



# Government Transition Advisory

## Government Transition Advisory Committee Meeting November 15, 2023, 6:00 p.m. Minutes

### Attendance

Commissioners					
Name	Present	Absent	Name	Present	Absent
Leah Benson	X		Maabi Muñoz		X
David Burnell		X	Fred Neal	X	
Jane DeMarco	X		Amy Randel	X	
Jose Gamero Cassinelli	X		Juanita Santana	X	
Manie Grewal		Excused	Amy Wood	X	
Lory Hefele	X				
Joe Hertzberg	X		<b>Alternate Members</b>		
Juliet Hyams	X		Brian Belica	X	
Zach Kearn	X		Terry Harris	X	
Destiny Magaña-Pablo	X		William Kinsey	X	
			Terrance Paschal		X

Staff Present			
Julia Meier	June Reyes	Diana Shiplet	Shoshanah Oppenheim
Barry Pack	Haley Blonsley		

### Welcome

Julia welcomed everyone and provided meeting logistics and informed everyone how to access closed captioning and interpretation services. Co-chair Gamero Cassinelli provided an overview of the meeting agenda.

### Commission Business

#### Preview of next co-chair rotation

Co-chair Gamero Cassinelli outlined the responsibilities of the co-chairs and how the transition to a new rotation will take place over the upcoming month.

#### Working agreement

Co-chair Gamero Cassinelli read aloud the committee's working agreements.

### Discussion with Mayor Wheeler

Co-chair Benson introduced Mayor Wheeler and provided an overview of the committee's work to date, including upcoming subcommittee topics and ongoing community engagement. She provided highlights of community input, including confusion around ranked choice voting, interest in how district offices will operate, the cost of the transition, and a lack of opportunities for public comment. Co-chair Gamero Cassinelli state that prior to the meeting, the committee requested the Mayor provide input on his reflections on the past year of the transition, what aspects of the transition he is most proud of and most disappointed in, and what opportunities and challenges he sees on the horizon.

Mayor Wheeler thanked the committee and transition team for all the work done to date and stated he is generally pleased with how the transition is going overall. He expressed gratitude for the successful completion of the districting and salary processes, the partnership with Multnomah County on ranked choice voting, updates to code related to council operations, and the work of Facilities regarding upgrades to council chambers and office space updates. He informed the group that today was the last meeting of the city council in the current council chambers space. The council will meet remotely while equipment is moved to the temporary meeting space in preparation for the remodel. He is thankful for the work of the bureaus in developing the updated city organizational chart, even if he doesn't entirely agree with all of the choices made by council when approving the resolution.

The committee and Mayor Wheeler discussed the following a questions and answers:

Question: You have positioned yourself as the champion of the transition, even to the extent of connecting your decision not to seek another term with your laser-focused commitment to the transition. The Government Transition Advisory Commission is focused on ensuring that the transition is effective, efficient, and consistent with the City's core values. Since our goals are aligned, how can this committee most effectively support you in your efforts and how can you most effectively support us in ours? What is the best approach to moving through disagreements in vision and/or approach to the transition process?

Answer: Mayor Wheeler stated that the best way the committee can be helpful is to continue to execute on the work plan developed with the transition team and supporting the work necessary to hire and onboard a city administrator. There will be lots of need for public education, particularly around ranked choice voting, and the committee is a credible community voice in this work. He stated the budget process, with outcome-based budgeting, will probably also have lots of questions, to which the committee can help to respond. Lastly, he encouraged the committee to continue to be creative and innovative in its work.

Question: What are the most common questions and comments that your office's constituent service staff are fielding about the transition and, more specifically what piece or pieces of the transition process do you think the general public has the most misconceptions about?

Answer: Mayor Wheeler stated there is a misconception that the Mayor has the ability to make city-wide decision unilaterally. The reality is that he continues to need the support of commissioners to get things done. As an example, there is a perception that he made all the decisions on the recently approved city organizational chart, even though that process was led by the Chief Administrative Officer, Michael Jordan, with input from bureau leadership and council offices. He thinks there is probably a lot of confusion from members of the public following the council amendments approved at the November 1<sup>st</sup> council meeting.

