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## Logan added to woes of election staff, panel says

**By Keith Ervin**  
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King County's election office is in worse shape than it was before County Executive Ron Sims hired Dean Logan two years ago to reform the problem-plagued operation, a key member of Sims' election-review panel said yesterday.

In a scathing briefing to the Metropolitan King County Council's review committee, Brian Malarky said Logan hired the wrong kind of superintendent, failed to make "cultural change" his top priority and ended up with an organization in perpetual crisis.

Malarky, chief reviewing officer for Sims' Independent Task Force on Elections, summarized the panel's initial findings yesterday for the council's Citizens' Election Oversight Committee.

Both review panels and a \$350,000 audit were launched in response to problems in November's election, including the counting of illegal votes and failure to count some legal votes.

Logan was not in the office yesterday and could not comment.

Malarky cited "haphazard" planning and said task-force members coined the term "the cuckoo clock" for one management practice: Four or five managers would meet privately, come up with a plan, announce it to the staff and then "go back into the office and shut the door."

In its initial findings, the task force this month said employee morale was low, training and communication were poor, a "culture of fear" discouraged workers from reporting problems, and leaders "may lack the skills and resources" to improve the organization.

Despite those problems, Malarky said, election workers have confidence in Logan. Logan earlier this month demoted Superintendent Bill Huennekens to a lower-paying job and began a national search for his replacement.

The task force is scheduled to make its recommendations to Sims by July 31. The County Council's oversight committee, which issued an extensive report last year, was reconvened after the botched November election.

Several members yesterday expressed anger that some of their earlier recommendations, particularly better staff training, weren't implemented.

"We've been given continual assurances by the director that the Good Ship Lollipop is headed in the right direction when it ends up in the iceberg field," said Michael Snyder, who represents the state Democratic Party on the committee.

Oversight-committee member Ellen Hansen, former King County elections director and former consultant to the County Council, said the administration squandered an opportunity last year to improve the elections after top managers lost their jobs in the wake of the flawed mailing of absentee ballots in 2002 and 2003.

"Elections could have gotten anything it wanted," Hansen said, "given how much of an embarrassment it's been for the executive and the County Council."

Logan told employees after the release of the task force's employee survey earlier this month, "We have much work to do." He also said in a news release there was "no excuse for this year's past performance."

The council oversight committee's next reporting deadline is in February.

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