

CHARTER COMMISSION- PUBLIC COMMENT REPORT

Date range: August 5, 2021 – September 21, 2021

From August 5 to September 21, 2021, at 8:00 a.m., **218 public comments** were submitted through the online public comment form, via email, and at the 8/9 Information Session meeting. **7** out of the **218** comments were made on behalf of a community-based organization. Of the 218 public comments received, the following comments were submitted:

Public comments:

The Charter Commissioners should recommend that Portland change to a city manager/council system of government with council member elected by districts.

If we had a city manager, we could fund it with the \$1.2 million dollars we are currently spending for each commissioner to have their own chief of staff, senior staff rep, staff rep and admin support specialist, according to the 2020-2021 City of Portland Listing of Job Classes. Our current system of five “mini”-city managers with duplicate staffing and sometimes competing interests is not the most efficient way to spend our tax dollars or govern our city. The citizens of Portland need to have better representation. The current system allows every commissioner to live in the same part of Portland...even on the same street. Our current commissioner system is denying its citizens equal access. According to the National League of Cities: “Several court decisions have forced jurisdictions to switch from at-large elections to district elections, and in most cases the reason was to allow more representation by specific ethnic and racial groups acknowledging that the prior system was a denial of equal access to the city’s political process. (See: McNeil v. City of Springfield, IL, 1987; and Williams v. City of Dallas, 1990; and Montes v. City of Yakima, 2014)”

[Public Comment at minute at 4:59](#)

[Public Comment at minute 8:50](#)

[Public Comment at minute 12:10](#)

[Public Comment at minute 15:40](#)

[Public Comment at minute 18:43](#)

[Public Comment at minute 23:48](#)

[Public Comment at minute 27: 25](#)

[Public Comment at minute 30:55](#)

Greetings! A while back I submitted comments through this website but never heard a word in reply. Did you receive my previous comments? Thanks.

Letter Attached

See updated details with hyperlinks here

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1EoUqUy1lylVyjl_D8j9cDuOh8zacBXPnpivYSIchAs/edit?usp=sharing

Considering the record levels of inequalities locally and globally, we need economic democracy. We should amend Portland's Charter to create and expand public utilities like broadband, electricity and banking. Many places have them and provide excellent and more affordable services with no profit extraction out of the local economy. Sandy's public broadband was created when corporations would not provide services since they couldn't make enough of a profit. Forest Grove and Hood River have public power providing lower cost service than the average in the state, while Portland pays higher than average. The Bank of N Dakota generates hundreds of millions in revenue annually and many localities are working to create new ones.

Remember when Enron owned PGE scammed rate payers, employees and investors? How can we tally up how much Portland loses to investor-owned broadband, power and bank oligopolies' profits, in addition to executive salaries, as well as wasteful marketing? Also, as we face the climate crisis, investor-owned utility, PG&E in CA, was a cause of numerous disastrous fires, as they prioritized profits and executive salaries over maintenance.

And what could we do with those millions of dollars for the public good? Public utilities can provide better services, and jobs while creating public wealth and economic democracy, that can help expand more public services and facilities, from broadband, banking, electricity, community land trusts, and housing. Many services that are not yet public utilities are monopolies that allow private enterprises to exploit both customers and workers for profits. Public utilities can ensure that residents are not left out of essential services and generate community wealth, rather than

profiting out of state corporations. This would also mitigate against growing economic inequality and boost people's confidence in democratic governance that is accountable to the people, and run for the benefit of the people, unlike investor owned enterprises.

This will also counter the trend towards privatization of utilities by Wall St and private equity. Private companies even threaten our political landscape, as reported by the Oregonian's Polluted by Money series: "Portland attorney Dan Meek said he became an advocate for campaign finance restrictions after winning a case proving illegal billing by Portland General Electric, owned at the time by Enron, the corrupt Texas energy giant. PGE and Enron went to the Legislature, which passed a law to invalidate Meek's ratepayer victory."

We need a more democratic and accountable economy, that will benefit all in our local economy with public enterprises, utilities and property including community land trusts and public housing. Public utilities can be a core part of this to counter the growing inequality in our city and world. We should amend the charter to facilitate this work.

Hyung Nam
Portland Metro People's Coalition

The Subcommittee on Form of Government is scheduled to meet at 6 pm on Sept. 7. Were you aware that is when Rosh Hashana starts?

Good day! A month or two ago, I submitted a comment via email, but I'm not sure you received it. Could you please confirm receipt of a comment from Peter Seaman? Thanks. - Peter

I believe Portland would be best served by a Council-Manager form of government, with some Council members elected by districts and some at-large. A mayor should be elected at-large and should chair Council meetings , but should have the same voting power as each of the other Council members (no veto (power)).

