

Government Transition Advisory Committee

Government Transition Advisory Committee Special Meeting October 3, 2023, 6:00 p.m. Minutes

Attendance

Committee Members					
Name	Present	Absent	Name	Present	Absent
Leah Benson	X		Fred Neal		Excused
David Burnell		Excused	Amy Randel	X	
Jane Demarco	X		Juanita Santana	X	
Jose Gamero Cassinelli	X		Amy Wood	X	
Manie Grewal	X				
Lory Hefele	X		Alternate Members		
Joe Hertzberg		Excused	Brian Belica	X	
Juliet Hyams	X		Terry Harris	X	
Zach Kearl	X		William Kinsey	X	
Destiny Magaña-Pablo	X		Terrence Paschal		X
Maabi Muñoz	X				

Staff Present			
Julia Meyer	June Reyes	Nicole Forbes	Shoshanah Oppenheim
Sofia Alvarez-Castro	Deborah Scroggin, Auditors Office	James Eccles, Auditors Office	Samantha Gladu, United Way
Grace Ramsey, Democracy Rising	Tim Scott, Multnomah County Elections	Scotty Sherington, Multnomah County Elections	

Welcome & Introductions

Julia welcomed everyone and provided Zoom logistics and introduced Spanish interpretation, American Sign language and closed captioning.

Meeting Agenda

Co-Chair Benson reviewed the meeting agenda.

Committee Business

Co-Chair Benson reviewed the committee business. The excused absences for the meeting are Committee Members: Burnell, Hertzberg and Neal.

Working Agreements

Co-Chair Benson reviewed the Committee's working agreements.

Government Transition Advisory Committee

- Question about the agenda and in the last meeting, we didn't have public comment near the front of the agenda. If we are going out requesting public comment, would like to give confidence that people would be doing public comment before 6:30pm. Was there a conversation about that?
 - Staff Response: Asking about the one meeting I missed, our practice has been right after committee business, so it is a known time that community members don't have to wait around for items.
- Ask that that it can continue to be our practice and at all costs avoid moving it.

Public Comment

Julia introduced public comment, there was no one signed up for public comment. Anyone can submit public comment by calling 311, through our online comment form on the transition website or emailing transtion@portlandoregon.gov.

Committee Updates

Committee reviewed the updates from the workplan workgroup, city organization update and community engagement update.

The committee then reviewed an opportunity to moderate a public forum for the neighborhood associations. Then opened for questions and discussion on the opportunity to co-moderate events like this.

- Would it be all the committee attending to moderate?
- Could we state on there, that this isn't a position but we are moderating?
 - Co-chair Gamero Cassinelli - In our media guidelines - even if we say we aren't taking a side, people will think that we are.
- Thinks that this is a great idea and should do it.
- What is the downside? Facilitating is a bit of a different role then our community engagement.
 - Co-Chair Gamero Cassinelli - We aren't doing our presentation and a group could have an agenda that we might not support as GTAC.
- If staff will be there, then I'm not sure this is a good idea. Facilitation is a difficult role and not in our job description.
- Could we use the term mediator or discussion leader to avoid endorsing another organization's position?
- Thinks its an opportunity we shouldn't miss.
- Some hesitation, because it's a different role and means we have to say yes to other groups and not sure we are prepared to do that.

Government Transition Advisory Committee

- We should treat it as a trial run and debrief afterward's. Concern around spreading people too thin.
- Opportunity to be in front of the community, to say we aren't here to take a side and to get the agenda ahead of time.
- Could be a lot of preparation ahead of time to do these types of events, it varies.
- In this role, who is presenting?
 - They original design is to have city staff present and GTAC moderate.
- To introduce city staff and present? The idea is that we free up city staff and to share information. A bit off the scope, but I'm fine with it.
- Role of GTAC is to do community engagement and can involve a lot of things. It's a sign of trust in our role.
- This is an opportunity for us to show up, not just use the organizations we already know.

Vote by hands – all raised in favor, Committee Member Gamero Cassinelli abstain – motion passes, and the committee will consider events where committee members are moderating.

Reporting back of GTAC outreach

- Met with business group and had some cynicism, did have some misinformation about ranked choice voting. Met with another group who needed lots of baseline information about charter reform, providing a good service with our outreach.
- Met with district coalition offices, desire to reduce ambiguity around district coalition offices, concern about changes in code coming forward around 3.96 and around the role of office of neighborhood involvement that took 5 years before and the amount of time with review. Engaging with coalitions about the changes that are coming with the move from 7 to 4.

Elections Methods

Sofia Alvarez-Castro, Inclusive Democracy Manager and James Eccles, Elections Analyst, led the committee through election methods. Then opened it up to questions and discussion. Tim Scott, Multnomah County Elections Director, joined the conversation part way through.

- How were the districts chosen to go in which election?
- When you do overvotes, what happens? Do the other votes count?
 - Staff Response: Yes, we try and capture the most number of votes as possible. It skips the overvotes and makes the third vote – the first.

