

**COMMITTEE TO RECOMMEND FUNDING
FOR THE PUBLIC ELECTION FUND
Monday, January 11, 2016 – 7:30 p.m.
5th Floor Conference Room
Council Office Building**

Committee Members Present:

David Scull, Chair
Sharon Cohen, Vice Chair
Lee Annis, Jr.
Margaret Greene
Paul Schwartz

Staff:

Amanda Mihill, County Council

Committee Chair Scull called the meeting to order at 7:36 p.m.

The Committee had before it a draft report. Committee members discussed whether to finalize the report and send it to the Council. Ms. Cohen expressed reservations about sending the draft report and noted that she had questions about the cost estimates in the Report's attachments as well as the operation of the program. Ms. Cohen indicated that she could send a list of questions by the end of the week to Council staff and Mr. Glavin. Motion to delay issuing a report until after the Committee's February meeting made by Ms. Cohen and seconded by Mr. Annis. Those in favor of the motion: Mr. Annis and Ms. Cohen. Those opposed to the motion: Ms. Greene, Mr. Schwartz, and Mr. Scull. Motion failed (2-3).

In discussing the substance of the draft report, Ms. Cohen questioned a candidate's ability to obtain the maximum amount of public contributions. Ms. Cohen further questioned whether candidates, particularly incumbents, are likely to participate in the public financing program since they raise more funds on their own than they would receive from the program. Mr. Schwartz expressed his view that the Committee's responsibility is to recommend an amount sufficient to ensure appropriate funding and that the Committee should not risk recommending an insufficient amount. Mr. Scull opined that while candidates likely won't reach the maximum amount of public funds, there was no harm in recommending more funding than will likely be used. Ms. Cohen noted her view that the Committee should recommend a funding amount sufficient to implement the public financing program, not necessarily the maximum amount possible.

Committee members discussed the expedited reporting date. Ms. Cohen felt that the report was too premature to send without additional research. Other Committee members were comfortable sending the report, but acknowledged that further research could yield follow-up information that would need to be transmitted to the Council. Motion to add a sentence to the report emphasizing that because the Committee is reporting earlier than anticipated, it is possible that additional information would result in updated recommendations. Motion made by Mr. Schwartz and seconded by Ms. Greene. Those in favor of the motion: Mr. Annis, Ms. Greene, Mr. Schwartz, and Mr. Scull. Those opposed to the motion: Ms. Cohen. Motion carried (4-1).

In the second paragraph on the first page of the report, Ms. Cohen moved to strike the number \$6,645,000 and replace it with \$3,272,861. Motion seconded by Mr. Annis. Ms. Cohen expressed her view that it is more accurate to list \$3,272,861 as the low estimate of costs as it reflects the estimated cost based on the 2014 election. Mr. Scull questioned what the problem was if the Committee recommended a funding amount that is more than necessary. Ms. Cohen responded that the County budget is tight and that the funding comes from the General Fund and shared her view that recommending a large amount is not reasonable. Ms. Greene opined that if enough funds are not appropriated for the program, it will kill the program. Those in favor of the motion: Mr. Annis and Ms. Cohen. Those opposed to the motion: Ms. Greene, Mr. Schwartz, and Mr. Scull. Motion failed (2-3).

Ms. Cohen made a motion to strike paragraphs 3-6 of the draft report; seconded by Mr. Annis. Those in favor of the motion: Mr. Annis and Ms. Cohen. Those opposed to the motion: Ms. Greene, Mr. Schwartz, and Mr. Scull. Motion failed (2-3).

Committee members discussed the amount of funding that the Committee would recommend to the Council. The draft report recommended that the Council budget \$12 million. Motion to replace \$12 million with \$10 million made by Mr. Schwartz and seconded by Mr. Annis. Ms. Cohen noted that the draft report and attachments suggested a funding range of between \$3,272,861 and \$9,875,000 and questioned why the Committee would then recommend funding \$12 million. Mr. Scull shared his view that generosity was desirable even if all the recommended funds were not spent. Mr. Scull noted that the maximum estimates were based on an election in which there was not an open seat for Executive and that if there were an open seat for Executive, there could be a large number of candidates running and that may want to participate in the program. Ms. Greene noted that she was in favor of ensuring ample funding and that \$10 million was a well-reasoned amount to recommend. Those in favor of the motion: Mr. Annis, Ms. Greene, and Mr. Schwartz. Those opposed to the motion: Ms. Cohen and Mr. Scull. Motion carried (3-2).

Ms. Cohen noted her objection to the report and the recommended funding amount and requested that her name be removed from the list of signatories and that she be given an opportunity to insert a dissenting opinion at the end of the report. Members concurred with this request. Motion to submit the report, as amended, to the Council. Those in favor of the motion: Mr. Annis, Ms. Greene, Mr. Schwartz, and Mr. Scull. Those opposed to the motion: Ms. Cohen. Motion carried (4-1).

Committee members approved the minutes from the December 1 minutes, with a correction to reflect that Ms. Cohen was in attendance at the meeting; motion made by Mr. Annis and seconded by Mr. Schwartz. Committee members agreed to meet next on January 26 at 7:30 p.m.

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.