

From: [Bill Weber](#)
To: [Charter](#)
Subject: Last night Governance Committee Meeting
Date: Tuesday, November 09, 2021 11:16:37 AM

What was your take-away from last night's meeting? I thought the three interviews were interesting and added value to the committee's work. My internet was unstable and I missed some of the discussion, but I didn't hear any of the speakers say that the institution of the City Manager was racist or contributed to systemic racism. I'm wondering if the committee has any other interviews lined up that would support the proposition that the office of City Manager is a racist holdover from the Jim Crow era? Thank you for all your hard work.

--

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From: [Joey Brunelle](mailto:Joey.Brunelle)
To: charter@portlandmaine.gov
Subject: Councilor Pay - Please read!
Date: Friday, November 12, 2021 2:30:12 PM

Hi Commissioners - I heard that the Procedures Committee is investigating whether to raise the pay for City Councilors.

If you are indeed going to pursue this, I *implore* you to make the new councilor stipends change as the cost of living increases, exactly like the current Charter does for the Mayor's salary. Article II Section 4:

"Prior to the date nomination papers are available for the first mayoral election, the city council shall set the mayor's compensation and shall re-set it prior to the date nomination papers are available for each mayoral election thereafter. During the mayor's term, the city council may adjust the mayor's compensation. At minimum, the mayor shall be paid compensation consisting of a salary which is no less than one and one-half (1.5) times the median household income for Portland as most recently published by the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, or successor index thereto, at the time such compensation is set or adjusted, plus customary city benefits."

For example, if you wanted to keep the same mechanism, you could make councilors stipends equal to one-third or one-half of the median household income.

(Personally I think Councilors should be paid full-time salaries for their work because holy crap it's a full time job - and then some! - to be a good councilor, but hey whatever, at least you're increasing the current situation, which is absolutely a barrier to anyone seeking to be a city councilor who's not retired, married to a breadwinning spouse, or independently wealthy.)

If you don't make councilor salaries move as cost of living increases and inflation increases, we could find ourselves in 20 years in effectively the same situation we're in today.

Thanks!
- Joey

From: [Joshua Moss](#)
To: charter@portlandmaine.gov
Subject: School Board Recommendations
Date: Friday, November 12, 2021 8:56:26 AM

Hello,

Hope your fall is going well.

I wanted to suggest that the school board should not be granted independent taxation authority. I'd very much like to see the City Council remain the approving body for the school budget.

I think the most important thing to recognize here is that the School Board has gotten the vast majority of their requests approved by City Council, so is the Council really a blocker? I think that it's also much more accessible for working people to be able to email their City Councillor, who they know to go to for "city/political" related issues, rather than expecting everyone to know and understand who and what the school board is, or, have the time/energy/know-how to track two, independent local government bodies.

I think it's a little unrealistic to expect working folks to participate actively in local politics as it is, let alone when they would have to track two independent budget making bodies. Many people simply do not have the time or know-how to get involved. Now imagine, you're a working single parent, maybe scrapping out multiple jobs. You are concerned because property taxes have risen greatly in the past four years raising your housing costs 22% (true story...), 85% of the increases coming from the school budget. Now you would need to figure out the school board budgeting process and interact with the School Board, in addition to City Council? I don't think that makes sense, and I see us having an equity discussion around this topic if this was the case in a few years.

The School Board should operate in conjunction with the City Council, not independently.

Thanks for volunteering your time to make Portland a better place,

Josh Moss
12 Bancroft

From: [John Bennett](#)
To: charter@portlandmaine.gov
Subject: Elected mayor
Date: Thursday, November 11, 2021 7:28:36 AM

I favor return to City Manager form of Government.

We have already seen the power growth in the Mayoral Office.

City Manager is under the City Council and answers to that body.

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Joey Brunelle](#)
To: [Dory Waxman](#); charter@portlandmaine.gov
Cc: [Michael Kebede](#); [April Fournier](#); pali@portlandmaine.gov; [Andrew Zarro](#); [Tori Lyn](#)
Subject: Re: Introductions, Participatory Budgeting
Date: Wednesday, November 10, 2021 12:58:21 AM
Attachments: [Participatory Budgeting - Handout.pdf](#)

Thank you Michael. Nice to meet you, Dory. We may have met a long time ago, but it's a pleasure to make your acquaintance again.

I am glad you have a talented team helping you. I look forward to hearing about their experience with PB. As for me, I went to a PB conference in Boston in 2016 where I met elected officials and staff from many cities around the world that use PB, like Hamilton (Ontario), Chicago, Paris, Cambridge (Massachusetts) and some smaller cities in North Carolina and California. That sparked my interest in the subject, and when I ran for city council in 2017 and 2018 I made PB a key part of my platform. As I'm sure you remember, in my 2018 campaign I ran a half dozen mock PB sessions around the city to introduce Portlanders to the basic concepts. In fact, Commissioner Barowitz attended the session I held at the Reiche School.

