

**August 27, 2021**

**ELECTION CODE COMMITTEE MEETING**

**3:00 PM**

COUNCILMEMBERS PRESENT: Arndt, Canonico, Ohlson  
STAFF PRESENT: Carrie Daggett, Kyle Stannert, Ryan Malarkey, Tammi Pusheck, Aimee Jensen  
CITIZENS PRESENT: None

**1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

**2. SELECT COMMITTEE CHAIR/VICE CHAIR**

Councilmember Ohlson made a motion, seconded by Mayor Arndt, to elect Councilmember Canonico as Chair. Yeas: Arndt, Ohlson, Canonico. Nays: none.

THE MOTION CARRIED.

Councilmember Ohlson made a motion, seconded by Councilmember Canonico, to elect Mayor Arndt as Vice Chair. Yeas: Arndt, Ohlson, Canonico. Nays: none.

THE MOTION CARRIED.

**3. DISCUSSION AND DECISION OF MEETING FREQUENCY**

Vice Chair Arndt asked how frequently the Committee met in the past. City Attorney Daggett replied the meetings were monthly when the Committee was actively working; however, there was a break during the period before the election. She stated resulting Code changes went before Council in August and September of 2020 so those were in effect well before campaigning began and the election occurred.

Councilmember Ohlson suggested meeting monthly to start and stated changes should happen earlier to ensure the rules are clear and packets are ready for candidates farther in advance of the election.

City Attorney Daggett noted upcoming redistricting will have a relationship to the election calendar.

Councilmember Ohlson asked why ranked voting was not listed under agenda item number 6. Interim City Clerk Pusheck replied it was not on the Council priorities list. Councilmember Ohlson stated he would like the topic added to the agenda today.

Members agreed to meet once a month by unanimous consent.

City Attorney Daggett stated staff would work on getting a schedule in place.

**4. DISCUSSION OF MEETING FORMAT INCLUDING PUBLIC COMMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

Councilmember Ohlson suggested public comment should be limited given the working nature of the Committee and open meeting. Vice Chair Arndt agreed and noted all decisions would be made at the full Council level and written public comment is always welcome. She supported one public comment section on all agenda items at the beginning of each meeting and suggested limiting the time to 30 minutes total, at five minutes maximum per person.

Councilmember Ohlson concurred with that suggestion.

City Attorney Daggett noted the Zoom meeting is currently set to have a chat happening and that may need to be managed going forward. Members agreed they were not interested in seeing the chat.

## 5. PUBLIC COMMENT

Jeff Pace discussed ranked choice voting noting that while there are some positives, including the formation of a consensus candidate, there are also some negatives, including complicated voting that may lead to vote exhaustion. He stated all candidates must be ranked to keep an individual from losing his or her franchise. He also expressed concern ranked voting favors white, well-educated voters over minorities and older voters and commented on cities that have recently done away with ranked choice voting.

Kathleen Schmidt, League of Women Voters, commented on plurality voting and stated preferences cannot be clearly expressed when citizens can only vote for one candidate. She stated the League of Women Voters prefers and ranked choice voting to plurality voting to help ensure each person's vote counts equally and the winner wins with most support.

Robbie Moreland encouraged the Committee to recommend adoption of a proposed resolution declaring Council's support for referring a ranked choice voting ballot measure to the November 2022 ballot. She also encouraged capping election spending and suggested the Committee consider a form of public election funding for which she provided a draft ordinance.

Eric Fried supported placing ranked choice voting on the ballot.

Emily Gallishote expressed support for placing ranked choice voting on the ballot.

Jody Deschanes expressed support for placing ranked choice voting on the ballot. She stated Aspen repealed ranked choice voting as it was improperly implemented. She also requested an update on the redistricting process and timeline and expressed support for moving municipal elections to coordinated Larimer County November elections.

Marge Norskog discussed research she has done regarding the number of ballots cast, the number of registered voters, and the number of candidates for recent municipal elections. She stated the City Clerk's Office should be commended for its handling of the increased number of ballots and coaching of the increased number of candidates; however, she stated leaving election rule monitoring and updating to a part time Council Committee and citizen activists feels inadequate. She expressed support for moving municipal elections to November in a coordinated fashion with Larimer County and expressed support for ranked choice voting. She also suggested the formation of a Board or Commission dedicated to election oversight.

## 6. DISCUSS AND DIRECT STAFF REGARDING POSSIBLE TOPICS FOR COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION

- a. **Preliminary discussion regarding process and schedule for evaluating whether to move the regular municipal election from April to a coordinated Larimer County November election**
- b. **Redistricting**
- c. **Review of Campaign Finance requirements and process**

Vice Chair Arndt stated the Council priority around this was to discuss this possibility and she suggested moving the elections to November of even years.

Councilmember Ohlson noted voters will have the final say on the topic. City Attorney Daggett clarified an ordinance proposing a Charter amendment would need to go before voters.

Vice Chair Arndt expressed support for coordinated elections with Larimer County. City Attorney Daggett noted that is a requirement for any November election.

City Attorney Daggett suggested staff may want to build topics into upcoming agendas based on details and anticipated timing.

Councilmember Ohlson stated he would like to have ranked choice voting discussed.

Chair Canonico stated she would like other innovative items being considered at the state level to also be discussed.

Members agreed redistricting needs to be discussed.

Vice Chair Arndt suggested discussing coordination with the state on campaign finance requirements, discussing public campaign financing, and discussing Board or Commission election oversight.

Councilmember Ohlson discussed the importance of ensuring the sources of all campaign contributions are available.

City Attorney Daggett commented on the existing Code language related to redistricting and noted it has not been changed to state that redistricting should occur every ten years upon receipt of census data.

Vice Chair Arndt asked if expansion of the city limits leads to automatic redistricting. City Attorney Daggett replied annexed districts become part of the adjacent district and that does lead to numbers being unequal. She stated it will be worth considering wither there will be triggers other than the census for redistricting.

Councilmember Ohlson commented on the importance of ensuring citizens are not redistricted such that they do not have the opportunity to vote for a Council representative two elections in a row.

Councilmember Ohlson suggested discussing changing municipal elections from non-partisan to partisan.

Vice Chair Arndt stated Councilmember compensation may need to be discussed as the expectations are not commensurate with the compensation. Members discussed the topic and agreed it should be discussed further for possible placement on a ballot.

## **7. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned by unanimous consent at 4:26 PM.

## **MINUTES APPROVED AT THE SEPTEMBER 20, 2021 ELECTION CODE COMMITTEE MEETING**