



City Council

Overview and Approval of Ranked Choice Voting Process for the Purpose of Appointing a Councilmember to Fill the Unexpired Term of Position 2

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Title

Overview and Approval of Ranked Choice Voting Process for the Purpose of Appointing a Councilmember to Fill the Unexpired Term of Position 2

Recommended Action

Committee Recommendation:

Not referred to a committee.

City Manager Recommendation:

Receive an overview of, and move to accept, the process of Ranked Choice voting for the purpose of appointing a Councilmember to fill the City Council Position 2 vacancy.

Report

Issue:

Whether to receive an overview of, and move to accept, the process of Ranked Choice voting for the purpose of appointing a Councilmember to fill the City Council Position 2 vacancy.

Staff Contact:

Susan Grisham, Executive Assistant, 360.753.8244

Presenter(s):

Mary Hall, Thurston County Auditor

Background and Analysis:

In October 2020, Councilmembers passed a resolution expressing support for Ranked Choice voting. When planning began to fill the Council Position 2 vacancy, several Councilmembers expressed interest in using Ranked Choice voting to assist with the process of appointing a new Councilmember.

What is Ranked-Choice voting? The voter ranks the candidates in the order preferred to them: First choice, Second choice, Third choice, and so on. If the voters top pick cannot win, their vote counts

for their next choice.

How are the ballots counted?

- If a candidate receives a majority (more than half) of the first-choice votes, that candidate wins, just like any other election.
- If there is no majority winner after counting first choices, then the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated. Any voter who picked the eliminated candidate as their “number one” will have their vote count for their next choice.
- The process continues until one candidate receives a majority of votes in the final round.

If approved by the City Council and at the conclusion of interviews of seven candidates, the selection process will be administered by Thurston County Auditor Mary Hall and Chris Mason of FairVote Washington. Lisa Ayrault, Executive Director of FairVote Washington will also be present.

The ballot, designed by County Auditor Hall, will contain the name of each candidate in alphabetical order by last name. There will be space for each Councilmember to write their name and sign their ballot.

Mayor Selby will open the voting, and each Councilmember, while on camera, will rank all the candidates in the order of their preference, 1 - 7, by filling in a circle on the ballot. After the Councilmembers have completed their ballots, Mayor Selby will announce that voting has closed. Councilmembers, who will each be stationed in a separate room within City Hall to adhere to social distancing guidelines, will return their ballot using the envelope provided and one by one place it in the blue drop box that will be located in the Council Chambers. Once all the ballots have been placed in the ballot box, Mayor Selby will close the voting.

County Auditor Hall will then open ballots and verify signatures against the signature in the County's voter registration database. Tabulation will be conducted and narrated by Chris Mason and displayed on screen. The tally will be manual using an excel spreadsheet.

Once the tabulation has been completed, County Auditor Hall will announce a winner, and Council would need to move to accept and appoint the winner to Council Position 2.

Ranked-Choice Voting Rules for Tabulation:

1. If a candidate receives a majority (more than half) of the first-choice votes, that candidate wins.
2. If no candidate receives a majority of votes in a given round of counting, then the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated.
3. A Councilmember's vote will be counted for the candidate that they ranked highest who has not been eliminated.
4. Tabulation will continue in rounds until a candidate receives a majority of votes in that round.

Tiebreaking:

Because small group elections are prone to ties, some additional rules will be used for this election.

1. We will use the Average Ranking to break ties.
 - The Average Ranking for each candidate is the sum of the rankings given to that

candidate by each voter, divided by the number of voters.

- All voters must rank all 7 candidates in order to have the correct Average Rankings
2. If there is a tie for which candidate to eliminate, the candidate with the largest Average Ranking (lowest overall preference) will be eliminated.
 3. If the Average Ranking values are also the same for tied candidates, then the candidate to eliminate is selected by lot.
 4. Elimination by Lot will be determined by using a six-sided die.

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

The community has an interest in who will fill vacant Council Position 2.

Options:

1. Receive the briefing and move to accept the Ranked Choice voting process to determine a candidate to fill Council Position 2.
2. Receive the briefing and use a different process to determine a candidate to full Position 2.
3. Do not receive the briefing and do not determine a candidate to fill Council Position 2.

Financial Impact:

N/A

Attachments:

None