

Portland, Oregon

Population is 640,000

City Budget is \$4.7 billion

Mayor and City Commissioners have executive authority

Elected Auditor has 11 performance auditors (50 overall in the office) The Audit Division budget is about \$2,086,000 in addition \$480,000 for an outside audit of finances.

Portland has a unique governance structure. The mayor and five non-partisan “commissioners” are elected at-large to four-year terms. The mayor assigns each commissioner and him/herself to be the administrator of a city bureau and may change these assignments at any time. Commissioners are responsible for enacting and enforcing City ordinances and are salaried.

DUTIES OF AUDITOR In 1868, Portland voters established the office of city auditor who was independently elected to a four-year term. With passage of charter amendments, the latest in 2017, the auditor now supervises and may conduct performance audits on all city entities and their use of public resources. The expanded auditor’s responsibilities include eight divisions: audit services, performance and financial, city ombudsman, Independent police review, elections, city archives and records, council clerk, and lobbyist registration.

INDEPENDENCE The auditor selects what to audit with input from the public. To encourage and support Management, the auditor provides a draft of the audit report and draft recommendations. If there are major issues, the auditor takes them into consideration. The auditor does not want to take on the role of management, so recommendations are broad and flexible allowing department management to determine how to meet the goals. The Portland auditor retains independent legal counsel and is in charge of its own procurements and human resources.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION Access to information is found in the PDX city charter: the auditor “shall have timely access to all employees, information and records required to conduct an audit or otherwise perform audit duties, including confidential and legally privileged information and records so long as privilege is not waived as to third parties.” The city code has similar provisions which may be amended to conform with legislative action in 2017.

ACCOUNTABILITY Candidates for Auditor must have a CPA or Certified Internal Auditor to qualify to run for the position. In the past 25-30 years, five different individuals have served as auditor. The Auditor states they run on a “no surprises” basis. The auditor requests volunteers to serve as her “sounding board” which is not required. The 2017 Charter amendments require the Auditor’s Office to have adequate internal controls, comply with all applicable laws, operate efficiently, and periodically undergo reviews by outside entities.

FUNDING The auditor must submit and gain approval from the City Council of its annual budget, but it does not have to seek review by the city’s budget office. This may provide some checks and balances to the extensive authority of the auditor. The auditor would like more control over the budget. Some observers question that the auditor is elected but appears in the Portland Budget document along with other bureaus.

OTHER UNIQUE PROVISIONS To place an issue on the ballot, the auditor may collect adequate signatures to qualify. The City Commissioners at the Auditor’s request placed the 2017 Charter Changes

on the ballot.

(Multnomah County elected auditor may serve only two four-year terms.)