Government Transition Advisory Committee

- Does the computer read it this way?
 - Staff Response: Yes, normally done by the software on the computer.
- How much does it cost to update and how do we trust that?
 - Staff Response: It doesn't cost the city anything, its on the county.
 - Staff Response (Tim Scott): cost is about \$150,000 and we are well into the software certification on the federal level.
- Are you able to walk through what the ballot looks like for Ranked Choice voting?
- If you had to do a recount, the manual count would be more complex?
 - Staff Response: The math does not change, but the process would be handled by the county.
 - Staff Response: For the recount, with single winner there would be multiple passes with the ballots, it would be extensive and expensive to do a hand recount. For multi-winner, we are still working through what that would look like and have plenty of time to work it out.

Voter Education

Sofia Alvarez-Castro - Inclusive Democracy Manager, James Eccles - Elections Analyst, Deborah Scroggin - Auditors Office, Scotty Sherington - Multnomah County Elections, Samantha Gladu -United Way and Grace Ramsey - Democracy Rising, reviewed the voter education plan and then opened it up for discussion and questions.

- Request to share out talking points around voter education and ranked choice voting with GTAC.
- Question around candidate trainings – are they mandatory or voluntary?
 - Staff Response: there are no mandatory candidate trainings, besides the small donor elections program and will encourage training and remove barriers to access.
- Looking forward to asking questions. Will we be able to dive into the topic again in the voter education sub-committee?
- In the hypothetical, where your candidate needed 26 votes and got 30 – can you clarify how the excess votes are allocated?
 - Staff Response: We look at the first rank, there is a surplus fraction equation in the election code. Its an equation to get to an average – $4/30$ ths - and put that into their second vote on the ballot.
 - Staff response: Your vote is a dollar, if your favorite candidate only needs 90 cents – you get to spend 10 cents on your next candidate.
- Does that mean I vote 1 and $4/30$ ths times?
 - Staff Response: No, you only get one vote. Your one vote is just split if someone goes over the threshold needed to win.

Government Transition Advisory Committee

- How will voter education efforts handle misinformation – like only vote for me? Is that misinformation or campaign information?
 - Staff Response: If you look at evidence and run a campaign off it, it's not misinformation. If they say something wrong about voting, we will correct it.
 - Staff Response: That is not misinformation, just bad strategy and something that we watch for. Voters find ballots intuitive, even if they are getting that message as intuitive and will vote the ranking.
- Will there be voter education to high schools, and will it be different than other outreach?
 - Staff Response: Yes, we are doing it already, in Multnomah County you can vote at 16 and get their ballots at 18. So yes, we will be doing that outreach.
- For people who are houseless and now that we have districts, how will they vote in the new system?
 - Staff Response: People only need a physical location or intersection in order to register to vote. That physical location determines their district, and you can choose a separate address for mailing.
- Is it easy to change that address?
 - Staff Response: Yes, you can do it at the Oregon Votes website at any time. Updating is very simple.
- For the hard-to-reach voter education, do you feel confident and prepared with the budget you have?
 - Staff Response: The budget could always be higher. When you divide 675000 with the number of registered voters – its .64 per person. Proportionally it will be more, but looking forward to partnering with GTAC as we strategize to make sure there are big investments in voter education so we can do this justice.
- Shout out to the transition resources and videos are very helpful, getting questions about ranked choice voting. Question around using a “unique” form of electing multiple candidates and is hearing that more in community – is it unique because of three candidates in one district or are we truly unique?
 - Staff Response: Portland looks different, but we are not unique – we are borrowing from people who have done this before, like Minneapolis and Cambridge. Not the first time its being done. Is it common, no, but we are able to borrow from others and leaning on their experience.
 - Staff Response: Internationally, its very well used, in the US, less used but we are not the first to use ranked choice voting. The process on the back end is different, but for the voter – its all the same. There are a few other cities doing this, Palm Desert, Minneapolis, Cambridge – but there are best practices we can lean on in doing this work.

Government Transition Advisory Committee

- With United Way's role – when is the rollout and what focus will you have? Is there an opportunity to focus in on future form of government and who to reach if you are looking for assistance?
 - Staff Response: with the RFP process in January, there is still another election in May that won't have any rankings. In June, we will start community strategy launched, events over the summer and fall. Will be focusing on voting districts and here is how you use your ballot. Some conversations will be why there are changes. There is a valuable role with GTAC to add this work to it, and together we can strategize on how to cover the city in the extent that we can.
- Why Ranked Choice Voting versus Star Voting?
 - Staff Response: There are benefits and downsides to any system you put in place, the charter commission looked at many different options. STAR voting is not in large jurisdictions like Minneapolis, so it would be a newer system. That said, the charter commission took community feedback and input in every step of the way, listened to ideas, did research and then it went to a vote and had a landslide victory.
 - Staff Response: This is the system we are using now, no matter how you feel about the system, but we need to make sure you know how to vote in November 2024.
- How does the overall voter education budget compare to a typical year?
 - Staff Response: The county can talk about what they do in a typical year. The city has not done voter education, prior to the charter having a requirement to do voter education, we haven't done it. We have had candidate guides and outreach and materials available passive. So it's the first time being done.
 - Staff Response: We've had our program in place since 2014, the majority of the budget goes to staffing for 1 person when we had around 350,000 registered voters, now approaching 600,000 eligible voters and up to 2 FTE now. If you look at just the cost of the hard-to-reach voter contact, that is significant compared to what Multnomah County normally spends on voter education. It's a significant investment to make initially, but it's the ongoing work and working closely to make sure our resources and efforts are spent well and certainly the messaging needs to be collaborative. To that point, it does need to be an investment that's made over and over again. This is voting behavior, if its only once every 2 to 4 years that people see these ballots, to get that habit built up – it's very important to have that continued investment on the city's side.
- How are we proportionally sending the available new budget on general voter education compared to the hard-to-reach voters?

