Open and Accountable Elections Commission

October Meeting Minutes

*October 21, 2020*

**Present:** **OAEC Members** Berk Nelson, Amy Sample Ward, Sabra Purifoy, Amy Ruiz, Anahi Rodriguez, Courtney Helstein. **OAE Staff:** Susan Mottet and Daniel Lewkow. **Public:** Cristina Nieves

**Absent:** **OAEC Member:** Ricardo Lujan

Housekeeping (7:05 pm-7:10 pm)

* Review September OAEC Meeting Minutes

The OAEC unanimously approved the September meeting minutes, contingent on the changes that Commissioner Turrill made be incorporated.

OAEC Chair Bussell accepted a new job with the City of Portland, so she has resigned her position as Chair of the Commission. The OAEC will need to appoint a replacement to serve as Chair for the remainder of her term, which ends Apr 30, 2021. OAEC members were open to having that discussion either at the November meeting or at the January meeting. Several other Commissioners will have terms ending in April 2021, but they all have the option of serving a new term after that. Commissioner Helstein offered to reach out to Next Up, to see if there were any young leaders who would like to join.

**Program Updates**

Of the three final candidates participating in OAE, two have reached their fundraising caps (Mayoral candidate Sarah Iannarone and Commissioner #4 candidate Mingus Mapps). Commissioner Eudaly has not yet reached her fundraising cap, but is close.

User Research Project (7:10 pm-7:20 pm)

* Update on project
* Review initial data on donor survey

The user research consultant’s contract has been finalized and signed. Amy Santee is now part of this project. The questions have been finalized too. We are in the process of scheduling interviews with candidates, campaign staff, and stakeholders who engaged with the program.

Staff sent out a survey to around 5000 donors who gave to candidates running in the Primary and Runoff elections. We have interim results from 400 people: most respondents understood the concept of the six-to-one match, however they had less of a grasp on the other details and the program rules. 49% learned about OAE from a candidate telling them about it, while 25% heard about it on the news. The vast majority had given to a candidate before (such as President, Senator, etc), but 53% had never given to a candidate for City office before. Most did not know that they could only have their donation matched to one candidate per race, and 80% had not seen the data visualization on OpenElectionsPortland.org. Those were preliminary results, and they might change if more respondents fill out the survey. Staff expects the user report to be finished in January 2021.

Charter Amendment Language (7:20 pm-7:40 pm)

One potential amendment would be to create an oversight commission for both OAE and the other elections work that the Portland Elections Office currently executes. It’s possible to name the new commission the Open and Accountable Elections Commission, so that current OAEC members would be able to smoothly integrate onto it and not have to restart the entire application process. But if there’s legal analysis saying that that would be an issue, the commission would need a new name.

OAEC Commissioner Turrill wanted to make the office truly independent from the City Commissioners’ offices, to ensure budget integrity. Director Mottet points out that should the OAEC make a recommendation about the law, that the City Council might then consider the OAEC under its purview. So it may be necessary to create a vision statement that would allow the commission to make legislative recommendations. The charter amendment would also need to allow for the OAE office to use city resources (such as technology, legal analysis, office space, etc) and the ability to issue subpoenas and compel information.

Potential Amendments to the OAE Code (7:40 pm-8:00 pm)

* OAEC members supported the proposal to change the language of the Code, so that the OAE office could remain with the Commissioner #1 office until at least 2022.
* OAEC members supported eliminating the primary matching period and the general matching period, to allow candidates to get trained as early as January 2021, and to spend the time collecting the needed qualifying donations.
* OAEC members supported allowing for candidates to raise matchable donations up to ten days before Election Day, instead of the three-week timeline in the current law
* OAEC members supported redrafting the Code to say that the program could accept up to 0.03% of the budget, instead of the current 0.02%.

Updated Documents and Forms (8:00 pm–8:15 pm)

OAE staff provided drafts of the revised forms, for the OAEC’s review:

* OAEC members were fine with the new Return of Funds form
* For the Complaints form, OAEC members suggested looking into electronic notary public, realigning the margins, and correcting the misspelling in “Complaintant”
* For the Notice of Intent form, OAEC members suggested clarifying that the NOI needed to be turned in by the deadline, while the other forms could be submitted up to seven days after the deadline
* On the Donation Form, OAEC members suggested clarifying that the campaign representative who physically received the gift needed to sign for cash donations, and correcting the misspelling in “initials”