He stated that his office is hearing a lot about the budget and cost of the transition, particularly the differences between the budget estimates provided during the election and the budget likely to be proposed for the upcoming fiscal year. Additionally, they received input on the need to address climate emergency, particularly the desire to create the position of a new climate officer in the Office of the future City Administrator. Lastly, they heard a great deal about the role of neighborhood associations in the new city organizational chart. These recommendations have been reflected in the new organizational chart.

Question: Given the approach the other commissioners are taking on the transition, namely retaining full control over their bureaus through the end of their term, it seems that there will be a sort of “transition cliff” on January 1, 2025, where the new government will need to take swift and sweeping actions. How does that impact your approach to carrying out the transition? What impact do you anticipate those actions having for onboarding the new government? Does the new government need a detailed playbook for an immediate to-do list to get started?

Answer: Mayor Wheeler stated that there should not be in a “light switch” moment, which is why he hoped to be able to transition sooner and test the system with an interim city administrator and interim deputy administrators. Council did not agree with this proposal. However, he believes that the City can get most of the way to where he intended by the end of 2024 because the charter transition team is working on the policy and process pieces and there will be opportunities for the committee to advise on the approach and materials. The risk of what council did in maintaining administrative authority over bureaus is that there may be confusion between the role of the interim city administrator and the role of the legislative body. The question becomes if there is a disagreement between council and the interim city administrator, who decides the outcome? Not all of this has been worked out, but the commissioners have pledged to work together to sort out these areas of confusion. Mayor Wheeler stated he is confident the City will land in a good place on these issues.

Question: As you know, this transition is difficult for so many reasons, but what do you say to Portlanders who distrust the current mayor, council and bureaucracy making decisions for an entirely new set of decisions-makers in an entirely new system? What do you think are the roles for those who aren’t currently in office or in the city bureaucracy and who are they? What role do you think candidates running for office should play?

Answer: Mayor Wheeler stated that government distrust is at an all-time high and that’s why Portlanders approved such a radically different charter reform passed overwhelmingly. They made it clear what they want out of their government, including honoring collaboration across the city’s service areas. We do lots of collaboration currently, despite the form of government, not because of it. He is confident the professional management of the city will be a huge improvement. Mayor Wheeler stated that, while he doesn’t expect to change any hearts or minds about the current elected officials, if there can be a seamless transition, with bureaus already realigned and deputies and directors working in a collaborative and collegial manner, the public will notice this. On the flip side, if we don’t do this correctly, we will have 12 new council members and a new mayor coming in having to build a new government with limited experience. As far as potential candidates, they are paying attention to what’s going on and he’s grateful they have been engaged in this work are giving feedback and advice on the transition. The sooner the City can do a “dry run” for the new form of government, the better. This might not be exactly what he envisioned, but it will be close.

Question: Over the decades of siloing of bureaus many have duplicated services such as IT, purchasing, permitting, community relations, and citizen budget committees. What can be accomplished in the next budget cycle to condense these duplications without having to wait for future improvements?

Answer: Mayor Wheeler stated that there is an opportunity to streamline and consolidate. He will be more specific about this in his upcoming budget guidance. This guidance will have very specific instructions and requirements for each unique service area. There is also an opportunity to reevaluate citizen input into the budget process.

Question: In a recent council meeting there was a lot of time spent talking about the urban forestry and the city's tree canopy. Meanwhile, in northwest Portland PBOT is talking about removing up to 30 trees for intersection improvements. How do you interpret this discrepancy? Is this symptomatic of the current form of government?

Answer: Mayor Wheeler stated that, yes, this is a symptom of the bureau silos. We heard a lot about this, particularly around the climate officer and where in an organizational structure that position should reside. He provided an examples of how bureau decisions related to things like trees are currently siloed, causing a waste of staff time and city resources. If we had a climate officer, whose responsibility it was to pay attention to the tree canopy as a whole, issues like these might not occur.