The current format of our City Council doesn't work well for our citizens or for the city. We need to have a city council where the council members represent people living in particular geographic areas, call them districts. Districts could be as simple as North, Northwest, Southwest, Southeast and Northeast, although I believe we would need smaller sized districts. When a problem comes up for an individual, they will have a council member to contact. Now, when someone has a problem at the city level, it would be very helpful if there was a representative they could call to help them. Right now if I wanted help, I don't know who I would contact with a problem. The situation is always changing. One year this councilor is responsible for transportation, next year they handle education and somebody else is doing transportation. Last year I don't remember who was responsible for Police and Fire. This year it's Joanne Hardesty. A change for the good, yes, but another example of how priorities and strategies are changed whenever a new councilor takes on responsibility for a new area. Why aren't there standing committees to handle the different areas? There are recommendations that appear before city council that are less than half-baked and full of personal agenda that might be better if we had council members representing their districts, looking out for the interests of their citizens and standing committees where work products were vetted publicly before showing up for a vote in city council. Some of the pre-pandemic Landlord-Tenant acts come to mind here. I hope that the Charter Commission will take the time to understand how our current structure is not meeting the needs of the city and its citizens and be willing to make radical changes like I recommend here.

I love Portland. However, our commission form of government does not work and is not effective at tackling the basic needs of a city our size, nor is it fairly represent our diverse population and neighborhoods. We need to move away from the commission form of government and have a strong mayor and a city manager that understands how to run a city, while focusing on citizen priorities while addressing basic livability issues.

To be entirely honest I don't believe the Charter Commission adequately represents Portland demographics and so instead minority views and positions will be amplified due to City Council selecting commissioners who they or their staff think represents Portland. For these reasons I don't expect we will see the Charter change we really need and want as a City

We need our City bureaus to be managed by hired experts not a city council which lacks the experience to lead the bureaus effectively. We need a City manager too. City council should not directly manage bureaus. We should look at other cities governance because ours is weak.

The commission based form of city government is obviously not working, Portland is being destroyed. We need a city manager. Why have we held on to this archaic and ineffective form of government? Please put this on the ballot.

Dear Commissioners,

Thank you so much for the work you are doing. We have lived downtown Portland for over 16 years and seen it go from a wonderful and safe place to live to a place to a you do not really want to be. The tents taking over the sidewalks and public areas, the trash all over the place, the lack of safety at night. I may be wrong but it seems like the only thing running efficiently is Tri-Met. We need a city manager with real administrative ability and teeth to actually run a city of this size. You have a chance to change the tide and we need your courage and investment.

Thank you!

Change our city government to a city manager system, now!!!

If we don't do something to reclaim our city soon I fear it will be too late, I'll do whatever it takes on my end to help

I am strongly in favor of changing Portland's form of government to something more modern and effective. I was born in Portland and am embarrassed by what our city and city government have become. It's time to modernize. Portland is one of only two cities in the US with this incredibly ineffective and antiquated form of city government. Let's get with the program and start anew.

Geographic council representative city manager professional bureau heads elected mayor

I'd like either a form of government with a city manager or a stronger roll fit mayor.

The current system is broken.

Let's get this done before it's too late.

Thank you.

Some helpful info attached.

BTW, please let the Co-Chairs know that generally government meetings have a time at the end [or start] that allows for comment from the public. If they seriously want public input, I strongly suggest they reserve 15 minutes or so at the end of the meeting to take feedback from the public.

Also, leave the chat for folks to comment on. I'm sure some useful info will be funneled to the committee.

Please review the form of government that the City of Portland uses. Portland is the only city in the top 30 that uses the Commission form of government. The commission form of city government is the oldest form of government in the U.S., but exists today in less than 1% of cities. While this form of government probably made sense to use in Portland in the past, it appears to be outdated and inefficient.

Another thing to consider is where commissioners live versus who they are representing. In its current form, commissioners oversee bureaus, not any specific constituency. It makes sense to have districts in the city and have a council seat represent that district and the interests of that district's constituency. The commissioner should have to have a registered mailing address within that district's boundaries to ensure an accurate and fair representation of the community within each district.

The city currently operates each bureau as an individual entity, instead of a team working together. Perhaps having a City Manager could get bureaus working together as a team, instead of independent organizations, where the left hand doesn't talk to the right, which it currently feels like.

Greetings!

