



King County

Metropolitan King County Council

STAFF REPORT

Agenda Item:	27	Name:	Jeff Muhm
Proposed No.:	2025-0116	Date:	April 15, 2025

SUBJECT

Proposed Motion 2025-0116 would establish a process to appoint a King County Executive to serve until a successor is elected in the next general election and qualified.

SUMMARY

The King County Charter Section 680.10 governs the Council's role in filling the vacancy created by Constantine resignation.

Proposed Motion 2025-0116 would establish a process to inform the Council's decision in appoint the King County Executive. The process would include the formation of a blue ribbon selection committee comprised of three mayors from cities within King County to make recommendations to the Council to consider when making its final decision to appoint a King County Executive.

BACKGROUND

On March 28, 2025, King County Executive Dow Constantine accepted the position of Chief Executive Officer of Sound Transit and announced his resignation as King County Executive effective March 31, 2025.

The King County Charter and Washington state law set forth the actions the Council must take to fill a vacancy in a non-partisan county elective office. On April 1, 2025, the Council passed Motion 16794 appointing Shannon Braddock as the Acting King County Executive following Mr. Constantine's resignation. Then-Executive Constantine had previously designated then-Deputy County Executive Shannon Braddock to serve as Interim Executive in the event a vacancy occurred in the Executive office.¹ Ms. Braddock began serving as Interim County Executive immediately upon Executive

¹ Executive Order ACO-8-1-40 EO, dated July 10, 2024, which designates Ms. Braddock, is signed, the signature notarized, and the designation is filed with the recorder's office.

Constantine's effective resignation on April 1, and then as Acting County Executive following the Council's passage of Motion 16794 the same day.²

The King County Charter also requires that the Council take action to fill the vacancy by appointing a qualified person to serve as King County Executive in a non-acting capacity until a successor is elected and qualified in the November general election.

ANALYSIS

After the Council is apprised of a vacancy in the office of county executive, RCW 36.16.110 requires the Council, at its next regular (or special) meeting, fill the vacancy and, once filled, the appointee serves until the successor is elected, the election is certified (late November), and the successor is qualified (i.e. post bond and sworn in). The intent of RCW 36.16.110 is to not let an elective office remain vacant. However, the County's Charter provides failsafe measures to ensure that the Executive position is never operationally vacant and provides intervening steps in the selection process that are not inconsistent with state law.

Executive Constantine complied with the Charter and properly designated Shannon Braddock as the Interim Executive. The Charter also gives the Council an opportunity to place a person temporarily in the position as Executive by selecting an Acting Executive. The Charter limits the pool of persons from which the Council may choose to appoint the Acting Executive. Only those persons who served "as a deputy or assistant in such office at the time the vacancy" are eligible for the acting position. The Acting Executive is to "perform all necessary duties to continue normal office operations" and serves until the Council appoints, "pursuant to general law for nonpartisan county elective offices" a qualified person³ to hold the Executive position⁴. The Council's action to appoint Ms. Braddock as Acting Executive on April 1, 2025 complied with the Charter as Ms. Braddock previously served as Deputy County Executive at the time the vacancy occurred.

Proposed Motion (PM) 2025-0116 would establish a process to inform the Council's obligation under the Charter to appoint a County Executive until a successor is elected and qualified by appointing a "blue-ribbon selection committee" (committee) to review qualified candidates to be appointed as the Executive. The committee would be tasked with selecting a first choice and an alternate. Potential qualified candidates for the

² Under King County Charter Section 680.10, the Interim County Executive "shall exercise all the powers and duties of the office granted by this charter and general law until an acting official is appointed" by the Council.

³ The relevant qualifications for the Executive position are in Charter Sec. 630: "Each county officer holding an elective office shall be, at the time of the officer's appointment or election and at all times while the officer holds office, at least twenty-one years of age, a citizen of the United States and a resident and registered voter of King County.

⁴ Note, as was done in 2009 in the Kurt Triplett Executive appointment, the Council may also choose to forgo appointing an Acting County Executive. In that case, Kurt Triplett was the Interim Executive. The Council appointed him Executive, skipping the acting stage of the process. Triplett served until Dow Constantine was elected at the November 2029 general election, that election was certified, and Constantine qualified to serve as County Executive.

committee to review would be limited to “former Executive Constantine’s designees to serve as King County Executive”⁵ under the provisions of PM 2025-0116.

The committee would be comprised of City of Seattle Mayor Bruce Harrell, or his designee, to represent the western-third of King County; a mayor who represents the southern third of King County; and a mayor who represents the eastern third of King County. An amendment would be required to PM 2025-0116 to name the mayors from both the southern and eastern thirds of King County.

In addition to providing a top choice and alternate to the Council, PM 2025-0116 would require that the committee’s recommendations also address the positions of the top choice and alternative on substantive policy issues including, but not limited to:

1. Addressing the King County general fund budget deficit;
2. Maintaining operations of the youth jail and alternatives to confinement;
3. Public safety and criminal justice, including the operating level of the sheriff’s office;
4. Proposal and implementation of new taxes; and
5. Implementation and governance of major capital and operational expansions including Harborview operations, the county hospital tax levy, and the Crisis Care Centers Levy.

The committee would be required to meet no later than April 25, 2025, and the committee’s recommendation be transmitted to the Council no later than May 7, 2025.

The proposed motion finally declares the Council’s intent to “use the committee’s recommendation to inform its final decision when appointing the King County executive on May 13, 2025.”

ATTACHMENTS

1. Proposed Motion 2025-0114

⁵ Executive Constantine’s designees included Deputy County Executive Shannon Braddock; Chief Operating Officer/Director of Performance, Strategy and Budget Dwight Dively/ Chief of Staff Karan Gill; Chief People Officer Whitney Abrams; and Deputy Chief Operating Officer Jennifer Hills.