Question: We have received a number of community questions about the role of the mayor in the new form of government, which is one of the harder ones to answer in order to give people a sense of what the Mayor's core responsibilities will be beyond hiring the new city administrator. From your advantage point, what other important roles will the mayor have and what qualities should people be looking for when electing a mayor?

Answer: Mayor Wheeler stated he's heard both that the future Mayor will have more authority as the head of the administration and also that they will have less authority because they no longer sit on council. He thinks that both of those ideas are incorrect because for any issue, whether it's the responsibility of the city or not, the future mayor will be asked to respond. They will have quite a bit of authority – such as ability to do executive directives and craft the budget. Most importantly, though, they will always have the “bully pulpit”, giving them the ability to have access to the public's attention. A lot of what's needed for the next mayor is around relationship building – having good, professional relationships with all 12 members of city council.

Question: As someone running for City Council: the new government structure is not just a change to how government works, but also a change to what campaigns for city council look like. Do you have any thoughts about how city council candidates this year can help set the tone and shape future election cycles?

Answer: Mayor Wheeler stated that if he were running for council, it would be important to recognize that you're going to get elected based on your performance within your district. Candidates and future council members will be expected to spend more time going to community events, participating in neighborhood association meetings, non-profit association meetings, etc. They will need to become experts in their districts, which is exciting. He would advise candidates to not be solely focused on only their own district because the problems occurring in those neighborhoods are not entirely dissimilar to problems occurring in other neighborhoods. Councilors will need to look both into their own districts and at the other districts to find solutions.

Question: Currently, there isn't a culture that permeates throughout the organization regarding truly effective community partnerships. That's one of the visions or goals of this transition – for a participatory form of government. This appears to not be reflected in the new organizational chart as presented. Right now, every bureau does their own training for their advisory committees, so there is no consistency. We should take advantage of this change in government to develop a real structure for a centralized training system for city advisory committees, so they all have the understanding and the

same level of understanding about their role in a participatory government. So many other things need to take place there is concern that this need will be lost.

Answer: Mayor Wheeler stated that city council's legitimacy comes from the public, but people feel disconnected from their government right now. A robust structure geared toward community engagement, both the taking of input and the reflecting back on ways that input was or was not used, is important. In the new organizational chart, there is a community engagement officer whose responsibility it will be to help with this work.

Mayor Wheeler offered his thanks to the commission for its work.

### **Verbal Public Comment**

Michael Veale – Thanked the committee for their work. Stated that as context for his comments, the runway cost for the new government is currently running \$13m over the existing budgeted resources and there are additional cost implications for a lot of the things that this commission has discussed. Last week's budget work session highlighted that the city has significant budget constraints. One of the fundamental topic that the committee and transition team need to grapple with is flow of matters which require council input and approval, interaction model between the legislative and executive branches, and how and when stakeholder input will be solicited. It's his understanding that these issues were first raised by former member Bill Farver in June, and Mr. Veale wrote to the committee afterward. The recent subcommittee meeting on legislative process there was some discussion of process, a separate legislative policy staff, and district offices. These all have significant cost implications, which doesn't mean they are bad, but we should stay centered on that. All these specifics need to be firmed up before Council onboarding. Hopefully socializing it will speed up the time so that we can have something to council so they can be instantiated in code when they are impaneled in January of 2025. He stated that he is worried about phase 2 being post January 2025, and it appears from tonight that the Mayor might be agreeing with him. Hopefully, fiscal year 2025 can better anticipate and fiscal year 2026 can be better informed with that. The objective is for the council to hit the ground running, recognizing that it can and will evolve based on experience. It's not going to be perfect day one, but we've got to get something in. Until he sees all of this stuff flowed through and understood, he thinks that we're not understanding the cost implications. As stated in his prior communications, this means defining, and he suspects staff is doing this, what are all the different kinds of ordinances, resolutions, appointments, everything that goes through council, the flows the points, the bodies that review, and what not, the budget process proposal, how to propose, and review. How policy priorities are identified, defined, reviewed, approved, etc. And how, and when, public input is handled. All of that implies a lot of work of a lot of people and if we don't understand that all upfront it will have implications later on in terms of cost. We cannot afford for the council to muddle along without the first pass by January 2<sup>nd</sup>. Regarding the legislative policy staff, there are two schools – Minneapolis' comprehensive analysis is heavy on strong mayor cities most with separate heavy staff, the list of cities which were in the material you reviewed on Monday had some council-manager forms of government as well and they are light on staff. We have to find some middle ground. Staff mentioned they are working on this, you guys expressed interest, you have to work together and collaborate. Doing this sequentially, which is what he perceives and going on, is just going to burn up time, and you're going to get frustrated and there will be lots of what if analysis. It's going to take time.