I have been a Portland resident for six years. I strongly urge the Charter Commission to recommend a change to an aldermanic system of city government for Portland. Coming from the Chicago area, I am most familiar with and most favorable to the system in Chicago. Here the link to the explanation of how Chicago's system works:
https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/mayor/provdrs/your_ward_and_alderman.html#:~:text=Each%20district%20is%20represented%20by,of%20the%20City%20of%20Chicago.

Having experienced the past few years here as a resident of the Pearl District in Portland, I believe that we need to move to a stronger form of local government, where each area of the city is represented.

Indeed: To better days ahead!

Please consider dealing with the unprecedeted outbreak of violent and property crimes.

Commission,

The attached letter of concern is in response to the recent RFP process that was identified as an opportunity for the once-in-a-decade Charter Review Commission to be better informed by greater engagement of community groups spreading the word about its important work. The NAACP Portland, and so many other community-facing organizations, saw this as an opportunity to solicit and ensure greater voice, engagement and influence by Portland's typically underrepresented, marginalized and voiceless BIPOC, immigrant, disabled and LGBTQ communities of color, in the critical deliberations and recommendations that could emerge from this appointed body.

Our excitement at the first announcement was evident and we were pleased to lean into the RFP process and to imagine collaborative work and partnerships to inform and suggest work to the Commission that could result in more transparent, equitable and accountable local government. We were soon disappointed, however, as our letter attests, to discover the timeline was short, and the funding available did not seem adequate to support the level of work required to truly elevate and amplify community engagement beyond historical majority community interests.

We offer the attached letter as a primer on what we believe is necessary work at the local government level, and is most important as we continue to break down old systems that favor the status quo, as we work to move government entities beyond rhetoric in order to arrive at more racially and socially just and democratic processes, and to ensure that recommendations for better governance are more inclusive of the voices of all residents,

I invite your review and responses.

Hello,

I would love to see Safety Rangers helping people on the streets that need help and visitors that need help (they have Safety Rangers in the French Quarter in New Orleans).

I have lived in Portland for 20 years, and have been puzzled by the "weak-mayor" form of government. It does not seem to be responsive to citizens. There is no desk upon which the buck stops. Also you have Commissioners in charge of city agencies where the Commissioners have no expertise.

I moved to Portland 20 years ago from Philadelphia, PA. I didn't understand the "aw shucks, we're just a big small town" form of government then and it's even worse now. Every tax payer funded project feels like a giant boondoggle because no one in charge has any expertise. Or, it's all pet projects of the commissioners ignoring the needs of our city and its inhabitants. We're surrounded by neighbors in economic crisis. Many of whom are victimized by rampant car thefts. But, the streets department just painted corners yellow for reasons. Vision Zero cost how much and yet, no one took into consideration anything other than lowering speed limits. The city erected 2 different signs on my street corner that make it impossible to see oncoming traffic if you need to turn. We're drowning in trash, but public trash cans aren't allowed? affordable? And, it doesn't matter why, because new commissioners will be voted in who will do whatever. We need actual experts leading our actual city. Our system of governance wasn't working 20 years ago when we were much smaller and it's actively harming our citizens now.

It is obvious that Portland is in trouble This has been going on pre pandemic, but the current state is exacerbating our already existing issues of equity, affordable housing and social services. When I moved here 13 years ago I was so amazed how clean the city was, how nice public transportation was. It is sad that is all gone. But we saw this coming and I cannot help but feel that developers and politicians that invested in them made handfuls of money and now we have tens of thousand houseless community members. This should be an all hands on deck effort. This is a crisis!!!

The research of what to do is established, the non profits exist. What we are missing is a city government that can act on the will of the people to make things happen. It is an embarrassment and we need to change to a more effective

form of government. We also need to have conflict of interest policies; no active developers sitting on planning boards or anyone looking to benefit monetarily from city decisions. Please make the city council larger and more geographically representative. No more at large positions. We need a city manager and policies to get the work done when and where we need it.

Hello Charter Commission thank you for accepting and reviewing public comments and for your dedication to the betterment of the Portland metro area.

The advanced degree of lawlessness mixed with poverty striking the city calls for a critical reassessment of the role of the state in the lives of our most critically dependent.

Whether it be drugs, mental illness, or a combination of both the stark reality is that there is a portion of our community whom are physically and mentally incapable of taking care of themselves and living in generalized society.

Some may believe that allowing them to roam about freely somehow is the most ethical. In my opinion, this provides optics that only soothes the ethical dilemma in the housed, stable citizen's mind. It is inherently an unethical choice; believing a delusional person is choosing this life is nonsense.

