**Open & Accountable Elections Commission Meeting Minutes**

*January 30, 2020*

Present:

* Serin Bussell (Chair)
* Ricardo Lujan (Vice Chair)
* Amy Ruiz
* Amy Sample Ward
* Norm Turrill
* Sabra Purifoy
* Courtney Helstein
* Susan Mottet (Director)
* Daniel Lewkow (Deputy Director)

Housekeeping

December meeting minutes--approved unanimously by OAEC members without additional changes

Program update:

* Staff showcased the new data visualization tool on the OpenElections.org website
* Staff confirmed that, as of Jan 30th, seven candidates were certified for the for the regularly-scheduled election. One was certified in the Mayoral race, three were certified in the race for Commissioner Position #1, and 3 were certified in the race for Commissioner Position #4. Sam Adams had turned in the required number of donations, but staff was waiting for confirmation that his campaign had gathered the minimum 100 signatures to qualify to appear on the ballot, as required by the Portland Elections Office. Once staff received that confirmation, OAE could certify Adams as the eighth candidate who is eligible for public matching
* For the special election, staff heard that fifteen candidates had shown interest in running. Eleven had publicly announced their candidacies, and seven had filed their notices of intent.

Language Access Rule:

OAEC agreed that the language should be clarified to say that if a candidate who is running for office requests accessibility accommodation at a public event in a reasonable timeframe, notifies OAE staff of the request, and that their request is unfilled, then other participating candidates in the same race must pull out of the event

Special Elections emergency rule

Staff recounted that candidates participating in the special election had questions about how to pay off previous campaign debt and still comply with program rules. Staff reported that the OAEC Special Elections Subcommittee made a recommendation on this question, that the program would interpret any expenditure for a previous campaign within 45 days of the special election cycle start date as counting for the current campaign, and therefore be within program rules. OAEC unanimously supported that recommendation, and OAE staff will issue it as an emergency rule soon.

Validation testing

* Staff shared the results of efforts to use different methods to reach out to donors who had “return to sender” postcards. Staff had texted and emailed donors who had addresses could not be confirmed via postcards, to verify whether they had given to participating candidates and to ensure that their residential addresses were within City limits. Staff reported back that emails had a higher response rate than texts, and that the technology to email was less costly and more easily-available to utilize.
* OAEC member unanimously supported incorporating emails into this process

Match rate for regularly scheduled election and special election

* Staff shared that based on the number of candidates who achieved certification, the program would be able to maintain a six-to-one match rate for the regularly-scheduled elections.
* OAEC members unanimously supported maintaining a six-to-one match for the regularly-scheduled elections
* Staff discussed the situation with the special election. Because the special election could not have been anticipated, and because there are so many candidates participating in this race, there is a possibility of a budget shortfall that would prevent the program from dispensing as much in matching funds as it will for the regularly-scheduled elections.
* Staff asked to bring OAEC members together for a different meeting, specifically focused on how to address the possibility of a budget shortfall. OAEC members agreed to meet by conference call on the weekend following the deadline for special election candidates to submit their Notices of Intent. Daniel will send out a Doodle Poll to find the best time to schedule the call for

User interviews

* Staff discussed possibility of hiring a User Researcher after the Primary Election had concluded. The goal would be for the User Researcher to interview different stakeholders who had interacted with the OAE program, and then compile a report on the program’s strengths and places for improvement
* OAEC members identified possible questions for the User Researcher to ask interviewees, such as:
  + The complete process of filing NOI forms, applying for certification, taking the trainings, etc
  + Penalties and prohibited expenditures
  + Balance between accessibility and accountability
  + Whether the matching funds provided enough money to run an effective campaign
  + Did donors understand the program
  + What campaigns felt the most confusing aspects were
  + Donors’ comfort level sharing personal information with a governmental entity
  + Was the process simple and accessibility for verified donors who were not registered to vote
  + Why some candidates chose to participate and others declined to join
  + Whether candidates’ participation matter in attracting donors
  + Whether donors want contributions to multiple candidates in the same race matched
  + What campaigns would change or keep the same
  + How difficult it was to sell merchandise
  + Whether the rules around in-kind donations difficult to navigate
  + Whether it was a hindrance that candidates must file for the ballot by petition to participate
  + Whether program staff were helpful and responsive
  + Whether the program helped encourage people to run, or formed a barrier to running