

## **Civic Engagement Group—April 14, 2017 Meeting Notes**

Mary Jane Francis, serving as moderator, opened the meeting at approximately 4:00 p.m.

### **Activities During the Past Two Weeks**

**FairVote Meeting:** Sue VanLeuven discussed the FairVote meeting she and Alice Wesley attended with about forty other Seattle residents on March 27th. FairVote is a national non-partisan electoral reform organization, which attempts to address concerns regarding the fairness and effectiveness of voting and election processes. This organization perceives three primary problems that limit voter effectiveness: 1) limited choices, 2) gerrymandering, and 3) restrictive voter identification laws.

The organization's position is that *ranked choice voting* will resolve some, if not all, of these problems. Ranked choice voting is used in Scotland and New Zealand and has recently been adopted in Maine and New York City. It is also used in a significant number of collegiate student elections.

The short version of ranked choice voting is that voters select candidates in rank order (1st choice, 2nd choice, etc.). If no one gets 50 percent of the votes, the lowest-ranked candidate in the number of first place votes is dropped. The voters who selected the defeated candidate as a first choice will then have their votes added to the totals of their next choice. This process continues until a candidate has more than half of the active votes, or only two candidates remain. The candidate with a majority among the active candidates is declared the winner. (Use the URL below to see the video on how this works.)

There is also a process for electing multiple candidates, but it is too complex to describe in these notes. If you would like to see a short demonstration on how this works, click on this URL: [http://www.fairvote.org/rcv#how\\_rcv\\_works](http://www.fairvote.org/rcv#how_rcv_works). Scroll down and click on *Instant Runoff* and *Multiple Winner*.

**Councilmember Tim Burgess Visit to Skyline:** There were a number of very favorable comments regarding the visit of Councilmember Burgess to Skyline. He was remarkably frank about the role of the City Council in budgetary and policy issues. The consensus was that he should continue to serve the citizens of Seattle, although he has firm plans to retire at the end of his term this year.

**Professor Lisa Manheim's talk on Voter Suppression:** Diana Caplow recounted some of the high points from Professor Manheim's terrific address to us on methods used by political parties to control voter outcomes. These methods include gerrymandering, restrictive voter identification laws, and other techniques that political organizations use to retain control of legislative bodies. She suggested that citizens begin and continue to be actively engaged in such activities as voting; participating in local politics, as well as at the federal level; and joining voting rights groups, among others. She particularly stressed the need for voters to be educated.

*An attendance concern:* In the course of the discussion, it was noted that Skyline attendance for this event was less than we had hoped. The members present felt that the

practice of not advertising events through the CEG distribution list (when also advertised via the Skyline Lifestyle Department) was a mistake. More notice is better than less notice. (We will act accordingly.)

**“Indivisible” Activities:** Sally Soest identified a number of activities being undertaken in the local area by “Indivisible.” These include Tuesday rallies at the Federal Building that begin at 11:45 a.m. The general practice has been to assemble at the Federal Building, and then go into one of the conference rooms to meet with representatives from Senator Murray’s and Senator Cantwell’s offices. Sally talked about the positive effects of being with others who are of like minds—we are not alone.

Other events include the Tax March (held Saturday, April 15<sup>th</sup>), the March for Science on April 22<sup>nd</sup> (see below), and the Earth Day March on April 29<sup>th</sup>. To stay current with events, you may find the “Indivisible Washington” website useful. Events and activities can be found at <https://www.indivisiblewa.com>. Scroll down to *Events* and click on the “*Click here for (Seattle Area)*” for a calendar of events.

(Sally’s notes were distributed by separate email due to time-sensitive information. If you need a copy, please email [jimsanders1947@gmail.com](mailto:jimsanders1947@gmail.com).)

**Republican Precinct Committee Officer:** Jim Sanders announced that this precinct does have a Democratic PCO, but does not have a Republican PCO. (The incumbent recently resigned due to a relocation.) If you are interested in serving in this capacity, or exploring the possibility, please contact Ryan Roulier, Republican 43rd District Chair, by telephone at (253) 332-0782 or by email at [43rdrepublicans@gmail.com](mailto:43rdrepublicans@gmail.com). The next Republican 43rd Legislative District meeting is scheduled for Monday, May 24<sup>th</sup>, at Wedgewood Broiler, 8230 35<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE. This is a dinner and meeting held jointly with the 46th District Republicans. Dinner is at 6:00 p.m. (no-host), and the meeting will begin at 7:00 p.m.

**725 Blog:** Jim Tanner has reached out to Jim DeMaine to discuss the possibility of obtaining a page on the 725 Blog for the Civic Engagement Group. The page would be used to share ideas, thoughts, etc. on politics, policy, and events of interest to CEG folks and others. There was interest in pursuing this, but also questions about how it would work, etc. The meeting attendees felt that it would be a good idea to have a discussion with Jim Tanner and Jim DeMaine before moving forward.

