Clean and Open Elections Task Force

January 23, 2018

Edited February 11, 2018

I.   *Participation*

In attendance
Joe Beckmann, Nate Clauser, Vishal Doshi, Ariel Horowitz, Andrew Levine, Josh Rosmarin, Nick Salerno, Eric Weisman

Guest – Pat Cain, longtime Somerville resident and warden at one of our local polling locations

Not in attendance
Annie Connor, Sara Oaklander, JT Scott

II.   *Meeting Logistics*
At this time, we are scheduled to meet next on February 13th, and again February 27th. If you know already you cannot attend on these dates, please let Sara and Andrew know. If attendance seems like a problem, Andrew will send out a Doodle poll to see when the most people can attend meetings

III.   *Presentation: Public Financing of Elections – Vishal*
See attached: Public Financing of Municipal Elections
- Not widely used, but there is a list of cities with this system – chart Vishal made only has mayoral elections on it
- Participation – number of candidates that took advantage of it in most recent election
- Maximum amount is for a single mayoral candidate
- How it works
    - Seattle does Democracy Vouchers
    - Grants – every candidate gets same amount after a base
    - Match – match small private donations up to a level
- Expenditure limits
    - Outside expenditures aren't limited
    - Candidate expenditures would be limited
    - Unconstitutional to increase private expenditures if opponent has lots of outside expenditures
- Theory – will get more diversity and will remove barriers to entry
- Issues
    - Restrictions are one-sided – low participation rates in expensive media markets
    - Hard to justify taking public funds
    - Hard to figure out what the thresholds should be

- New Haven piloted then adjusted the results – thresholds are usually a certain number of donations
- How does public financing affect participation in municipal elections?
- Encouraging representation
  - From the candidate side and the voter side
  - This is mostly a candidate intervention, but a path to more voter participation
- Democracy Vouchers in Seattle
  - Pool of money available
  - Every citizen gets $25 to assign to any candidate every year
  - Raised money through a Real Estate Property Tax
  - Who you give your money to is available online in a searchable database
  - Cap on money you can raise on candidate committee
  - Seattle also has a law compelling newspapers/TV to disclose who's buying ads, even for city election candidates
  - What candidates spend the money on – that's in the reports. Restrictions on what the funds can go for. Can't go to your own salary. Much of it goes to printing.
  - (Here much of money goes to printing, some to web design)

Discussion
- Based on reports – Aldermen spending roughly 3-17K for an alderman race; will check Mayoral reports online through OCPF
  NOTE: After the meeting, a second look at OCPF reports showed that many races for alderman were considerably more expensive, including the following figures:
  - Winning ward candidates in wards 1-4 spent between $16K and $33.6K
  - Losing ward candidates in wards 1-4 spent as much as $49K.
  - In at large races, wining candidates spent between $11K and $48K, with the lowest spenders being incumbants and the highest spender a first time winner. Losing at-large candidates spent as much as $25K.
  - The mayoral race is noticeably more expensive, with the incumbent being reelected after spending over $300,000, and the highest-raising challenger spending $18k.
- Democracy vouchers are interesting, but could they fall victim to all the other issues that are still out there?
  - Still hard to get your name out and attract these vouchers
  - Can't buy TV ads because you'll run afoul of expenditure restrictions
  - Is problem that candidates with small constituencies couldn't get enough voice/money? – Then this could help. But if they couldn't get off the ground for other reasons, this may not help
- Vouchers are appealing for openness and transparency
- Do matching funds make sense as an alternative?
- What's mechanism for choosing where vouchers go?
  - Only paper forms – disbursement from office on a cycle

- Advantage to democracy voucher – those who don't have a lot of money can make a donation
- Giving a small amount of money could get you committed to political process
    o Giving a Democracy Voucher could do the same thing
- Candidate standpoint – give you a more useful way of seeing who you're appealing to
- Four $25 vouchers – is that overly restrictive?
    o Maybe, but also helpful to have choices
- How much of it goes to primary versus general?
- Can you give it all to same person?
- Democracy vouchers as a tool for engagement seems helpful
    o Less helpful for getting more candidates
    o More likely it would perpetuate preexisting disparities
    o Would grants better bring in a diverse group of candidates?
- Can there be restrictions on what kind of campaign literature used? Have it printed by High School students for engagement issues?
    o Probably 1st Amendment limits on this
    o Could give "In-kind" Donations of printing/web hosting, etc.

