



CITY OF

PORTLAND, OREGON

OFFICE OF THE CITY AUDITOR

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To: Tom Potter, Mayor
Sam Adams, Commissioner
Nick Fish, Commissioner
Randy Leonard, Commissioner
Dan Saltzman, Commissioner
Linda Meng, City Attorney
Steve Townsen, City Engineer

From: Gary Blackmer, City Auditor

Subject: Auditor's Office Verification of Street Renaming Petition Information

This memo is in response to a request by Commissioner Adams that the Auditor's Office verify street renaming petitions. City Code Chapter 17.93 places street renaming petitions under the authority of the City Engineer. The City Engineer has developed the street renaming petition sheets and application materials. According to the Code the applicant's primary City contact is the City Engineer and we believe that should continue to be the case throughout petition verification, for consistency.

I have heard directly from four of the five Council members and the Chief of Staff of the other that they agree with the following verification approach.

The methods we will use are not the same as those for initiative petitions and in many ways are less stringent. More exacting, labor intensive verification is possible but the other rules set forth for this process are not exacting and lack any penalties or other consequences for violations. To impose a high level of precision in petition verification would be disproportionate.

City Code Chapter 17.93 requires a street renaming applicant to obtain a minimum of 2,500 signatures in support of the proposal from legal residents of the City at large or signatures of at least 75% of the abutting property owners along the street proposed for renaming on the petition forms supplied by the City Engineer. We understand that the two current street renaming applicants will likely pursue the 2,500 at-large signatures.

The two petitioners have been told by the City that it will accept signatures from residents who are 16 or older. There is no database that contains all the names and addresses for this population. The five databases available to us are the property tax roll, voter registrations, Department of Motor Vehicle records, and verification of school district enrollment for David Douglas and Portland Public Schools. (We are awaiting a decision from Parkrose.) Age is not available in all these databases. Further, signatures cannot be consistently verified because these databases do not have them or make them available to us.

Steps of Signature Count

1. Verification that every petition sheet has the correct street(s) to be renamed – reject any petition sheets with street(s) that do not match the street renaming application.
2. Random sampling of 300 signatures. We will conduct residency verification on one random sample from the full population of petition sheets submitted
3. Initial screening of the sample – examine each name and address of the sample for:
 - Legibility – reject illegible names or addresses
 - Location – using PortlandMaps to reject addresses outside Portland
 - Duplicates – one of the duplicates will be rejected
4. Reject if the remaining names and addresses do not appear on any of the following data sources:
 - PortlandMaps
 - Voter Registration data
 - DMV Records
 - school district enrollment records
5. Calculate the valid signatures – the percent of verified signers will be calculated and applied to the total number of submitted signers to determine whether 2,500 have been submitted. The sample size would provide 95% confidence in the sample with a precision of 4 to 5%.
6. Report to the City Engineer the results of our analysis. The Auditor’s Office will complete the verification process within thirty calendar days from receipt of the street renaming petition sheets.
7. Until the deadline, the applicant can gather and submit one additional batch of petitions to my office. Depending upon the number needed and provided, we will either draw a fresh sample from the entire population, or verify the new names and addresses, and report our analysis to the City Engineer.

Issues to Note

We will be fair and consistent in our application of these procedures and how we address any unanticipated situations. However, the non-specific language in the City Code, combined with the inherent difficulties in any petition verification activity, create risks that need to be noted for these petitions and those in the future. City Council, the City Engineer, and the consultant hired to review the process should understand that:

- Some eligible signers will not be matched with any database, such as adults who recently moved from outside Portland and have not updated their voter registration or driver’s license information.
- The Auditor’s Office will review the petition sheets in a cursory manner for any obvious forgeries but cannot provide any assurance that a person is actually the signer of the petition.
- The databases provide some record of residency but cannot provide any assurance that a person is actually a resident of Portland.
- There is no appeal process to the Auditor’s Office for the petition verification decisions or results produced.