### **Coming Events**

**Listening Circles:** Mary Jane Francis reported that the CEG will hold another listening circle. This session will be limited to 6–8 participants, but will also be open to non-participating observers. A separate email will go out later this week with a list of possible topics. The topic to be used will be based on responses from residents interested in participating (not just observing) in a circle on that topic. Stay tuned!

**March for Science:** Sue VanLeuven (and possibly others) will be taking the bus to participate in the rally and/or March for Science on Saturday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>. Sue’s advice is to bring water and food with you. The rally will begin at 10:00 a.m. at Cal Anderson Park (on 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue, between Pine Street and Denny Way), with the march to the Seattle Center beginning at noon.

As with the Womxn's March, some may wish to go to the rally, some may wish to participate in a portion of the march, and some may wish to take a bus to the Seattle Center, where the March concludes. If you are interested in participating as part of a Skyline Residents Group, please contact Sue by telephone at (206) 407-1923 or by email at [msuevanl@yahoo.com](mailto:msuevanl@yahoo.com).

**Kate Starbird—Fake News:** Jim Sanders advised that we have asked Kate Starbird, Assistant Professor of Human-Centered Design and Engineering at the University of Washington, to speak to us about Fake News. Professor Starbird has actively studied this phenomenon over the past several years and has recently been interviewed on NPR and by Danny Westneat of the *Seattle Times*. We are hoping to arrange a session with her in August, which is the earliest time she is expected to be available.

**Dow Constantine, County Executive:** Katherine Graubard and a group of residents are reaching out to King County Executive Dow Constantine to invite him to speak to us on the role and the current challenges of County Government. We hope to have him join us sometime in June. Katherine clarified that the County Executive would be invited to talk about County Government, not as a candidate running for reelection.

**Democracy Vouchers:** John Harkins reminded us that the City's voters approved a Democracy Voucher Program, and each registered Seattle voter should have received a packet of four \$25.00 vouchers, which can be contributed to local campaigns. John and a group of residents will be contacting the City's Ethics and Elections staff to arrange for a speaker, hopefully in June, to tell us how this works and how to get a replacement voucher if you tossed, lost, or misplaced your original materials.

### **Other items of Interest**

**Compass Housing Shelter at First Presbyterian Church:** Suzanne Hittman noted that a new shelter/navigation center is planned for First Presbyterian Church. This shelter will differ from most, in that it will be open around the clock and can be used by single men and women and by couples. The facility will be operated by the Compass Housing Alliance. There will be a public meeting at First Presbyterian Church on May 22<sup>nd</sup> beginning at 6:30 p.m.

**Planned Parenthood Lunch:** Diana Caplow reported that Washington Planned Parenthood will hold a fundraising luncheon on Wednesday, May 31<sup>st</sup>, at noon at the Westin Hotel (1900 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue). Jamia Wilson, Executive Director for Women, Action, and the Media, will be the principal speaker. For additional information, please contact Diana by telephone at (206) 407-1790, or by email at [dianacaplow@gmail.com](mailto:dianacaplow@gmail.com).

**Homelessness—Peace and Justice Interest Group:** Sue Hogan reminded us that the Peace and Justice Interest Group will host David Wertheimer of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for a talk on "Ending Homelessness" at 3:30 on Wednesday, April 19<sup>th</sup>.

**Thanks:** To Mary Jane Francis for acting as facilitator for this meeting; to Dick Hulbert, Mary Ann Hagan, and Jane Sanders for taking notes; and to Lilyan Snow and Wendy Schoen for editing, proofing, and formatting.

The meeting ended at 4:55 p.m.

**Next Meeting:** Friday, April 28, Mount Baker Room.

**Attachment:** Listening Circle Topics—for consideration only. Don't vote yet.

## Possible Listening Circle Topics

1. If you were part of the inner circle, what advice would you give to President Trump on the subject of Syria, and why is it important? (*Note: This could be a recurring topic, using different officials and areas of concern.*)
2. Should voters support the County's Arts Initiative Sales Tax Increase? Why or why not?
3. Is there a way in which we can come together to support women's health issues and family planning, without fighting over the issue of abortion? How would we do this?
4. Is the increasingly dominant role of money, particularly 501(c)(4) "dark money," a threat to American democracy; if so, how can or should this threat be addressed?
5. Are charter schools a solution or a threat to public education?
6. Should correctional facilities be run as public institutions or private-for-profit contract agencies?
7. Are Democracy Vouchers (\$25.00 certificates issued to voters by the City of Seattle) a good idea, and how do you plan to use yours?