

January 10, 2022

**ELECTION CODE COMMITTEE MEETING**

**12:00 PM**

COUNCILMEMBERS PRESENT: Pignataro, Canonico, Ohlson  
STAFF PRESENT: Kyle Stannert, Rita Knoll, Ryan Malarky, Tammi Pusheck, Carrie Daggett  
CITIZENS PRESENT: Robbie Moreland, Joe Rowan, William Russell, Connor Duffy, Kathleen Schmidt,  
Andrea Samson, Tom Henry Regan, Jody Deschanes

**1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

**2. ROLL CALL**

**3. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Robbie Moreland supported placing ranked choice voting on the ballot. She requested the Committee consider closing the loophole that allowed a group to raise money for several large independent expenditures during last April's election without disclosing their donors.

Joe Rowan encouraged the Committee to make a concerted effort to bring in alternative points of view during its discussions and stated much of the material being presented regarding ranked choice voting, campaign finance, and elections in general, is largely information that has been aggregated by influences outside Fort Collins and Colorado. He encouraged the Committee to apply strong governance principles to the entire discussion.

William Russell encouraged beginning joint elections with Larimer County in order to help increase voter turnout.

Connor Duffy warned of down ballot roll-off that could occur with more candidates being on the ballot during even year elections.

Kathleen Schmidt, League of Women Voters of Larimer County Election Reform Team Chair, supported ranked choice voting. She stated this is a local, grassroots effort to place the topic on the November 2022 ballot.

Andrea Samson discussed Loveland's positive experience with coordinated off-year elections and stated she believes it does increase voter turnout and has decreased costs for the City.

Tom Henry Regan, DSA Fort Collins, supported ranked choice voting and discussed his experience with it in Maine.

Jody Deschanes reiterated Ms. Moreland's and Ms. Schmidt's comments and expressed support for placing ranked choice voting on the ballot.

**4. PUBLIC COMMENT FOLLOW-UP**

Councilmember Pignataro thanked the speakers and stated Council as a whole will have robust conversations about all the topics.

**5. CONSIDERATION AND APPROVAL OF THE NOVEMBER 15, 2021 COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

Councilmember Ohlson made a motion, seconded by Councilmember Pignataro, to adopt and approve the meeting minutes of November 15, 2021. The motion was adopted unanimously.

## **6. REDISTRICTING UPDATE**

Deputy City Manager Stannert noted conversations about the timing and resourcing of redistricting work have been ongoing and the Clerk's Office has been working with the GIS and IT departments to have the work done by the end of April.

City Attorney Daggett stated current Code language aggressively requires redistricting on a frequent basis, which is somewhat problematic in terms of moving residents in between districts; therefore, Council has been specifically acting to suspend the redistricting requirement in certain situations. She stated the prior Committee supported changing the Code to make the normal practice involve redistricting only after new Census data is received every ten years.

Councilmember Pignataro encouraged using very explicit language regarding the times during which redistricting occurs.

Councilmember Ohlson stated he does not yet support redistricting only every ten years and discussed the importance of not redistricting a Councilmember out of their district. He discussed the change to base districts on population versus voters. He requested staff provide the current general guidelines for redistricting and noted large developments or annexations could occur in parts of town that could throw off district numbers within a ten year timeframe.

Chief Deputy City Clerk Knoll noted redistricting used to occur before every municipal election when the districts were based on voter registration numbers. When the switch was made to base it on population, redistricting was changed to be every ten years based on Census data. The current Code criteria allows for redistricting to be considered any time a change to the map is being made based on another factor such as changing County precinct boundaries. She stated building permit data has been used for population estimates in the off years; however, that has caused some difficulty.

City Attorney Daggett stated extrapolating population change can be done in a number of ways and some questions arose about how to establish a reliable, consistent way to do that based on real data and not assumptions. She suggested placing a more detailed discussion of the topic on a future agenda.

Councilmember Ohlson stated the goal of redistricting is not perfection in terms of getting the numbers exactly even between districts.

## **7. SCOPE OF MARCH 8, 2022 WORK SESSION DISCUSSION AND DIRECTION FOR STAFF**

Deputy City Manager Stannert stated there will likely be two main items of focus for the work session discussion, one being the discussion of November coordinated elections in even years, and the other being ranked choice voting. He requested the Committee provide any additional direction for staff.

Councilmember Ohlson thanked staff for their responsiveness and the timeline. He stated it may be beneficial for the Committee to have one extra month beyond the proposed March 8<sup>th</sup> date in order to formulate recommendations for the full Council.

Councilmember Pignataro suggested staff bring forth some flowcharts to determine what would occur if these items were both on the November ballot and depending on whether both or one pass.

Chair Canonico stated she would also like to see coordinated odd year elections be discussed at the work session as well.

Councilmember Pignataro stated she would prefer coordinated odd year elections.

Councilmember Ohlson expressed support for coordinated even year elections, and stated staff has been focused on that as well based on Committee direction, but stated he would be open to considering odd years depending on what the overall election and campaign finance reform package includes.

Deputy City Manager Stannert stated it seems the most important thing staff can focus on providing information for relates to process trade-offs and implications rather than strict education.

Councilmember Ohlson stated another focus of the Committee is related to disclosure of campaign contributions.

Councilmember Pignataro expressed concern about making too many changes at once and about not applying a scientific method to making the changes. She stated she would like to be able to tie results to specific actions.

Councilmember Ohlson stated the Committee and Council should focus on the changes that need to be made electorally that are good for the community. He commented on the strong ability of voters to make discerning decisions about each ballot issue.

Councilmember Pignataro encouraged the Committee to bring forth any proposed Charter changes to Council as early as possible. Councilmember Ohlson concurred.

City Attorney Daggett asked if there is a consensus to look for a later work session date.

Councilmember Ohlson suggested postponing the work session one month to allow the Committee one additional meeting to formulate recommendations.

Councilmember Pignataro stated that may be fine for candidates given redistricting will not be complete until April.

Deputy City Manager Stannert stated he believes an April work session will also allow expedient efficient work to continue.

Members discussed the possibility of utilizing the fifth Tuesday in March for a meeting date and staff agreed to follow up on a proposed schedule. Members agreed this topic could be postponed from the March 8<sup>th</sup> work session.

## **8. PROPOSED TIMELINE**

## **9. FUTURE ELECTION CODE COMMITTEE DATES WITH SCHEDULING CONFLICTS**

## **10. OTHER BUSINESS**

## **11. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned by unanimous consent at 1:03 PM.

## **MINUTES APPROVED FEBRUARY 28, 2022**