

City of Seattle
Office of the Mayor

September 29, 2011

Seattle Ethics and Elections Commission
PO Box 94729
Seattle, WA 98124-4729

Dear Commissioners,

The purpose of this letter is to seek your opinion and guidance regarding any ethical limitations on efforts by city employees to solicit in-kind contributions in support of a school attendance campaign, as described more fully below. We have raised these issues with Wayne Barnett, and he suggested it would be a good case to seek the opinion of the Commission.

The Seattle Attendance Campaign is a citywide effort initiated by the Mayor's Office, in coordination with Seattle Public Schools, the Alliance for Education, and Get Schooled. The goal of the campaign is to improve academic achievement by improving attendance citywide. Background materials regarding the campaign are attached as **Exhibit A**.

One component of the campaign is to offer recognition and prizes to students, classes, teachers and principals who meet attendance goals. In preparation for launch of the Campaign, staff members in the Mayor's Office have asked local businesses to donate prizes for participating students, both in person and by letter. A form letter used for this purpose is attached as **Exhibit B**. Prizes will be received and distributed by the Alliance for Education, a 501(c)(3) non-profit which is the fiscal sponsor for the program.

Examples of gifts that have been offered or discussed with potential donors to date include the following:

- Gift certificates to Molly Moon's Ice Cream
- Pagliacci pizzas
- Starbucks gift cards (for teachers)
- Woodland Park Zoo passes
- Showbox Theater passes
- Pacific Science Center passes
- EMP passes
- Raleigh bicycles
- EVO Headphones

For donors, the benefits of participating in the campaign include promotion of their business and products, and the goodwill that is normally associated with charitable contributions. While no specific promises have been made regarding sponsorship recognition, we expect that prizes will be publicized to students as incentives to participate in the program, and donors will be identified, recognized, and thanked as in-kind sponsors.

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As local businesses, most potential sponsors will likely have business with the City from time to time; however, to our knowledge, none of the entities we have engaged are currently in negotiations or awaiting decision on any pending matter of significance. We do not believe there would be any reasonable expectation of a *quid pro quo* or preferential treatment associated with sponsorship of the program. We would of course appreciate any further guidance from the Commission to whether and how additional steps should be taken to ensure that there is no appearance of impropriety.

Sincerely,

/s/

Carl J. Marquardt
Office of the Mayor

Attachments

Copy: