

# Item 7 - Democracy Dollars Report



Ryan Micik, Chair  
Francis Upton IV, Vice Chair  
Alea Gage  
Vincent Steele  
Karun Tilak

Nicolas Heidorn, Executive Director

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TO: Public Ethics Commission  
FROM: Suzanne Doran, Program Manager  
Bobby Zaidi, Community Engagement Analyst  
DATE: September 6, 2024  
RE: Measure W Oakland Fair Elections Act Implementation Update for the  
September 16, 2024, Special PEC Meeting

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With the passage of Measure W, the Oakland Fair Elections Act, the Public Ethics Commission (PEC or Commission) is planning for a transition of growth in staffing, structure, and responsibilities as administrator of a completely re-designed public financing program. This memorandum provides an update on implementation activities since the last Commission meeting.

## Administrative Processes and Technology

The PEC's resolution authorizing entering into a contract with MapLight for the development of the Democracy Dollars software platform passed at the July 2 City Council meeting. In July and August, the PEC-IT team began meeting with MapLight to negotiate the scope of work for the contract. Once finalized, the contract goes to the City Attorney and Contract Administration departments for final approval.

## Staffing

On August 3, the PEC welcomed Rabab "Bobby" Zaidi (he/him) to our team as our Democracy Dollars Community Engagement Specialist. This position is funded by a one-year grant from the Haas Jr. Fund to assist development of the Democracy Dollars resident-focused, equity-centered engagement plan to encourage broad participation in the January 2026 launch. Over the coming months, staff activities will include drafting the Democracy Dollars Program's communication strategy and outreach plan. Bobby brings a wealth of experience to the PEC gained as a community engagement planner with the City of Austin Watershed Protection Department including leading a pilot bilingual community ambassador program, which was recognized by the International Association for Public Participation.

## Community Engagement and Partnerships

**OpenOakland** – As previously reported, staff is partnering with volunteers from civic technology group Open Oakland interested in prototyping user interfaces for residents to interact with the Democracy Dollars program. The goal of the project is to conduct early user testing to inform the design process when staff begins working with vendor MapLight. After mapping resident "user journeys" in March and April, the project team created mock-ups of

potential Democracy Dollars designs and mobile-first webpages to simulate the resident experience registering and then assigning their Democracy Dollars. In August, volunteers and Commission staff tabled and conducted user-testing at the Lakeview branch library and the BOSS Black August Block Party. In addition to testing, staff distributed PEC flyers and brochures, Commissioner recruitment information, and City of Oakland swag to volunteer testers and interested community members. The Open Oakland team is preparing a summary of their findings and recommendations to share with the Commission in the coming months. Thanks Commissioner Gage for helping staff the PEC table on short notice!

**Online Engagement** – In August, staff established an easily recognizable URL for the Democracy Dollars webpage, <https://oaklandca.gov/DemocracyDollars> as well as a dedicated email address for program inquiries after launch.

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## DEMOCRACY DOLLARS

### IMPLEMENTATION OVERVIEW WITH KEY DATES



## 2023: Preliminary Tasks


<b>Jan – Jun 2023</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ FY 2023 – 2025 budget proposal and advocacy</li> <li>✓ Business requirements for technology drafted in partnership with ITD</li> <li>✓ Develop initial program webpages to chart implementation progress</li> </ul>
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<b>June 2023 Milestone 1:</b>	 <b>FY 2023 – 2025 Budget adopted</b>
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<b>Jul – Sept 2023</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Democracy Dollars Program postponed due to lack of funding</li> <li>✓ Supplemental independent expenditure disclosure requirements implemented</li> <li>✓ Engagement with campaign filers to raise awareness of new disclosure requirements and gain feedback on process for collecting new disclosure data</li> </ul>
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<b>Sep 2023 Milestone 2:</b>	 <b>Program manager position filled</b>
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<b>Oct – Dec 2023</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Graduate student researcher recruited to support outreach development</li> <li>✓ Collaborative projects initiated with Open Oakland volunteers</li> </ul>
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<b>Nov 2023 Milestone 3:</b>	 <b>\$210,000 Grant funding approved for outreach strategy development</b>
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## 2024 – 2025: Program Foundations

<b>Jan – Jun 2024</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Grant-funded Engagement Specialist position recruitment</li> <li>✓ Technology vendor selected</li> </ul>
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<b>June 2024 Milestone 5:</b>	 <b>Council authorizes contracting with technology vendor</b>
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<b>August 2024 Milestone 6:</b>	 <b>Community Engagement Specialist hired</b>
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<b>Jul – Dec 2024</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negotiate contract with vendor and submit for City Administrator approval</li> <li>• Identify policy modifications for Commission action prior to launch, including pilot options</li> <li>• Community Engagement plan development begins</li> <li>• Development of forms, systems for program administration</li> </ul>
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<b>Oct 2024 Milestone 7:</b>	 <b>Software platform development begins</b>
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<b>Jan – Jun 2025</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budget development for FY 2025 – 2027</li> <li>• Develop regulations for Commission approval, as needed</li> <li>• Develop contract for signature verification</li> <li>• Democracy Dollars design options finalized</li> <li>• Develop marketing materials and educational resources</li> <li>• Recruit for new permanent staff positions</li> <li>• Develop performance metrics and determine baselines</li> </ul>
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Jun 2025 Milestone 8:		Community engagement plan adopted
Jul 2025 Milestone 9:		FY 2025 – 2027 program funds budgeted
Aug – Sep 2025 Milestone 10:		New positions filled, staff onboard
Sep – Dec 2025		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Finalize service contract and process for signature verification</li> <li>Adopt program rules and regulations prior to 2026 launch, as needed</li> <li>Evaluate progress towards milestones required for 2026 launch date</li> <li>Finalize and publish outreach and training materials for Oakland residents, candidates</li> <li>Democracy Dollars funds available announced</li> </ul>
Dec 2025 Milestone 11:		Software platform tested and ready to deploy
 <h2>2026: Program Launch</h2>		
Jan 2026 Milestone 12:		Candidate application process begins
Jan - Mar 2026		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outreach to raise awareness of Democracy Dollars program</li> <li>DD voucher, packet, and mailing information ready for printing and distribution</li> <li>Software platform and public program dashboard live</li> </ul>
Apr 2026 Milestone 13:		DD mailed to Oakland registered voters by April 1, 2024
Apr – Nov 2026		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PEC staff processes DD vouchers, disburses funds to candidates</li> <li>Ongoing community outreach to promote program</li> </ul>
Nov 2026 Milestone 14:		First Election with Democracy Dollars
Dec 2026 - ongoing		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Candidates return unused funds</li> <li>Program audit, performance evaluation reports for Commission and City Council</li> </ul>
 <h2>2027: Post-election Evaluation</h2>		
2027 Milestone 15:		Report to City Council