

COVER SHEET -- AGENDA ITEM #R4

For Commission Meeting: January 22, 2018

“Open Signal FY18-19 Potential Operations Funding Reduction”

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the MHCRC authorize the Chair to sign a letter to Portland’s Mayor and Council members objecting to a potential \$288,018 reduction to Open Signal’s FY18-19 operations funding from the City of Portland.

Background

Open Signal currently receives \$896,379 from the Portland General Fund under its grant agreement with the City of Portland. Open Signal uses the funds to provide outreach and training in support of the City of Portland’s digital equity goals and initiatives. The operations funding also assists Open Signal and the community with use of the capital funds, community access channels and other resources provided under the cable franchise agreements.

The Portland Mayor’s FY 2018-19 budget guidance directed a 5% reduction in General Fund revenues to City bureaus and programs and included a guideline to hold revenue-generating programs harmless and not be subjected to the 5% reductions. The Bureau of Revenue and Finance provided the Revenue Division a reduction target of \$288,018 based on its General Fund revenues. However, the Revenue Division has no programs that are not revenue generating so the entire reduction amount was placed on the Open Signal grant agreement. The Revenue Division believed it had no choice but to propose the Open Signal reduction to comply with Citywide budget guidance and amounts.

A reduction of this magnitude (31%) would devastate Open Signal’s ability to provide community access to technology tools and training and content distribution platforms. It would eliminate five fulltime staff from Open Signal’s 21.75 FTE, a 23% reduction.

Staff will work with the Commission Chair, Commissioner Dicile (the MHCRC representative on Open Signal’s Board, and Justen Harn, Open Signal Executive Director, to craft a letter from the Commission objecting to the potential reduction and supporting Open Signal’s significant services to the community.

Prepared by: Julie S. Omelchuck
January 17, 2018