### **Committee Engagement Updates**

June provided key takeaways from the October 2023, Community Engagement Status Update. The latest update includes zip code data, which confirms a lack of input from east Portland communities. Included

in the report is guidance on how to find nuance and meaning from large amounts of public input. She thanked the committee for the increased number of engagement presentations they are giving.

Group members gave an overview of recent engagements including the topics of interest and questions asked by community members. Much of the interest is related to district offices, excitement and confusion about ranked choice voting, concerns about city budget, and how neighborhood associations will work with the future government.

### **October 2024 Transition Status Update and Annual Report**

Shoshanah Oppenheim gave an overview of the October Transition Status Update and the Transition Annual Report, including:

- The beginning of implementation of the change management strategy
- Partnerships with the county on ranked choice voting and voter education strategies
- An upcoming resolution from facilities in preparation for city hall updates
- The passing of the new city organizational chart resolution on November 1

Group asked about how closely the city is monitoring the county's software updates necessary for implementing ranked choice voting. The transition team is working closely with Multnomah County, which has a close partnership with its software vendor doing the work and achieving the required certifications. This can be added to a future agenda for a more in-depth conversation. Additionally, the County is also working closely with the City on robust voter education.

Group asked if they could have access to the ranked choice voting overview early in the new year. Shoshanah stated this is part of a suite of information which the committee will have access to as soon as it's completed. Group discussed the need for an early start to candidate education and for it to include information regarding the possibility of a slow the release of election results due to the new tabulation processes.

Group provided reflections of the work done over the last year. They expressed gratitude for the efforts and cooperation of the committee members, the leadership of the committee co-chairs, and the work of the transition team. Group expressed excitement for upcoming engagement and presentation opportunities, and the work of the two subcommittees. Frustration was expressed regarding how challenging the late the late start of this committee and how that made the first few months of the committee's work challenging. Concerns were raised regarding how to change culture in the city's organization – particularly around increased community participation, how to lead the narratives regarding this work in the community rather than be reactive, and the next council possibly not being given all the tools they need to be successful.

### **Next Steps**

Co-chair Benson outlined the next steps. The next full committee meeting is December 5, 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

### **Meeting adjourned, 8:00 p.m.**

Minutes respectfully submitted,  
Diana Shiplet, SPOT Coordinator

## **Chat**

18:01:30 From ASL Interpreter To All Panelists:

Hello, this is Katie - one of the ASL interpreters. Kevin, the other interpreter is waiting to be made a panelist

18:21:57 From Zach Kearn To Everyone:

For the public record, here is the Government Transition Advisory Committee workplan: <https://www.portland.gov/transition/documents/government-transition-advisory-committee-workplan-approved-11123/download>

18:24:56 From Leah Benson To Everyone:

For people tuning in, Mike Jordan (who has been referred to multiple times) is the Chief Administrative Officer for the City

18:33:50 From Jose Gamero Cassinelli To Everyone:

If any community members have questions for the Mayor, please post it to the Q&A. Thank you!

18:51:12 From Jane DeMarco To Everyone:

Will there be Job Descriptions or a list of roles for Mayor or City Councilors, so that anyone wishing to run knows what they are getting into?

