



Turn the page



"It was obvious that KC was not prepared," says Colleen Davis. "Lakeitha was voted in on her merits. I was excited because it was going to be new blood, new energy, which is what all organizations need."

Elliott's win was within party rules, but just as it energized and excited some, others were upset that the new precinct committee people had been allowed to vote.

"It's actually quite shocking the way the whole thing went down, says Colleen Davis. We've been doing it this way at least as long as I've been involved -which is six or seven years..."

"It got ugly really fast. People were saying really mean things about Lakeitha, and to her."

Complaints that the election was illegal came with calls for action.

Under the party bylaws new PCs can vote immediately. State law says their names must first be recorded by the county clerk.

"We were not aware of this," Hagmeier says. "There was grumbling during the meeting, and by the next day people were complaining that they shouldn't have been allowed to vote and that their vote had been canceled out."

Feelings Were Raw

Some felt that party officials handled the conflict poorly because the election result snubbed Hanson, a longtime power within the leadership group.

"When you don't have term limits, the function can get confused with the person," Leslie Davis says. "I have tremendous respect for Carla Hanson and what she has done for the party. However, we needed new blood."

Amid heated discussions, behind-the-scenes emails, and sleepless nights, county party officials consulted with state party officials, Secretary of State Kate Brown's office and a lawyer.

In a letter, Frank Dixon stated the Democratic Party of Oregon's position. The election was flawed, he writes "but neither the DPO nor the officers of the MCDCC (Multnomah County Democratic Central Committee) have any authority to declare the election invalid.

"The DPO will continue to recognize Ms. Elliott as the chair of the MCDCC, based on the result of the Nov. 14 election, until the MCDCC meets as the political party governing body to decide what to do."

Asked for advice, the Secretary of State's Office said it had no authority to intervene.

"You ask whether ORS 258.016 can be applied to the party election. After a review of applicable statutes, we have determined that chapter 258 does not apply to internal party elections, but only official elections conducted by elections officials."

Nevertheless, after consulting with a lawyer, who also is party member, officials decided that continuing with Elliot as chair left the party vulnerable, Hagmeier said.

"As much as we wanted to move forward with Lakeitha as chair we could not do that."

So would it have become an issue if the vote had gone the other way? Hagmeier says it would.

"I firmly believe this was going to come up no matter who won..." she said. "Possibly it would have been different individuals who would have brought it to our attention."

A New Election

Party officials have [scheduled a new election for 7 p.m. Dec. 12 at Hollywood Senior Center, 1820 N.E. 40th Ave.](#), when the party Central Committee is set to meet. Doors open at 6:30 pm. The rule that conflicts with Oregon law will be changed at the same meeting.

Hanson told The Skanner News she has withdrawn her nomination. She is willing to do whatever work she can to further the party as a whole, she says. It's not about individuals; it's about working to improve people's lives. However, [a new contender, campaign chair Tracee Larson](#), has declared herself a candidate. [Elliott says she was disappointed at the way the election played out, but will run again Dec. 12](#), and do her best to win.

"This is not just a revote with the same people," she stressed. "A new election opens it up to a whole new pool of people. So there could be other candidates for the chair's job."

From Hagmeier's perspective, failing to hold a new election would have been unfair on Elliott. She shouldn't have to start her term under a cloud, she says.

"This isn't a question of who wins; it's a question of the legitimacy of the election."

That's the word too from Sheldon Joseph, former chair of the party's Black Caucus.

"Hopefully whatever issues there are, they get resolved by the 12th and there's a definitive election by the rules, and we can get back to good politics in the State of Oregon."

For Colleen Davis the episode is a learning experience for party leaders.

"The bottom line is, if we are going to encourage young people to step out and take over, we have to empower them and treat them with the utmost help and respect. This process has been just the opposite."

Correction: The time of the meeting has been corrected. Please note time.

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As for your question at the top: nothing. This is more about those who have positions of authority feeling threatened by a process they felt was flawed (and it was), and, on the other side, some who went thru that process and had it turned on its head. We'll resolve this Thursday (electing Lakeitha properly) and then move on from there.

Reply · 3 · Like · 9 December at 19:05



Archie Pacey · Gorebridge

Re-running the election seems unavoidable, since there are questions regarding the legality of the first vote. Electoral legislation must prevail.

Tomorrow qualified voters have an opportunity to do justice to L Elliott, who has the bottle to stand again. She deserves your votes.

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