IV.   Presentation: The Candidate Experience – Ariel
See attached: Candidate Access
1. Legal Requirements for running for office
    a. Have to be at least 18 years old, need to be older running for Congress
    b. Resident for at least 5 years for most offices
    c. Somerville – resident for 6 months
    d. Signature requirements vary widely
    e. 120 Signatures for Alderman
        i. Not a very high lift
2. Financial Outlays
    a. 10K-30K for an alderman race *(See above for adjusted numbers)*
    b. About a fifth of Somerville median income, at least
    c. May be issue of finances for candidates, but may not be main local level determinant
        i. Some won with small amounts of money
        ii. Compared to something like a senate race, this isn't that much money
        iii. Not often talked about as the biggest barrier from the candidate side
        iv. But it wouldn't take much money to finance public elections
3. Biggest issue – Candidate Recruitment
    a. Hard to get people to run, especially women and people of color
        i. Opacity related to what the job of an alderman etc. is
        ii. Some might just say it's not that appealing
        iii. But might not know what issues the board works with
        iv. As long as you're not talking about being in Congress/running for Governor, the barrier is really about how to show you're a strong candidate

> > v. Incumbency a big issue because people don't know how to make that case that they would be a better officeholder
4. Amateurization
   a. Not much national money being spent here – state party doesn't give financial resources to candidates at the local level
   b. Much of this happens in primaries – but much of it is unofficial
   c. Idea that compelling candidates are unofficially invited into circles – less formal recruiting
5. Resources targeting these kinds of questions
   a. Candidate training programs – multiple in state
      i. State GOP/Dems run training programs – 2-3 day events
      ii. Emerge – Program for Democratic women running for office
      iii. Mass Alliance offers candidate and campaign trainings
6. Barrier to access
   a. Even politically engaged residents of the city don't really know how to get involved in city politics
   b. Somerville leader of Indivisible
      i. Lots of engagement on FRIT waiver issue – engagement was too late in the process through to make a difference (percentage of Affordable Housing that has to be in development)
      ii. Planning board had already acted, too late to revise
         1. Activists felt like they couldn't make a difference
   c. Voter issue in a way, but also about the idea of candidacy formation
      i. If you can't get on-ramp into understanding political system, you may lack the ability to think of yourself as a viable political candidate
7. City could offer scholarships to training programs or run its own training program
   a. If you want to run for office, get you to a training and come to alderman meetings
   b. Be more public in when deadlines to run for office are
8. Demystification of political process
   a. Asking current aldermen, mayor, state reps, etc. to do videos about why you decided to run for office, what you do, and what you like about it etc.
   b. Format that could get people interested
   c. Have Tufts/Harvard students show up at Alderman meetings and do a podcast or blog about what's going on

Discussion

Are aldermen in Somerville full time? What's salary?
- 40K a year for aldermen. Classified as a full time job and allows for health benefits. Time commitments are substantial.
- Substantial benefits to seniority in office – do we want lots of turnover? Who would you want to be kicking out of office when?
- Is long tenure bad? Not necessarily.

