**Open and Accountable Elections Commission**

*July 15th Meeting*

**Present**: OAEC members: Ricardo Lujan, Amy Sample Ward, Serin Bussell, Sabra Purifoy, Norman Turrill, Anahi Rodriguez. OAEC staff: Susan Mottet and Daniel Lewkow. Members of the public: Cristina Nieves

**Absent**: OAEC members: Amy Ruiz, Courtney Helstein, Berk Nelson

1. Housekeeping (7:05-7:10 pm)
2. Review of June meeting minutes

OAEC unanimously approved the June meeting minutes

1. Budget Update (7:10-7:15 pm)
2. Review of the budget as of July
   1. Review the total amount distributed
   2. Review the projections for the special and regularly-scheduled runoff elections

The OAE program spent $2.1m in matching funds, for all races. It has spent $350k since the May 19th primary. The program received $20k in returned unspent public funds. Staff anticipates that the program will be solvent, even if all of the remaining publicly-financed candidates receive the maximum amount of matching funds.

1. Ongoing Project Update (7:15-7:30 pm)
2. Website transfer: DL update
3. User research and survey

The current effort to transfer the content from Portlandoregon.gov website to the new Portland.gov website is in progress. Staff aims to have it finished, approved, and published by the end of August.

On the user research work, the OAE staff has selected a user researcher, based on the proposals that the program has received. [Amy Santee](https://www.amysantee.com/) has strong experience in user research, and has an understanding of the OAE program, from her work advising the program about OpenElectionsPortland.org. Staff will soon be finished writing the contract, and she’ll then start developing a list of questions. The OAEC subcommittee that was recently created to advise on this project will need to be connected with the user researcher help review and finalize the list of questions.

It will not be feasible or affordable for the user researcher to interview every individual connected with the OAE program. So the user researcher will interview a select number of individuals, and OAE distribute a questionnaire to a larger number of people. OAE staff and potentially the OAEC subcommittee can then follow up with particular individuals who have filled out the questionnaire for a deeper analysis. OAE staff will provide updates about what it is learning from the interviews on a monthly basis.

1. OAEC Report (7:30-7:45 pm)
   1. Data

One issue that OAE staff confronted when analyzing data on previous donations to publicly-financed candidates was how to disaggregate donations. If a donor gave five donations of $10 each, then all five donations would be counted in the total that OpenElectionsPortland.org reports, even though it was all from one donor.

OAE election aides went through each donation line by line, and delineated how many donors there actually were to each campaign. So OAE staff can now develop a sense of how many individuals were engage in our democracy. There are still challenges comparing the data with how many people gave to non-publicly-financed candidates, because ORESTAR automatically aggregates donations of less than $100. OAE staff will ask the campaigns themselves to provide this data, but it is questionable as to whether they will provide it.

* 1. Proposed structure:
     1. Intro
        1. Background on OAE
        2. Goals of OAE
        3. Metrics for goals
        4. Administrative goals and metrics (smooth implementation, audit)
     2. 2020 Cycle Quantitative Performance of OAE in relation to goals
        1. Quantitative program data, like donor size and type and other metrics we have data on
        2. As many meaningful comparisons to non-OAE data as possible (previous cycle or non-OAE candidates, to the extent that we have good data to compare)
     3. 2020 Cycle Qualitative Performance of OAE in relation to goals
        1. Excerpts from user experience research
        2. Feedback program has received

OAEC members reviewed the proposed outline for the OAEC report. Commissioner Sample Ward suggested including an excerpt from the user research and key items of feedback from the candidates, since that would be of direct interest for many readers. The program can include the full feedback and analysis in a later report. Staff suggested separating out candidates from donors from treasurers in the report too.

* + 1. 2020 Cycle Administrative Performance of OAE in relation to goals
       1. Excerpts from user experience research
       2. Feedback program has received
       3. Results of internal audit
    2. Conclusions
       1. Summary of overall conclusions
       2. Reference to the fact that the OAEC will make recommendations for amendments to OAE Code, OAE Admin Rules, and OAE internal policies and practices as an addendum (unless the OAEC is ready with those as the time of initial publication)

Commissioner Sample Ward suggested summarizing all of the changes that the program has made since it was launched in 2019. Commissioner Lujan agreed, adding that it would be a helpful document for other localities and lawmakers to read. Commissioner Sample Ward offered that it would be helpful to give that section to the user researcher, so that she had context as she crafted questions.

Commissioner Turrill suggested using a Google Doc to edit the report. It was pointed out that there may be issues with public meeting laws then, since if enough OAEC members were on the document at the same time, then it could be considered a quorum. OAE staff offered to connect with the City Attorney to ask her opinion on the topic.

1. Program Location (7:45-8:15 pm)
   1. Short term
   2. Long term options discussion:
      1. Auditor’s office
      2. Create an independent body to oversee/house it
      3. House at state/county and have only a technical home inside the City?
      4. Other ideas?
   3. If the OAEC’s long term recommendation is rejected, what is back up recommendation until a permanent home is found?

For the near future, the OAE program is located in the office of Commissioner #1, which will be Commissioner-Elect Carmen Rubio starting in January 2021. However, the program could be moved to another office if the City Council so desired. OAE staff spoke to Rubio, who said that she would be happy to keep the program in her office for the short term. Rubio did not have thoughts to share at the time about what a long-term solution would look like, but offered to join the OAEC conversation to discuss options.

Commissioners Turrill, Lujan, and Bussell supported keeping OAE with the Commissioner #1’s office for the near term. OAEC members did not object to having Commissioner-Elect Rubio be ultimately in charge of the program.

The City’s Charter Review process, which begins in January 2021, could consider the possibility of creating an independent body that is merged with the Portland Elections Office. It could also include the Honest Elections enforcement, since the Auditor has the ability to delegate that to another office. This new body would emulate many other independent election offices in other cities and localities.

One other idea that was considered was whether to situate OAE in the county’s office, and then create an IGA between the City and the County to operate the program. Commissioner-Rubio was in favor of exploring this as an option.