

FAIR ELECTIONS PORTLAND

PRESS RELEASE

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Candidates Supporting Municipal Clean Elections Win All Elected Seats on Portland Charter Commission

[PORTLAND, ME] – All of nine Charter Commissioners elected Tuesday, June 8 have indicated their support for a municipal Clean Elections public funding system. Most filled out a [Fair Elections Portland survey](#) and indicated their support for Clean Elections, while others indicated in other public forums that they supported the program.

“We are looking forward to working with the Charter Commission to support the creation of a robust Clean Elections program for municipal candidates,” said Anna Kellar, Executive Director of Maine Citizens for Clean Elections. Kellar also serves as the chair of the Fair Elections Portland campaign. “It is great to see a strong mandate for a more equitable and inclusive city, and Clean Elections is an important structural step in that direction.”

For the second time, Portland voters have indicated their support for Clean Elections in the city. While the Charter Commission will take up a number of important structural questions, the charter revision process would not be happening at this time, except for the broad support for the Clean Elections charter amendment. In 2019, more than 6,800 Portland voters signed a petition in support of an amendment reading:

“The city council shall establish and fund a mechanism providing public campaign funds to qualified candidates for mayor, city council, and school board. The mechanism must provide sufficient funds to allow candidates who meet qualifying criteria to conduct competitive campaigns, must be voluntary, must limit the amount of private funds a candidate may raise, must only be available to candidates who demonstrate public

support, and must be limited to candidates who enter into a binding agreement not to accept private contributions other than those allowed by the public funding program.”

While the commission can go beyond the wording of the original amendment to describe the details of a public funding provision, the original ballot language should be the starting point.

“The public funding program must be protected from the vicissitudes of politics. It should be placed in the Charter so that incumbent elected officials can’t use it as a political tool,” said FEP legal counsel John Brautigam.

“Portlanders deserve a responsive, accountable government. But with the cost of running for office in Portland at a record high, we don’t have a say in the many decisions our city makes that impact our daily lives,” said FEP leader Scott Vonnegut. “A publicly-funded Clean Elections program would give working-class people the means to run for office and represent their communities using small donations from constituents instead of large checks from wealthy donors.”

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