Government Transition Advisory Committee

- Staff Response: The city has the hard-to-reach voter contract at 675,000 and for this fiscal year we have separately another 200,000 on strategies we want to implement together.
- Staff Response: That's what the city has, we overlap voters with the county going to the same voters, Auditors office has a separate budget and we can put something together for the sub-committee.
- Looking forward to a media plan around this and to do work on our behalf if we ask.

Staff asked how involved people would like to be involved in planning and the sub-committee. It might be a good idea to do that in the first meeting.

- What might be helpful would be – between the budget and team, here's our plan and here is where we are short of resources and where GTAC might be involved or can help with.
- Not just things you want our opinion on, but also talking points because are getting those same questions in our engagement work.
- Excited for the plan and training for the committee, it will make it easier for us to truly participate in the voter education efforts.
 - Staff Response: We are working on that plan with all our overlapping roles and work. We will have a draft and involve you in that plan and get feedback.
- Who in the City of Portland government is this committee of work, working with other then the transition team if any?
 - Staff Response: We are working with Auditors office, Elections office and the Transition Team for the city.

Next Steps

Co-Chair Benson reviewed the next steps and the proposed upcoming schedule.

Meeting adjourned, 7:55p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted,
Nicole Forbes, Transition Project Coordinator II

Meeting Chat:

- 8:01:00 From Amy Wood to Hosts and panelists : Nevermind!
- 18:01:27 From Destiny Magana-Pablo : welcome back Julia!
- 18:01:41 From Amy Randel : Welcome back Julia!
- 18:09:21 From Terry Harris : Maybe a question for Nicole, but are we due for another monthly comment report soon?

Government Transition Advisory Committee

18:10:41 From Julia Meier (she/her), staff : @Terry - You will receive the September 2023 monthly updates, including the public comment report, next week.

18:11:01 From Terry Harris : thx

18:16:58 From Amy Randel : I support collaboration on this event, I'd love to volunteer. I don't share the concern about this appearance portraying misleading information regarding our stance as a group on the issues.

18:18:33 From Amy Wood to Hosts and panelists : Can we attend as a presenter vs. facilitator?

18:18:42 From Amy Wood : Can we attend as a presenter vs. facilitator?

18:22:38 From Amy Randel : Hearing from the group, I'd also want to know more about other roles we could play

18:22:42 From William Kinsey : An idea: perhaps we can continue to be a presenter about city transition, and then use a discussion format. This approach avoids implication of endorsing other groups' views.

18:43:21 From Zach Kearnl : @Julia, can we replace our existing slide on RCV for our community engagement presentation with this slide? It's extremely useful

18:43:37 From Julia Meier (she/her), staff : @Zach - Yes!

18:46:19 From Zach Kearnl : TY!

18:57:00 From Terry Harris : My question: what is the current status of the *legal* infrastructure around this? Both county and city. What are the rules/regs/procedure manuals/whatever required? And what is the schedule/status?

19:13:14 From Jose Gamero Cassinelli : 2024 Candidate Guide PDF:
<https://www.portland.gov/elections/documents/city-portland-candidate-guide-november-2024-municipal-general-election/download>

19:18:32 From Jane DeMarco to Hosts and panelists : The presentation on voter education and voting was wonderful. Thank you

19:19:28 From Deborah Scroggin to Hosts and panelists : Elections rule governing candidate filing, open for public comment for the next several weeks- please take a look! <https://www.portland.gov/auditor/rede/news/2023/9/29/notice-proposed-rulemaking-ara-1601-election-candidates-september-2023>

19:20:33 From Deborah Scroggin to Hosts and panelists : Much appreciation to James Eccles on our staff for explaining math in a public meeting!

Government Transition Advisory Committee

19:34:13 From Amy Wood : Adding to that budget question, how does the overall voter education budget compare to a typical year?

19:54:28 From Lory Hefele to Julia Meier (she/her), staff(Direct Message) : Welcome back! Excited to hear about your trip. Jane mentioned signing up for a subcommittee - did I miss the sign up?

19:55:06 From Julia Meier (she/her), staff to Lory Hefele(Direct Message) : We are going to bring it back to the next meeting on 10.17, but folks did agree to form two subcommittees so far.