

**COMMITTEE TO RECOMMEND FUNDING
FOR THE PUBLIC ELECTION FUND
Monday, January 29, 2018 – 7:30 p.m.
4th Floor Conference Room
Council Office Building**

Committee Members Present:

David Scull, Chair
Sharon Cohen, Vice Chair (via phone)
Lee Annis, Jr.
Margaret Greene
Paul Schwartz

Staff:

Amanda Mihill, County Council

Committee Chair Scull called the meeting to order at 7:34 p.m.

Committee members unanimously approved the minutes from the October 30 meeting; motion made by Ms. Cohen and seconded by Mr. Schwartz.

Committee members discussed the draft report that was circulated by e-mail. Committee members discussed the recommendation that the \$11 million previously recommended by the Committee was sufficient to cover distributions for this election cycle. Mr. Annis made a motion, seconded by Ms. Cohen, to recommend a reduction of \$1 million to the amount appropriated to the Fund. Mr. Annis noted that the County has a projected budget shortfall and suggested this reduction as a way to help alleviate that shortfall. Other Committee members believed that it was pre-mature to reduce the amount in the Fund because other candidates could file. The motion failed 2-3 (Mr. Annis and Ms. Cohen supported the motion; Mr. Scull, Ms. Greene, and Mr. Schwartz opposed the motion). Ms. Cohen noted her intention to write a dissenting view to be attached to the Report.

Committee members discussed the staffing requirements to keep up with administering the Program and generally agreed to retain language in the Report encouraging that funds be used to provide staffing/software support for the State Board of Elections staff.

Committee members discussed an amendment proposed by Chair Scull to amend the County law to prohibit the use of funds appropriated to the Public Election Fund from being redirected to other programs. Mr. Schwartz moved that the recommended language be added to the Report as a Committee recommendation; Ms. Greene seconded the motion. After discussion, the Committee generally agreed to wait until the 2019 Report to make recommendations regarding changing the County law.

Ms. Cohen moved that the Report be amended to include a recommendation to change County law to ensure that only registered voters can contribute to a candidate using the Public Election Fund; Mr. Annis seconded the motion. Chair Scull indicated his view that the Committee should wait until the 2019 Report to make recommendations regarding amendments to the law. The motion failed 1-4 (Ms. Cohen supported the motion; Mr. Annis, Ms. Green, Mr. Schwartz, and Mr. Scull opposed the motion.)

Ms. Cohen moved that the Report be amended to include a recommendation to change the definition of “qualifying contribution” in the law by requiring the contribution be made by a registered voter and requiring a County Voter ID. Other Committee members expressed concern that this Report was not the appropriate time to make changes to the County law. Ms. Cohen agreed to withdraw her amendment, but requested that the full text of her proposed amendment be included in the minutes.*

Ms. Cohen moved that the Report be amended to include a recommendation to change County law to prohibit the Council from amending the law after the first year of an election cycle. Other Committee members expressed concern that this Report was not the appropriate time to make changes to the County law. Ms. Cohen agreed to withdraw her amendment, but requested that the full text of her proposed amendment be included in the minutes.*

The Committee heard from candidate Bill Conway, who is a participating candidate with the Public Election Fund. Mr. Conway expressed support for the public financing law, but also expressed some challenges he and other candidates have encountered while participating in the system. Mr. Conway expressed some concerns with how the state software operates and noted that using the system is very labor intensive and is sometimes unstable. Committee members encouraged Mr. Conway to speak to the state Board staff about his experience with the system.

Committee members decided that their next meeting will be on September 12 at 7:30 p.m.

Meeting adjourned at 8:52 p.m.

* Staff note: The full text of Ms. Cohen’s minutes are attached to these minutes.