



Portland Transition

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Monthly Community Engagement Status Update: February 2024

Purpose

This monthly status update gives an overview of community engagement activities related to the government transition, highlighting progress toward engagement goals, themes from public comment, activities by the Government Transition Advisory Committee (GTAC), and upcoming milestones.

Summary of engagement activities

Table 1: Engagement activities to-date

Engagements	February 2024	Total to-date (since Nov. 2022)	Transition projections to March 2025
Community survey responses	0	625	600
Transition newsletter signups	53	3,251	3,665
Community listening sessions & workshops	0	6	7
Participants at listening sessions	n/a	459	250
Public comments received	14	2,647	2,000
Hours of verbal public comment	0.11	19.61	37
Public meetings and hearings	11	114	100
Briefings and presentations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those done by GTAC 	17 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15/17 	97 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 59/97 	126 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 126
Policy discussions with community organizations	1	40	60
Employee townhall meetings	0	6	18
Employee attendance per townhall topic	n/a	1,624	1,100
Media coverage	12	265	200



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Public comment

The public is invited to comment through our online comment form, email, and verbal public comment. From February 1 to 29, 2024, the Portland Transition Team received **14** public comments.

This month's public comments were driven by City Council Agenda items and topics covered at GTAC meetings including the city's budgeting process, City Council staffing recommendations, voter education contracts, and Title 15 Emergency Code realignment.

Topic	February 2024 (% of comments received)	Total to-date (since Nov 2022)
Service delivery & bureau management (including city organization chart)	36%	34%
Community education & engagement	14%	7%
City budgeting, resource allocation, participatory budgeting	29%	7%
Form of government (including roles and responsibilities of elected officials)	57%	20%
Transition management	29%	4%
Rank-choice voting	29%	3%
Geographic districts	7%	42%
Other	0%	2%
Salaries of city leaders	14%	18%
Number of comments	14	2,647

Big questions raised and themes

The following themes emerged from public comment, public meetings, and community briefings and presentations in February 2024. Note that all public comment is available in the [February 2024 public comment report](#).



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Public comment. The comments received in the month of February reflected concerns about the City Council staffing recommendations, city's budgeting process, Title 15 Emergency Code realignment, and voter education contracts. Several of the comments were responding to GTAC's recommendations on City Council staffing. They advocated for a comprehensive assessment of staffing needs based on the functions and responsibilities of the city's executive and legislative branches. As well as a more nuanced comparison with peer cities' council staffing structures.

Other comments stressed the importance of long-term planning in budgeting and staffing decisions, considering the budget constraints in upcoming fiscal years. Some public comments urged prioritizing funding for essential services such as public safety and infrastructure maintenance over perceived transition expenses like council staffing or interim Deputy City Administrator severance packages.

Several comments were addressing the Title 15 Emergency Code alignment. To ensure consistency and clarity in emergency response efforts, some testimonies advocated that the city's definition of "emergency" be aligned with federal, state, and neighboring local jurisdictions. While recognizing the need to prepare for natural disasters such as earthquakes, there was also a comment for preparedness for other emergency types, including civil unrest and mass civil disturbances.

Some of the comments continued to emphasize the need for fairness, impartiality, and transparency in voter education contracts to avoid perception of bias or advocacy for specific candidates or groups. Two comments noted policy recommendations to improve contract oversight and accountability. Finally, some of the comments expressed interest in understanding the specifics of ranked-choice voting implementation, including the legal language and mechanisms for vote transfer and counting.

Public meetings. There were six public meetings of the Government Transition Advisory Committee and five public meetings of city council.

GTAC meetings included the following:

- One full regular meeting (topics included transition one-time expenses, annual ongoing costs, budget recommendations letter on council staffing, and forming the Budget Workgroup),
- Two meetings of the Districts + Council Operations Subcommittee (onboarding recommendations, district offices, community engagement planning),
- One meeting of the Voter/Candidate Education & Outreach Subcommittee (topics included candidate sessions, voter education website, ranked-choice voting platform, and media plan),
- The first meeting of the Budget Workgroup to recommend improvements to community engagement in the City's budget process, and
- A special meeting of GTAC (training by the City Attorney's Office on political activities restrictions).



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City Council actions included the following:

- Assign certain program functions to Commissioners-in-Charge in anticipation of the future service area realignment to support transition to the mayor-council form of government (Emergency Ordinance) (Referred to Commissioner of Finance and Administration)
- Authorize Director of the Bureau of Human Resources to offer Employment Agreements to Interim Deputy City Administrators (Ordinance) (Passed as Amended)
- Amend Title 15 Emergency Code to align with the amended City Charter approved by voters in Portland Measure 26-228) (replace Code Title 15) (Ordinance) (Passed to second reading)
- Accept two guaranteed maximum prices of \$3,469,244 and \$4,796,719 from Howard S. Wright for construction of Council Chambers, Councilor Offices, Mayor and City Administrator Offices, and major maintenance (Procurement Report – RFP 00002125) (Report) (Accepted – Prepare Contract)

City Council also held a work session on the City Administrator's Office budget.

