino as a fourth language. The Department will provide ballots, services, and materials in Filipino.

The Division has learned that voters often prefer smaller, pocket-sized materials; so the Division is starting to develop more pocket-sized materials. The Division is reviewing its materials not just for Filipino, but for all languages.

The group is working with SFGovTV on the station's third installment of its nine-part documentary series on San Francisco elections. The first part was on the Ballot Simplification Committee.¹ The second part on polling places and poll workers was filmed a couple weeks ago and has not aired yet. The third segment will be on voter registration.

The Department sent materials to the Smithsonian on providing language assistance to voters because the Smithsonian is doing an exhibit for the 50th anniversary of the Voting Rights Act. The Department is also doing an historic elections exhibit in its front office in conjunction with the 100th anniversary of San Francisco City Hall. Also, March 18, 2015 is the 137th anniversary of the Department of Elections. The Outreach Division will have a celebration as part of that.

Pollworker Division: The Division is working on improving its instructional materials and videos, for example around the new voter kiosks and opening and closing procedures. The Division will also be consolidating the positions of District Leads (which worked with the Precinct Services Division) and Field Election Deputies (which were organized by the Pollworker Division), so that there will no longer be a separate District Lead position.

The Division had one of its regular Voting Accessibility Advisory Committee (VAAC) meetings. One topic that came up was the desire for the Department to provide more information about the availability of accessible voting machines, which are touch

¹ The SFGovTV series is called "Election Connection." Here is a video link to Part 1 on the Ballot Simplification Committee: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O0eBt83XFGE> .

screens. This presents a challenge because the Commission has a policy to promote the paper-based system. Director Arntz also explained that in the past the Department sometimes placed accessible Porta Potties on the sidewalk. The Department was cited for this, so the Department now needs to place those Porta Potties on the street and get permits for that before doing so.

Precinct Services: The Department will be consolidating precincts for the November 2015 Election because it is a municipal election, which they have always done. They will reduce the number of polling places by about 191. They will use the list of polling places from November 2013 as a starting point. They are also experimenting with a “pop-up” system of delivering polling-place equipment (in analogy with pop-up restaurants) since Warehouse space may be limited in the future. They are also looking into using tablets during equipment delivery for access to real-time information.

Publications: They are reviewing materials and forms in preparation for translation to Filipino.

Technology Division: The Technology group redesigned the web site, and the changes are now live. They are still interested in feedback from the public to simplify the organization of the site, reduce the number of clicks to reach information, make link text more closely match the information on the corresponding page, etc. They started hosting CSS and JavaScript files on a Content Delivery Network (CDN) to reduce the load on Department web servers. They are continuing to work on the ballot-tracking program, including reviewing why three to five thousand ballots weren't tracked correctly. The time-sheet application will probably launch in April, which was a later launch than originally anticipated.

Voter Services Division: The Division is doing planning projections not just for November 2015, but also for June and November 2016. The Division started staffing the Filipino language phone line. The phone number is (415) 554-4310.

Commissioner Jung asked if there are additional steps that can be taken to address the web server issues that happened on Election Night, since those issues drew such an emotional response. Director Arntz replied that they have already made significant changes, including adding memory to the servers and using a CDN to host some of the files. Commissioner Jung asked who is leading the web site redesign. Director Arntz replied that the IT Manager is leading it.

President Jerdonek asked about the GSA index. Director Arntz responded that it was an index of publicly available records that would also indicate how long each type of record would be kept. President Jerdonek asked if the Department has done more work on designing what the bilingual ballots would look like, as opposed to trilingual. Director Arntz replied that they have already done that exercise. The Department previously asked their translation vendor to mock up bilingual ballots, which they are going with. English-Chinese will be the default ballot unless voters request Spanish or Filipino.

Commissioner Jerdonek asked if the bilingual ballot is a lot simpler and cleaner, and Director Arntz replied that it was.

Regarding the concerns of a possible conflict between the Commission policy to favor paper ballots and the desire for accessible touch screens to be publicized more, President Jerdonek asked Director Arntz if he had looked into including both requirements in the RFI or RFP. President Jerdonek noted that some new systems simultaneously meet both requirements, with accessible ballot-marking devices that print onto a paper ballot. Director Arntz replied that the RFP for the last system did include both requirements of accessibility and paper ballot; and Sequoia, for example, responded with two solutions: an optical scanner for the paper ballots and a touch screen for accessibility.

President Jerdonek asked where the software for the polling-place delivery information system would come from. Director Arntz replied that Fresno has already developed an application or program for this, and the Department would need to buy it. President Jerdonek asked why only the CSS and JavaScript files were going to be hosted on a CDN as opposed to all of the files (e.g. HTML files). Director Arntz said he didn't have an answer at the moment.

Commissioner Jung asked when the result of the Controller's audit would be known. Director Arntz didn't know but estimated a month after its completion.

No public comment.

6. Review of Department's proposed budgets

Director Arntz reported that since the BOPEC meeting, the \$2.5 million for the future Warehouse was moved to a "continuing project" category, so this amount is no longer reflected in the annual budget total. He reported that the Department is still in communication with the Sheriff's Office to finalize the amount for the work order with the Sheriff's Office. The Department is also in communication with Human Resources for guidance in finalizing the amount to budget for health care for temporary workers as a consequence of the Affordable Care Act.