Somerville could experiment with this more at an aldermanic level

- Term limits for one of the positions

Part time alderman/salary/ impact on candidate recruitment
- Many treat it like a full-time job
- Time it takes to be an alderman a significant commitment – making it a full-time position would be good for candidate recruitment
- Would have a full-time job if they won the race
- Having a full-time job as well can make this difficult (and what about conflicts of interest?)
- Time spent running for office too is considerable

Tone is really daunting for women
- Misogynistic invective will be thrown at you
- Same true for race, gender and sexual minorities

Motif in Discussions
- May be different strategies successful at municipal level than at other levels
- What's different about what we want to see for municipal level offices versus other offices
- Party rep thought there was no such thing as a ladder – Alderman doesn't prepare you for being a state legislator in many ways, so why would you do it?
  - Issues with this way of thinking
- Do we have issues that are terminal offices versus offices that are a way to build up to other offices?
  - School committee often a terminal office

Primary charge is about offices in Somerville – not necessarily getting people to higher office and building a bench

Connection between School Committee and Board of Aldermen

Our charge is about getting people from non-candidate to candidate

Candidate recruitment – little understanding of what kinds of problems you can solve as an alderman, or school committee member, etc.

Could elect some of commissions in the city, rather than have them appointed

V.   *Next Steps*
- Nate can do his presentation on non-citizen voting (Some info on shared site)
  - Can non-citizen residents donate to campaigns or run for office?
- Could get a survey done for us from Indivisible membership – or a survey in general
- Eric, Joe, Nick, and JT may have some data to show at some point – what to deltas look like at any time

Second Round of Tackling Additional Issues
- Go back to list of questions
- Student vote
- Eligible voter restrictions
  - MA has no disenfranchisement of felons once no longer incarcerated

- o   Incarcerated population of Somerville?
- Veterans and students – are they voting? How strong is absentee participation?

Google Drive
Let Andrew know when you add things to Google Doc – he'll flag what's in there

Next meeting – February 13, 6:30-8pm, 167 Holland Street
JT (Candidate experience) and Nate (Non-citizen voting)

Public Financing of Municipal Elections – Prepared by Vishal Doshi, 1.23.18

Survey of public financing in municipal elections

- There are 30 active public funding programs at the state and below levels[1]
- 16 are at the city or county level

Jurisdiction	Population[2]	Max available $	Ratio	Participation[3]
Santa Fe, NM	83,875	$60,000[4]	0.72	67%
New York City, NY	8,537,673	$3,832,950[5]	0.45	62%
Long Beach, CA	470,130	$161,000[6]	0.34	60%
Tucson, AZ	530,706	$231,677[7]	0.44	55%
San Francisco, CA	870,887	$975,000[8]	1.12	43%
Los Angeles, CA	3,976,322	$800,000[9]	0.20	33%
Albuquerque, NM	559,277	$335,927[10]	0.60	25%
Oakland, CA	420,005		-	11%
Honolulu, HI	351,792	$89,345[11]	0.25	10%
Hawaii, HI	185,079	$19,762[12]	0.11	10%
Maui, HI	154,834	$16,167[13]	0.10	10%
Kauai, HI	65,889	$7,782[14]	0.12	10%
New Haven, CT	129,934	$125,000[15]	0.96	
Austin, TX	947,890		-	
Boulder, CO	108,090	$20,000[16]	0.19	
Seattle, WA	713,700	$100 per voter[17]		

How it works

- Different types of public funding
  - Match private donations up to a maximum (1:2, 1:1, 2:1, 6:1)
  - Grants (equal money for eligible candidates)

[1] http://www.demos.org/publication/public-funding-electoral-campaigns-how-27-states-counties-and-municipalities-empower-sma

[2] Wikipedia

[3] http://www.demos.org/publication/public-funding-electoral-campaigns-how-27-states-counties-and-municipalities-empower-sma

[4] https://www.abqjournal.com/539208/santa-fes-public-campaign-financing-system-panned-over-outside-spending-for-gonzales.html

[5] https://www.nyccfb.info/candidate-services/limits-thresholds/2017/

[6] http://www.longbeach.gov/globalassets/city-clerk/media-library/documents/elections/2018/candidate-handbook-v-3-updated-12-6-17 *estimated

[7] https://www.tucsonaz.gov/files/clerks/Expenditure_Limits_History_Sheet_-_2015.pdf *estimated

[8] https://sfethics.org/compliance/campaigns/candidates/public-financing-program