Community briefings and presentations. The Government Transition Advisory Committee held 17 community briefings and presentations. Eight presentations were given to community organizations, including one serving houseless individuals, three aimed at engaging the Latinx community with two of these conducted in Spanish, three were for groups serving elders with two specifically hosted by the Elder Pride Services Program to address the LGBTQIA2+ elder community, and collaborative event was organized with two organizations focusing on youth engagement. In addition, GTAC members participated in three of the Office of Civic Life's Community Information Sessions on District Coalition Offices and conducted one presentation for a neighborhood association. There were two events for educational institutions: a panel event in collaboration with Portland State University and another session at the Lewis and Clark College Political Science Department.

Two presentations were conducted at shelter house meetings at two Transition Project sites by transition staff.

Demographics

Collecting demographic data allows us to understand the representation of historically underrepresented communities in City Hall and decision-making processes. We gather this data with a commitment to collecting only necessary information, ensuring its value to the City and the communities we serve.

The City collects zip codes from public commenters, but this information is optional and **8** commenters provided this information.



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Table 3: Public comments received by geography

Location	February 2024 Public Comment	Total Public Comment (Since April 2023)	Portland Population
North/Northeast Portland	13%	23%	28%
Southeast Portland	25%	43%	25%
East Portland	0%	6%	24%
West Portland	63%	18%	23%
Portland-Metropolitan area	0%	7%	N/A
Other Oregon cities outside metropolitan area	0%	2%	N/A
Outside of Oregon	0%	0%	N/A
Number of commenters with geographic data	8	1,159	
% of comments sharing geographic data	47%	44%	

Government Transition Advisory Committee (GTAC) engagement

GTAC is the primary public engagement body for the transition, advising on the Transition Plan's development and implementation. Committed to augmenting the City's engagement strategy, members actively engage with the community by providing at least two education or engagement opportunities each quarter outside of City-hosted events from June 2023 to February 2025.

Individuals and groups engaged

GTAC members reported engagement with the following individuals and groups in February 2024:

- Dignity Village
- Guerreras Latinas
- District Coalition Office Model Change Info Sessions for District 1, 3, and 4
- El Programa Hispano leadership team
- Northwest District Association
- Muslim Educational Trust with Urban League of Portland



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- Lents Neighborhood Livability Association
- Eastside Village
- Montavilla Neighborhood Association
- Portland State University Institute for Metropolitan Studies and Center for Urban Studies
- Lewis & Clark College Political Science Department
- Latino Network Lideres Program
- Center for Positive Aging with Elder Pride Services
- Friendly House Community Center with Elder Pride Services
- Individuals
 - Janice Thompson, League of Women Voters and formerly with Oregon Citizens Utility board

Transition team members reported engagement with the following groups in February 2024:

- Jean's Place
- Clark Center

New opportunities for engagement or barriers to engagement

GTAC reported the following reflections as new opportunities for engagement or barriers to engagement identified as part of their outreach efforts this month:

- Opportunities
 - Leads for groups that would benefit from a Spanish presentation
- Future presentations
 - Center for Public Service at PSU
 - Bringing high school students to City Hall
 - Dignity Village voter education presentation

Big Themes or Questions

- Voting and 2024 election
 - Interest in understanding on counting votes in the new system
 - Interest in voter education plan around ranked-choice voting due to concerns about how it works
 - Concern small donor program being overwhelmed
 - Interest in hosting candidate forums
 - How to register to vote
- Mayor / City Administrator
 - Confusion about roles of mayor versus City Administrator



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- Civic Life and District Coalition Offices (DCOs)
 - Funding concerns and questions on matching coalitions to district offices including how board membership is impacted if a different nonprofit runs a DCO
 - Questions about future role of Civic Life and District Coalition Offices
 - Request for more transparency around budgeting and DCOs
 - Question around transition of board seats if DCO shifts to a different nonprofit DCO
- Council Operations including In-District Offices
 - Curious about impact on possible policy areas
 - Staffing for councilors
 - Facilities research regarding in-district offices
 - How future offices will impact the future of dignity
 - Managing collaboration with a large council
- City Organization
 - Whether a citywide operational natural area and tree management will be independently managed outside of the Parks bureau
- Districts
 - When districts will be re-drawn
- Community Education and Awareness
 - More media coverage needed to build awareness of what's coming
 - How to stay involved

Upcoming transition decisions

The following actions and milestones serve as a reference to promote early engagement.

- Development of the Mayor's proposed budget to support the implementation of ballot measure 26-228. Community listening sessions will be hosted by the Citywide Budget Office, on April 10, 13, 15, and 16.