

Explanatory Statement

Seventeen of 20 volunteer Charter Commissioners recommended amending the City Charter to provide for a City Administrator, supervised by the Mayor, to manage Portland with twelve Councilors representing four districts making laws and voters ranking candidates in elections.

Currently, most legislative and executive powers are merged in Council. Council makes laws and Council members directly manage bureaus.

Under the Commission's recommendation, Council would focus on making laws. The Mayor would not serve on Council but could break tie votes on non-emergency ordinances. The Mayor would implement laws passed by Council, with help from a City Administrator hired by the Mayor and confirmed by Council. The City Administrator would hire, fire and supervise most bureau directors. An Independent Salary Commission of human resource professionals would set elected officials' salaries.

Currently, Council consists of five members elected citywide – one Mayor and four Commissioners.

Under the Commission's recommendation, Council would expand to 12 members. Seats would shift from citywide to four new geographic districts with three Councilors representing each district. An Independent District Commission would draw initial districts; subsequent redistricting would be tied to census population updates every decade beginning in 2030.

Currently, Portlanders vote for one candidate per office. If no candidate gets more than 50% during the May primary, the top two candidates continue to the November general election.

Under the Commission's recommendation, voters would rank candidates in order of voter preference. Ranked choice voting allows results in one general election, eliminating the need for primaries. The city would conduct voter education campaigns to familiarize voters with ranked choice voting.

The Mayor and Auditor would be elected using a ranked choice voting method called instant runoff. This method elects one candidate who receives a majority of the vote. Ballots are counted in rounds. The candidate receiving the fewest votes in each round is eliminated; votes for the eliminated candidate are transferred to the voter's next-highest ranked candidate until a single candidate has a majority.

Councilors in each district would be elected using a ranked choice voting method called single transferable vote which elects multiple candidates in one election, based on a threshold. With three positions to fill, candidates are elected with 25% of the vote plus one vote, or when all other remaining candidates are eliminated. Ballots are counted in rounds, using a process to proportionally transfer surplus votes of elected candidates to next-highest ranked candidates. Candidates with the fewest votes are successively eliminated and their votes are transferred to the next-highest ranked candidates until all positions are elected.

Under the Commission's recommendation, a new Council, Mayor and Auditor would be elected by ranked choice voting in November 2024 and take office January 1, 2025, when other amendments become effective. Half the Council and Auditor would serve an initial two-year term. Thereafter, those elected would serve four-year terms.

Cost estimate for the Commission's recommendation is 0.9 to 8.7 million dollars annually, or 0.1 to 1.4% of Portland's discretionary funding.

(488 words, plus 8 hyphenated words and percent signs = 496 words)