PDC announces transition of Executive Director and names new Assistant Director

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The Public Disclosure Commission announced today that its Executive Director, Evelyn Fielding Lopez, will be leaving in May to pursue other interests.

The Commission also announced the appointment of Barbara “BG” Sandahl, a veteran of Washington state government and a Lean management expert, as the agency’s new Assistant Director and that it will soon be appointing a new Director of Communications and Customer Service.

The citizens of Washington State created the PDC in 1972 by voter-approved Initiative to shine a light on money in politics, lobbying and campaigns. The PDC’s mission is to provide timely and meaningful public access to accurate information about the financing of political campaigns, lobbyist expenditures, and the financial affairs of public officials and candidates and to ensure compliance with the State’s disclosure and campaign finance laws. The PDC is guided by a five-member, non-partisan citizen Commission.

Commission Chair Anne Levinson said, “We have embarked on an ambitious set of reforms to improve public access to information, provide great customer service, increase the use of technology to simplify filing requirements, resolve complaints more quickly, and aggressively enforce the law whenever warranted. Having B.G. and a new Communications and Customer Service Director join the management team is key to accomplishing these goals and to being strategically positioned for the future as well.”

“The PDC is a small agency, but it has a big mission, and so many in the public and media rely on it to help ensure the integrity and fairness of campaigns and elections in our state. We owe it to the public to do as much as we can, particularly in the context of today’s political environment. We have to continually improve open access to timely, user-friendly information online, and do more public education and outreach, as well as enforce the disclosure laws in an objective and non-partisan fashion,” Levinson said.

Sandahl has extensive experience in policy, legislative relations, elections, public administration, and is a leader in strategic planning and process improvement, including as a Lean Fellow at Results Washington in the Governor’s Office. Sandahl comes to the PDC from her post as Organizational Change Manager at the Department of Retirement Systems. She also has been an
official of the Department of Licensing, worked for the Secretary of State and was chief deputy for the Thurston County Auditor, which manages elections. While at the DOL she helped create the state’s highly regarded Enhanced Driver’s License.

“The Commission is delighted that BG Sandahl has agreed to join the executive team,” Levinson said. “She brings a record of accomplishment in strategy and collaborative leadership and is known as a change agent who is always looking for fresh ways to provide excellent, cost-effective service to the public.”

Executive Director Fielding Lopez was appointed in October, 2015. Ms. Lopez stated, “The PDC plays a critical role in open government and helps to ensure that the public knows who may be influencing campaigns and policy making. I have been proud to be the Executive Director of this agency, and to have worked with a very dedicated and skilled staff. I am particularly pleased with the changes that we have made, and that will continue to develop, in the PDC website and databases for the public.”

“We all would like to thank Evelyn for her leadership, particularly her hard work to eliminate what had been a long-standing backlog of complaints and our efforts to develop systems for more efficient complaint management,” Chair Levinson stated. Once our new Director of Communications and Customer Service has joined our management team, which also includes our Chief Information Officer James Gutholm, the Commission will provide an update regarding appointment of the next Executive Director.

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