

**GSA Chief Returning Officer
Report to GSA Council for the 20 November 2023 Meeting**

To: GSA Council
From: Sophie Shi
Date: 19 November 2023

Dear Council Colleagues,

I hope you all had a relaxing Reading Week.

Ahead of the December Council meeting, I would like to address the major change in November's meeting materials since the first mailing. I hope this brings transparency to Council as this is an issue that will have impacts on our election timelines moving forward. In the first mailing, you would have received materials for four referenda items to be voted on by Council to be included in the upcoming 2024 elections and referenda. Should the Board determine the remaining referenda to be urgent (J.BYL.3.1), presentations to Council may now be postponed to the December GSA Council meeting, provided that each candidate follows the Bylaw and Policy regarding the next steps.

As per the GSA Bylaw and Policy, the first step in initiating a referendum is for the Asker to contact the CRO (J.POL.7.1). As the CRO, I had no knowledge of 3 out of 4 of these proposed referenda, except for The Gateway, who had contacted me in August. These were not communicated to me by the Askers of these referenda or anyone else involved.

Following this conversation, they will then work together with the CRO to draft a yes/no referendum question (J.POL.7.3). To date, I have not heard from any of these groups regarding the question they intend to include. These discussions should have occurred well before the November meeting, in preparation for the Board proposal and Council presentation. If the CRO extends an invitation to the candidate, they will then present it to the Board (J.POL.7.2), who make the decision about whether they can proceed to present the proposal to Council (J.POL.7.4), at which point they will again work with the CRO to finalize the question before the Council presentation (J.POL.7.5). Following the Council presentation, Council will vote on whether they believe the referenda should move forward (J.POL.7.6).

If all four of these referenda proposals had been presented to me according to the timeline, I would have hesitated to allow all of them to go forward, as I do not believe it would give each a fair chance, and would have instead worked to find potential alternatives. As we are now put in a difficult situation, the decisions made going forward do not reflect that of a typical referendum cycle. I would like to thank GSA Council for their patience as we work to resolve this matter. I also want to thank the GSA Elections Coordinator, the recently elected DRO, and all of ERC for their support of the elections and referenda going forward.

Sophie Shi, Chief Returning Officer 2023-2024