

January 27, 2025

**ELECTION CODE COMMITTEE MEETING**

**4:00 PM**

**COMMITTEEMEMBERS PRESENT**

Chair/Councilmember Tricia Canonico  
Mayor Jeni Arndt  
Councilmember Julie Pignataro (remote)

**STAFF PRESENT**

Delynn Coldiron  
Cecilia Good  
Sara Arfmann  
Carrie Daggett  
Rupa Venkatesh

**A. CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

**B. ROLL CALL**

**C. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Pat Burger, Larimer County League of Women Voters, stated the Larimer County League of Women Voters is the largest in the state and is a non-partisan entity. Burger read a letter from the League regarding support of improved election oversight for Fort Collins elections, specifically the establishment of an independent election oversight authority with quasi-judicial powers.

**D. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION FOLLOW-UP**

Mayor Arndt stated the formation of an election oversight body is part of a growing town and stated there is a growing lack of trust in elections nationwide. However, she also noted she has full confidence in the Clerk's Office to be an independent arbiter of elections. She expressed support for starting with an outside consultant, through she stated she was unsure where necessary funds would be found.

**E. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – December 10, 2024**

**1. Approval of Minutes**

*The purpose of this item is to approve the minutes of the December 10, 2024, Election Code Committee meeting.*

***Councilmember Pignataro moved, seconded by Mayor Arndt, to approve the minutes of the December 10, 2024 meeting. Yeas: Chair Canonico, Councilmember Pignataro and Mayor Arndt. Nays: none.***

***THE MOTION CARRIED.***

**F. DISCUSSION/INFORMATIONAL ITEMS**

**2. Proposed Code Changes and Election and Ranked Choice Voting Updates**

City Clerk Coldiron summarized the proposed Code changes.

Sara Arfmann, Assistant City Attorney, provided additional detail on the proposed changes, beginning with eliminating write-in candidates as allowing that would make ranked choice voting elections much more complicated. City Clerk Coldiron noted write-in candidates do not have to go through the same process as other candidates. Mayor Arndt also noted there is a

low bar for becoming a candidate. Members opted to move forward with the elimination of write-in candidates.

Arfmann noted staff is also recommending clarifying that any special election not coordinated with the County would follow the rules adopted by the Secretary of State related to ranked voting. Members opted to move forward with the change.

Arfmann outlined the next proposed change regarding providing reasonable accommodations for any ADA request but eliminating the requirement that a petition circulator must read an entire petition upon request. Members opted to move forward with the change.

Arfmann outlined definition changes and campaign finance report changes with which the committee opted to move forward. Chair Canonico stated May 1, 2025 has been considered as the date for the first financial report to be due for this year only, with the next report due July 1, 2025.

Arfmann outlined two additional Code provisions that will likely be brought forward with changes, one related to nomination petition timelines and one related to the list of City Clerk duties.

City Clerk Coldiron summarized additional Code changes that will be brought forward regarding campaign enforcement and contribution limits and associated contribution changes.

***Councilmember Pignataro moved, seconded by Mayor Arndt, to recommend to the full Council changes 1 through 7 as reflected in the staff presentation on slide 9, including some language reconciliation regarding nominating petitions in the event of a recall and clarification regarding the City Clerk's duties. Yeas: Chair Canonico, Councilmember Pignataro and Mayor Arndt. Nays: none.***

***THE MOTION CARRIED.***

Cecilia Good, Senior Deputy City Clerk, discussed her research regarding seeking an outside consultant to conduct election oversight. She stated the services could cost as much as \$60,000 and staff would look at doing a RFP if that were the case.

Mayor Arndt stated the person doing oversight could be helped immensely with in-house training and also suggested regular candidate and treasurer meetings to provide information about reporting and campaigns.

Chair Canonico suggested the possibility of having two candidate information sessions. City Clerk Coldiron noted the first candidate information session will be recorded and available for viewing. She suggested the possibility of a monthly open meeting for questions.

Members commented on the importance of ensuring trust in elections and ensuring the first ranked choice election runs smoothly. Members also discussed paring back the scope of the election oversight party to being proactive about campaign finance reports. City Clerk Coldiron stated that could be done fairly readily, particularly with someone who is experienced with campaign finance.

City Attorney Daggett noted there have been few complaints that have led to investigations.

Mayor Arndt commented on the importance of having an oversight party.

City Attorney Daggett noted the Code has always preserved the authority of the City to take enforcement action about Code violations, though practically speaking, that approach has not been staffed.

Councilmember Pignataro suggested reaching out to the League of Women Voters for information regarding campaign oversight utilizing an outside consultant. City Clerk Coldiron stated staff could do additional research prior to the next Committee meeting.

City Clerk Coldiron asked if the Committee would like to hold off on addressing redistricting. Members replied in the affirmative.

City Clerk Coldiron noted the website has been updated for the 2025 election and there is a candidate information session scheduled for April 2<sup>nd</sup>. Additionally, there will be an extended staff report at the June 3<sup>rd</sup> Council meeting to present information to Council about ranked voting.

City Clerk Coldiron stated the County would like to use the name 'ranked voting' rather than 'ranked choice voting' to align with the State Statutes. City Attorney Daggett also noted the Charter uses the term 'ranked voting.' City Clerk Coldiron commented on the importance of voter education and messaging regarding the two terms essentially being interchangeable.

Chair Canonico suggested using ranked voting in order to maintain consistency with the State and Charter.

City Clerk Coldiron commented on a meeting with the League of Women Voters and a member from Ranked Choice Voting of Colorado. She stated those meetings will be occurring bi-monthly.

City Clerk Coldiron discussed the plan for voter education around ranked voting and the agenda for the March 3<sup>rd</sup> Committee meeting.

#### **G. OTHER BUSINESS**

None.

#### **H. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned by unanimous consent at 5:30 p.m.