[9] http://ethics.lacity.org/PDF/publications/candguides/Matching_Funds_FAQs.pdf

[10] https://www.cabq.gov/voting-elections/candidate-information/publicly-financed-candidates/election-matching-funds + $1 * registered voters

[11] http://ags.hawaii.gov/campaign/cc/public-funding-programs/partial-public-funding/public-funding-amounts/2018-maximum-public-fund-amounts/

[12] http://ags.hawaii.gov/campaign/cc/public-funding-programs/partial-public-funding/public-funding-amounts/2018-maximum-public-fund-amounts/

[13] http://ags.hawaii.gov/campaign/cc/public-funding-programs/partial-public-funding/public-funding-amounts/2018-maximum-public-fund-amounts/

[14] http://ags.hawaii.gov/campaign/cc/public-funding-programs/partial-public-funding/public-funding-amounts/2018-maximum-public-fund-amounts/

[15] http://www.newhavenindependent.org/index.php/archives/entry/campaign_finance/

[16] https://www-static.bouldercolorado.gov/docs/2017_Electronic_Election_Guidelines-1-201710050849.pdf?_ga=2.266047567.1793694122.1516683622-901782366.1516683622

[17] https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/11/seattle-experiments-with-campaign-funding/415026/

- - o Democracy Voucher (Seattle)
- Opting into public funding limits expenditures
- Qualifying for public funding typically requires establishing a base of support via small donor contributions

Potential benefits
- Attract more representative candidates (more racial, class, and gender diversity)
- Potentially wider donor base (either via voucher program or via qualifying for public funds)
- Candidates have more time to spend with constituents / are more responsive to them

Potential issues
- Restrictions on expenditures are one-sided driving lower participation
  - o Some programs allow exceeding those targets when opponent financing exceeds certain thresholds
- Need to come up with appropriate thresholds for candidate support before being eligible for public funds

Seattle's Democracy Voucher program
- Every eligible voter gets 4 $25 vouchers to give to candidates
- Total cost is $3 million annually paid for via property tax increase (avg cost per household $10.50)

Discussion
- Which model? Matching funds / grants / vouchers
- What would the cost of a program like this be for Somerville elections, given average expenditures for mayoral / aldermanic races?
- Hard to measure impact in a rigorous way, though anecdotal evidence suggests candidates can spend much more time with constituents, as opposed to fundraising.
- Worth interviewing city officials elsewhere about lessons learned?

Additional reading
- On Seattle's program
  - o http://www.seattle.gov/democracyvoucher/about-the-program
  - o https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/11/seattle-experiments-with-campaign-funding/415026/
- Overview of several programs: https://cg4tx.org/2016/02/17/austins-campaign-finance-system-and-alternatives/
- Demos overview: http://www.demos.org/publication/public-funding-electoral-campaigns-how-27-states-counties-and-municipalities-empower-sma
- On the New Haven program: http://www.ct.gov/seec/lib/seec/publications/new_haven_report_may_2009_final.pdf

Running for Office in Somerville

Process and Resources – Prepared by Ariel Horowitz, 1.23.18

I.   Legal Requirements

Candidates for local or statewide office must be:[1]
- At least 18 years of age (or older for US House and Senate)
- Registered MA voters
- Resident of MA for 5+ years for most state offices
- Resident of Somerville for at least 6 months for City offices[2]

In addition, candidates must secure a sufficient number of signatures from registered voters to qualify for the ballot. Signature requirements vary by office, ranging from 120 for alderman or school committee member to 10,000 for US Senator or House rep.

II.   Financial Outlays

Based on campaign finance reports submitted to the City, aldermanic campaign costs are generally in the thousands of dollars, ranging from under $3000 to over $15,000. This represents in the range of 2.5 - 17% of Somerville's median household income of ~$86,000.

