**Portland Elections Commission**

Meeting Agenda

*January 19, 2022*

**PEC Members Present:** Amy Sample Ward, Berk Nelson, Norm Turrill, Sabra Purifoy, Anahi Rodriguez, Jenny Lee, Cristina Nieves, Courtney Helstein. **PEC Members Absent:** Amy Ruiz. **PEC Staff Present**: Director Susan Mottet and Deputy Director Daniel Lewkow.

**Housekeeping** (7:00-7:05 pm)

* Review/approve the December 2021 meeting minutes

Meeting minutes were adopted unanimously

**Program Updates** (7:05-7:20 pm)

* The Notice of Intent (NOI) deadline was January 7th
* Review list of candidates and statuses (see body of email for image). 100% participation!
  + Notable changes:
    - Commissioner #2: Akasha Lawrence Spence & Jamila Dozier dropped out of the race. AJ McCreary & Michael Simpson submitted NOIs.
    - Commissioner #3: Peggy Sue Owens & Steven Cox submitted NOIs
    - We have Auditor candidates: Simone Rede & Brian Setzler!

The Notice of Intent deadline has passed, so staff has clarity about the total number of people who could qualify for SDE, and thus the maximum amount that the program will need to distribute.

* The Commissioner #2 race has 3 candidates: Commissioner Dan Ryan, AJ McCreary, and Michael Simpson\*.
* The Commissioner #3 race has 5 candidates: Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty, Vadim Mozyrsky, Rene Gonzalez, Steven Cox, and Peggy Sue Ownes
* The Auditor’s race has 2 candidates: Simone Rede and Brian Setzler

\*Michael Simpson said he does not plan to raise more than $750, but is determining whether he can clear the SDE qualifying threshold and raise 250 donations from Portlanders.

6 of the candidates have not applied for certification yet. No candidates who are committed to raising more than $750 have decided to skip the program, so the program has 100% participation from these candidates.

* The certification application deadline is approaching on January 28th
* OpenElectionsPortland.org website update and URL question
* Budget update:
  + Review budget process: asked for 50% more as part of Mayor’s budget
  + Review budget projections for program in 2022 cycle
  + Analyze the total matched, distributed, and spent so far

Staff expects there will be no runoff in the Auditor’s race, so staff anticipates saving funds by not needing to issue matching funds in a Runoff. Commissioner Nieves: could you explain why you do not expect a runoff in the Auditor’s race? Director Mottet: As of now there are only 2 candidates running in this race. And it’s unlikely another will jump in, because the requirement that a candidate must be a registered CPA keeps the potential pool of candidates small. It is possible that someone could run outside of the program, but that would be difficult since the Honest Elections contribution limits now apply.

* Director Mottet said that unless nearly every candidate receives the full match of $200,000 in the Primary, the program would be solvent. Most likely the program will carry forward around $1,200,000 into the next election cycle. Since the Mayor’s electoral cycle is traditionally more expensive, Director Mottet has requested 50% more funding from Mayor’s office for next budget allocation.

After the name change took effect on December 10th, staff has updated our branding and title on our website, social media, and soon on our openelections.org website, where campaigns report their donations and expenditures. Director Mottet asked if the website operators—Civic Software Foundation--recommended keeping OpenElections.org, or changing the domain to SmallDonorElections.org. CSF suggested SmallDonorElections.org/Portland, in case other localities or the state adopt a similar program, so that each office can have their own domains. SmallDonorElections.org has been bought by the SDE program, so it cannot lose it. Commissioner Turrill: can we have both and have one direct to the other? Commissioner Nieves: as long as it redirects to the right website, I’m fine. Commissioner Lee: Just make sure the search optimization works because most people find us by Googling us. The PEC’s consensus was to have it as SmallDonorElections/Portland.

**Policy Considerations** (7:20-8:30 pm)

* **7:20-7:30 pm**: Consider changing the NOI and Certification deadlines for the 2026 Auditor’s election and all Auditor cycles moving forward

The program has the Notice of Intent and Certification deadline in January, and staff needs to know as early as possible if the program will be solvent, based on the number of candidates who sign up. Especially for the cycles that include the mayoral races, since they’re so expensive and attract so many candidates. But in the Auditor’s cycles are difference because they do not attract as many candidates and are generally not as expensive. Because the Auditor’s race will likely not threaten the program’s fiscal solvency, there is not as compelling a need to make the deadlines as early as January, so Director Mottet asked if it made sense to move the NOI and Certification deadline later in the year. Would it be confusing if the NOI deadline for that office was different for alternating years? Would just apply in 2026 and forward? Commissioner Turrill: I like that it gives candidates more time to sign up. Chair Sample Ward: Was this part of the previous conversation about adjusting other timelines? Director Mottet: it was not discussed. Chair Sample Ward: I support adjusting it. Commissioner Helstein: I support changing it, because it is such a unique set of qualifications so it is harder to recruit candidates. Commissioner Nieves: My preference is to treat the auditor’s race as close to the other elected officials as possible. Commissioner Turrill: Would the deadline would move for all candidates in that cycle or just the auditor? Director Mottet: all candidates in that cycle because we’re not worried about being insolvent in those years. And we’ll broadcast it widely to candidates, organizations, campaign workers. Director Mottet: I propose setting the Certification Deadline as same as filing deadline in March. But the PEC can decide the exact date in 2026.

* **7:30-7:55 pm**: Consider how to handle candidates who want to participate but don’t get into the race until a major vacancy occurs after the NOI deadline passes.

Director Mottet pointed out how Sen. Akasha Spence Lawrence dropped out of the race after the NOI deadline, leaving the Commissioner #2 race a little less competitive. So other candidates could not jump in to fill that role because they had missed the NOI deadline. A highly competitive candidate could come in and decide not to use the program because they did not have a choice, and if they won, there would have been fewer Commissioners with program experience. Is there a way to allow candidates to join after the NOI deadline? The benefits would be that it be more inclusive and let more candidates experience small donor matching. The downside would be that it would be harder to know the total number of candidates running under SDE, so would be harder to anticipate our budget needs.

Director Mottet asked if there was the ability to join the program in the Runoff, even if the candidate had missed the opportunity to participate in the Primary? Candidates would have to follow certain rules about fundraising in the Primary to make sure they were in compliance with program rules. The code says that the Certification deadline needs to be no later than filing deadline. So maybe they could get certified before, but only get matching funds in the Runoff? The benefit is that it would protect the budget because there can still only be two candidates in the runoff.

Chair Sample Ward: It feels like all we’re solving for is making sure all the winners have run under the program. Director Mottet: if this program deters people from jumping in because they’ve missed the NOI deadline, then that is a problem. Commissioner Helstein: If a candidate is joining that late, and in a competitive race, they likely would not participate anyway. Director Mottet: there’s no advantage to running outside of the program with the Honest Elections contribution limits. Commissioner Helstein: can we get feedback from people who’ve run under the campaign. Commissioner Nieves: maybe ask some of the local political consultants? Commissioner Turrill: maybe we should just reexamine our deadlines? Chair Sample Ward: maybe we just need a little more time to think through the details of the policy? Director Mottet: perhaps the PEC could form a subcommittee that will meet midway between now and the next PEC weeks later? And SDE staff can collect input and then bring a proposal forward to February. Commissioner Nieves, Lee, and Rodriguez volunteered.

* **7:55-8:00 pm**: Consider what other data would be helpful on the data viz, during election cycles or after they are over

Director Mottet asked PEC members to think about this as we move through this cycle.