President Jerdonek reported on BOPEC's discussion of this item at its February 4, 2015 meeting. BOPEC voted unanimously to forward the budget to the full Commission with a recommendation to approve. President Jerdonek also summarized the additional documents that Director Arntz provided in response to the BOPEC discussion.

Commissioner Jung asked for clarification regarding the exclusion of the \$2.5 million amount for the future Warehouse from the annual budget total. Director Arntz replied that the change reduces the fiscal year request to \$19 million but that the money is still available for the Warehouse move.

Commissioner Rowe invited Mr. Anthony Ababon to speak, who is from the Mayor's Budget Office. Mr. Ababon introduced himself and explained that the \$2.5 million for the Warehouse move is already appropriated and so does not need to be appropriated again.

Moved by Commissioner Rowe and seconded by Commissioner Safont to approve the Department's proposed budgets. No public comment. The vote was UNANIMOUS to approve.

7. Ranked Choice Voting Education Materials

President Jerdonek stated that he put this item on the agenda item because the Department is working on improving its voter education materials and because elected officials and the media often emphasize the importance of ranked-choice voting (RCV) education.

President Jerdonek stated that his interest was in ensuring that voter education materials provide voters with enough information to use their RCV rankings effectively. He raised the example that if voters incorrectly think RCV is a "points-based" system (e.g. three points for first choice, two points for second choice, one point for third choice), then they may be led to withhold their second and third choices so as not to hurt their first choice. He summarized a memo on this topic that he included in the agenda packet, which includes sample wording that addresses this concern, as well as a sample RCV brochure from Minneapolis, MN.

Commissioner Rowe asked Deputy City Attorney White to clarify what types of actions the Commission has the authority to take on this issue, if any. Deputy City Attorney White replied that the general principle in the Charter is that the Commission has the authority to vote on policies, which the Director is responsible for carrying out. For example, the Commission could certainly adopt a policy directing the Department to work on improving ranked-choice voting education. However, a policy dictating that specific words be used in outreach would probably encroach on "day-to-day" affairs.

President Jerdonek stated that even though the item was phrased for "discussion and possible action," he was not planning to pursue a motion.

Commissioner Jung asked President Jerdonek if he could translate the memo into possible policies for the Commission to consider. President Jerdonek replied that he hadn't tried thinking through a policy to address this issue but for now was more interested in providing the information. President Jerdonek said that if he had to come up with a policy, it could be along the lines of saying that "materials should inform voters of what the rankings mean."

President Jerdonek asked Director Arntz if he had any thoughts on this item. Director Arntz replied that he had already shared the materials with the Outreach group and that the group had already incorporated some of the language from the Minneapolis RCV

brochure into one of their handouts. The group is open to including information they find is better. Director Arntz remarked that the Department did try the “As Easy As 1-2-3” language when RCV was first introduced, but the language did not go over well. Commissioner Jerdonek replied that he didn't think “As Easy As 1-2-3” conveyed the information that was important, but rather the sentences in the Minneapolis brochure like, “Your ballot will count for your 2nd choice only if your 1st choice loses.”

No public comment.

8. President's Annual Report

President Jerdonek stated that he hadn't yet received a draft report. No public comment.

9. Guidelines for Performance Evaluation of Director of Elections

Commissioner Rowe stated that she was asked at the last meeting to work with Deputy City Attorney White to draft a proposed process for the Commission to conduct the annual Performance Evaluation of the Director of Elections. The document would be public and allow the evaluation process to be consistent from year to year.

Commissioner Rowe thanked Deputy City Attorney White for his help. Commissioner Rowe stated that she had asked for Director Arntz's feedback during the drafting process. Commissioner Rowe explained that the proposed process includes inviting employees before the Commission to speak and answer questions, having the Director write a self-evaluation, having Commissioners write individual evaluations, and then compiling a collective written evaluation from the Commission.

Commissioner Rowe asked Director Arntz if he had any further thoughts. Director Arntz replied that he would rather the Commission decide on its own which employees to interview instead of choosing together with him. Deputy City Attorney White clarified that Commission members could still seek information from the Director about the roles of employees without it being explicitly stated in the guidelines.

The Commission discussed amendments to the proposed wording. Commissioner Jung proposed removing the words “the Director and” from the second sentence of paragraph (a) on Page 1. Commissioner Jerdonek proposed removing the words “and the Director” from the first sentence of paragraph (b) on Page 1. Commissioner Rowe proposed changing “him” in paragraph (c) on Page 1 to “him or her.” Commissioner Jerdonek noted a typo in the word “identity” in the last sentence of paragraph (a). Commissioner Jerdonek proposed removing “Commissioner” after “Submitted by” at the top of Exhibit A, since the Director would also be filling out this form.

Moved by Commissioner Jung and seconded by Commissioner Safont to adopt the proposed Guidelines for Evaluation of Director of Elections with the modifications as discussed. No public comment. The vote was UNANIMOUS to approve.

Moved by Commissioner Jung and seconded by Commissioner Safont to follow the Guidelines as adopted for this year's Evaluation of the Director. The vote was UNANIMOUS to approve.

President Jerdonek stated that he would start the Evaluation process by following the adopted Guidelines.

10. Discussion and possible action regarding items for future agendas

No discussion. No public comment.

Adjourned at 7:44 p.m.