I'm attaching the basic fact sheet about PB that I compiled for those events. I would add these key points to the information provided there:

1. Participatory Budgeting is a way to extend democratic control of some - not all - budgetary decisions. Some cities have tried using PB for huge swaths of their operating budgets, and they have ended in chaos - that's just too much to be decided by direct democracy. Successful PB programs tend to be smaller, with certain guardrails.
2. Most successful PB programs are limited to discrete capital expenses only. Anything that requires ongoing budgeting allocations (such as staffing) are out of bounds for most PB programs. In Portland, this would mean that the money for PB would probably come out of the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) budget.
3. The amount of money given over to PB is usually similar to the amount of money that is given to individual district councilors or aldermen as their own discretionary funds in other city government models. (We don't do that in Portland. Instead, Councilors make budgetary requests of the City Manager annually in individual, closed-door meetings, who decides himself whether or not to grant those requests. Our current process is not transparent nor democratic in any way.)
4. The amount of money given over to PB programs is usually tiny compared to the operating budgets of different departments. In Portland, maybe \$1-2 million a year in a citywide PB program would be a reasonable amount for a mature PB program. That said, I would recommend leaving the size of a potential PB program to the discretion of the City Council, rather than stipulating it in the Charter.
5. Important to note: it takes time to establish a PB program, usually on the order of years before a PB program is working on all cylinders. This is a good thing. Do not expect a PB program to sprout up overnight and be successful - in fact, other cities have shown that going from no-PB to full-PB without doing

enough preliminary work can be disastrous.

6. The first year or two of any PB program are actually spent democratically designing the process itself: a PB design committee is established, made up of a diverse set of members of the public, and optionally members of city staff and/or elected officials. This group discusses and lays down the initial rules and tenets of the PB system for that community. For example, what kinds of projects will be considered? Will there be a single city-wide PB process, or multiple district-level ones? How will projects be evaluated and who will evaluate them? How often will the PB process run - every year, or every two years? Should minors be allowed to vote on budget proposals? (In many cities the voting age for PB is 15 or 16.)
7. Once the design committee has done its work, generally cities conduct a pilot cycle with a smaller-than-full pot of money allocated to the program. Only after that has been done, and the kinks worked out of the system, is the PB process ramped up to a larger size.
8. I know many folks are concerned that a PB process would give power to the same privileged folks who currently dominate neighborhood organizations. This is a real concern, but if the program is designed correctly at the outset this effect can be greatly reduced. For example, many cities make extra effort to bring the PB process to marginalized groups and infrequent participants, rather than expecting them to come to the City. They do this with things like universal translation services, holding multiple meetings at different times of day and in diverse locations, providing child care, direct outreach through faith groups, tenant organizations, or other groups, and conducting voting in non-traditional ways (voting is the last step in any PB process). In fact, experimenting and exploring different ways to engage people via a PB process has made many cities more experienced in reaching those groups with regular city operations!
9. And about that voting step: I want to allay any concerns about cost to the City Clerk's office for this new voting process, because typically PB voting is not run through the clerk's office - it's done informally by volunteers. So instead of a finite number of pre-defined polling locations on a specific day and bubble sort machines, PB processes typically use slips of paper put into cardboard boxes at a much larger number of locations, like outside supermarkets and churches, with voting held over a week or two, run entirely by volunteers. Because the vote does not have to be formal, you can run it however you want, and maximize participation. These electoral innovations can, over time, trickle up to other more official electoral processes.
10. Last point for now: there is a nonprofit group called the Participatory Budgeting Project which a city can hire as consultants when trying to establish a PB program. They have a wealth of knowledge, and can really help make the difference between a successful program and an unsuccessful one. I strongly recommend getting in touch with them if you're seriously considering recommending a PB process.

And if you want a little inspiration, give this cute video introduction to PB a watch: <https://vimeo.com/71924254>

I'm happy to speak more on the subject in any capacity, or to refer to you to other experts who can provide more detail or perspective than perhaps I can.

- Joey

On Tue, Nov 9, 2021 at 2:56 PM Dory Waxman <dwaxman@portlandmaine.gov> wrote:

Thank you Michael
I have a pretty bright team helping with this but always welcome other voices !
Joey I will catch up soon
Best always
Dory

On Tue, Nov 9, 2021 at 5:52 PM Michael Kebede <mkebede@portlandmaine.gov> wrote:

Dory and Joey,

I'm wiring to introduce you to each other. You're both knowledgeable about this issue, but you have different and complimentary strengths.

I hope you're able to work together to make sure the charter commission is well informed as we decide whether to recommend participatory budgeting as a charter reform.

Best,
Michael

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