> *NOTE: After the meeting, a second look at OCPF reports showed that many races for alderman were considerably more expensive, including the following figures:*
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> - In at large races, wining candidates spent between $11K and $48K, with the lowest spenders being incumbants and the highest spender a first time winner. Losing at-large candidates spent as much as $25K.
> - The mayoral race is noticeably more expensive, with the incumbent being reelected after spending over $300,000, and the highest-raising challenger spending $18k.

This suggests the importance of candidate finance as both an electoral fairness and a candidate access issue.

III.   Candidate Recruitment

Most candidate recruitment in Massachusetts occurs informally. Because many areas (including Somerville) are effectively single-party, the national Democratic and Republican Parties are minimally involved in local races (including for US House) in Massachusetts. The state Democratic Party does not provide funding for local races but does operate a training program

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[1] https://www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/elepdf/Candidates-Guide-generic.pdf
[2] https://www.somervillema.gov/sites/default/files/guide-to-run-for-local-office.pdf

(described below). Moreover, because many races are ultimately decided in the Democratic primary stage, the state party is restricted in demonstrating preference for one candidate over another.

Therefore, there is little to no formal candidate recruitment process from the Democratic party in Somerville. There does not appear to be an active Republican Party organization in Somerville, nor do the alternative parties (Libertarian, Green-Rainbow, etc.) have a robust presence. Ultimately, most candidate recruitment occurs through person-to-person encouragement to run. This process is prone to reproduce systemic biases, as members of groups with less connection to the political system are less likely to be encouraged to run by political "operatives" (be they professional or amateur).

IV.   Candidate Training Resources

Several organizations operate candidate training programs or "bootcamps". These include:
- The Democratic Campaign Institute[3]
    - Operated by the state Democratic Party
    - In person
    - Once annual
    - Open to the public (registration required)
    - Costs $75/person
- Grassroots Training[4]
    - Operated by the state Republican Party
    - In person
    - Less than once per year?
    - Open to the public (registration required)
    - Free
- Emerge Bootcamp[5]
    - Operated by Emerge
    - In person
    - Once annual
    - Eligibility restricted to Democratic women running for office within the next year
    - Costs $750/person
- MassAlliance Training[6]
    - Operated by MassAlliance
    - In person
    - Several times annually
    - Geared towards progressive candidates
    - Costs $90/person

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[3] https://massdems.org/democratic-campaign-institute-2018
[4] http://www.massgop.com/training
[5] https://emergema.ngpvanhost.com/content/apply-emerge-ma-2018-bootcamp
[6] http://massalliance.org/training/

- Night School[7]
  - Operated by Democracy for America
  - Online
  - Intermittent
  - Geared towards progressive candidates
  - Free
- National Democratic Training Committee Training[8]
  - Operated by National Democratic Training Committee
  - Online
  - Aimed at Democrats
  - Free

V.   Other Barriers to Access

The biggest barrier to candidate access appears to center around engagement. Potential candidates don't know what the day-to-day job of an alderman or state rep is, how to construct a platform, and how to build a compelling case to voters based on that platform. Many potential candidates do not view themselves as viable for various reasons; this appears to be especially true of women.

Even politically-engaged Somerville residents may find it difficult to follow the ma

VI.   Ideas for City Actions

The following ideas may address some of the issues raised above.
- Process:
  - City advertisement of deadlines to submit nomination papers and other milestones of the candidate registration process
  - City facilitation of online submission of nomination papers
- Training:
  - City advertisement of candidate training programs
  - City-sponsored scholarships to candidate training programs
  - City-operated candidate training program
- Demystification:
  - Brief (~3 min) video interviews of each current Alderman, Mayor Curtatone, and Somerville state Senate, state House, US House, and US Senate representatives describing why each representative decided to run for office, what their job consists of, reflections on campaigning, and reflections on their experience in office (e.g. favorite part of being an elected official).
  - Potential university collaboration to have students attend BoA meetings and produce a weekly-ish podcast or similar format bulletin on the major issues being discussed by the BoA.

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[7] http://cms.democracyforamerica.com/site/events/category/online-trainings/#past-events
[8] https://www.traindemocrats.org/