18:52:32 From Joe Hertzberg To Everyone:

Response to Jane: As I read it, this is part of the charge of the governance subcommittee.

18:54:54 From Jane DeMarco To Everyone:

Good! Thanks Joe

19:05:41 From Diana Shipler (she/her), staff To All Panelists:

If everyone can speak up clearly, that would be helpful. Thank you.

19:10:42 From William Kinsey To Everyone:

Do we have a "final" city organization diagram to share in our presentations to communities?

19:12:21 From June Reyes (she/her), staff To Everyone:

An updated portion of the city organization diagram is in the latest presentation in the GTAC folder, but the whole chart is available as well -- I can include that link in the talking points.

19:15:12 From Fred Neal To Everyone:

Please do, June.

19:17:09 From Amy Randel To Everyone:

The annual report looks great and is so informative- way to go putting it together Transition team!

19:19:09 From Zach Kearn (he/him) To Everyone:

For the public record, here is the transition annual report: <https://www.portland.gov/transition/annual-report-2023>

19:22:47 From Destiny Magana-Pablo To Everyone:

especially when the candidates written need to be submitted on a certain day

19:28:10 From Destiny Magana-Pablo To Everyone:

Kudos to our amazing transition team!!! A mountain of a task

19:33:29 From Amy Wood To Everyone:

Having trouble hearing the audio in the room.

19:33:37 From Kevin- ASL Interpreter To All Panelists:

Interpreters can't hear anything

19:34:09 From Leah Benson To Everyone:

Sorry about that. We're working on figuring out the mics.

19:34:35 From June Reyes (she/her), staff To Everyone:

Can you hear better?

19:34:46 From Kevin- ASL Interpreter To All Panelists:

Better now

19:35:21 From Kevin- ASL Interpreter To All Panelists:

Thank you

19:35:27 From Rosie Spanish Interpreter To All Panelists:

Yes, Thank you!

19:45:42 From Terry Harris To Everyone:

Thanks Joe, very well-said.

19:54:55 From Jane DeMarco To Everyone:

Best book ever for anyone going thru change "Who Moved My Cheese, by Dr Spencer Johnson. Great and easy book for every city employee and for managers and HR to hold employees to demonstrate their cheese following

19:56:07 From Amy Wood To Everyone:

I wonder if we should organize a series of GTAC events that create more news along the way about the transition.

-Candidate info sessions

-Ranked choice voting practice events

-Etc.

19:56:35 From Amy Randel To Everyone:

Amy I love that idea!

19:57:04 From William Kinsey To Everyone:

Yes - Amy's comment would scale up outreach.

20:00:45 From Fred Neal To Everyone:

What's the time of the Nov 29 voter ed subcommitteemetg?

20:00:57 From Julia Meier (she/her), staff To Everyone:

4:00-5:30pm

## **Q&A**

Q: Steph Routh- Comment, not question: As someone who is running for Portland City Council, thanks to everyone in this room for your work.

A: Thank you Steph and thank you for being here!

Q: Joseph Emerson - Also as someone running for City Council: the new government structure is not just a change to how government works, but also a change to what campaigns for city council look like. Do you have any thoughts about how city council candidates this year can help set the tone and shape future election cycles?

A: Answered live

Q: Babs Vanelli - Comment for the Mayor...disagreed on some things that came out in today's 2:00 CC meeting. However, fully supported your No vote when the 4 Commissioners voted to continue their current roles into June 2024.

Q: Babs Vanelli - Hi...I am involved in my Neighborhood Assoc. Sullivan's Gulch Zip 97232...close in NE Portland. And, I have been asked to give a brief update on the Transition Process Mon. 11/20. I have been heavily involved in the changes in the City for 2 years now. I would love to have someone from GTAC present to our Assoc. Not sure how to set that up..... Please and thank you! ( it could be in Jan. 2024)



A: Hi Babs, I have your icloud email address, I can coordinate a presentation for you. I will you email you to set that up tomorrow. Thank you for the request and being here.