Most of these people must be taken into state custody, medically assessed, and housed. Once stable then these folks may make other decisions for themselves but as of now our decision of *indecision* is leading to a deleterious game of hot potato which will having lasting social and economic effects for all citizens in this city.

Without solving this crisis of unhoused mentally ill folks we cannot possibly hope to solve the car thefts, violence, and general lawlessness in our city.

Thank you for any consideration of the opinion above

Hello, and thank you for this opportunity to leave a comment.

The city government architecture as it currently is, does not serve the full Portland constituency. As a "weak position" mayor, how can I feel confident with the mayoral campaign rhetoric if the legislature is such that voting is consensus?

I would like to see the voting move from at large to district; the mayor and council move from consensus to democratic.

And - I would like to know why - WHY has nothing been done to relieve the residents of the houseless and mentally ill, and addicted populations living on our streets and in our public parks? WHY? There is certainly the money. Portland certainly has the critical thinking skills to figure this out for the benefit of people who are unable to house and care for themselves as well as the residents and business owners who live in Portland. Or, does it? There is a social contract we all assume when we live in an urban environment. This contract is broken, consistently. Is Mayor Wheeler and the Council listening? Hearing us? Reading about the assaults? Following how many people are picking up and leaving?
Why is the city government so quiet? Why is the city government absent? HELP!!!!

I'm at home in NE Portland on a Sunday night and the streets are full of lawless street racing a block from my house. My dogs are anxious and I am furious because this is NOT the first time. I wanted to call it into the PPB non-emergency number but that number just hangs up on you. What is going on with this city? Seriously, what is it? You treat North East Portland like a ghetto. It is disgusting. I've lived in and paid property taxes for 23 years and yet my streets are crumbling (NE 6th Ave and NE Lombard St) and the homeless are rife. It really is upsetting to watch this city of mine disintegrate.

I live in the Cully neighborhood. Most of the neighborhood organizations have been taken over by single-issue organizations (NAYA took over Our 42nd) or individuals who are intolerant of opinions other than their own (Cully Association of Neighbors really only interested in filling the neighborhood with low-income housing, though I don't think many neighbors really want that housing filling their part of the city vs other areas). So I'm interested in having a rep for this area who is unaffiliated with an interest group and whom I can call up if problems arise. I was very pleased with the representation I had when I lived in Boston. Also it would be great to have professional management of the city rather than management by amateurs or those only representing their ethnic block.

Portland's form of government is outdated and ineffective, and needs to go. Portland must institute a representative city council, where the city council members are elected by and represent districts, rather than departments. Every other large city in the country uses this form of city government, and it's time that Portland reconfigured so that the city government actually represented the people of the city.

We've lived in Laurelhurst since 1972. We are taxpayers. In the last few years and more-so just recently the crime in our neighborhood has gotten out of control. Just on our block (Couch between 39th and 41st) our car was stolen two weeks ago, our neighbor's car was ransacked, a neighbor caught someone trying to take something off his car, a work truck was stolen, street racing, a shooting and crash at the end of our street - and on and on and on. THAT'S JUST ONE BLOCK!

The city is dirty. Graffiti everywhere. Why can't the city get its act together and dispatch workers to clean up, repaint overpasses, move people off the sidewalks and clean up the junk scattered around every neighborhood. Our city government needs to get it's backbone to force code compliance. It's ridiculous. I have had enough of the "touchy/feely" city government and it's time to give the police and others the money and people to get the clean up work done - now. I blame the Mayor and City Council for allowing all of this to get so out of control. So tell them to get busy and fix the city so we can feel safe again.

The current form of government is not appropriate for a city of this size, with the socio-economic diversity from neighborhood to neighborhood and with the problems that exist. At-large commissioners with a weak mayor leave no one fully responsible or accountable and much of the city under-represented or not represented at all. Although I have no evidence of ongoing fraudulent acts, with representatives holding near complete control of individual government agencies with little oversight, a system like the one in place is very susceptible to corruption and mismanagement. There should be more commissioners in order to more appropriately represent the population, they should be elected from separate and defined geographic areas of the city, there should be separate elected officials with responsibility for public health, law enforcement, fire protection and other city services and Portland should no be run by a weak mayor but a city manager who is experienced in dealing with the very complex operation of a city.

We have a broken city commissioner system. We are the last big city that doesn't have representation specific to the areas of our city. We could be better as a whole if we had better representation and didn't have such gaping inequity. This is the reason we. Any have good mayors. Because our commissioner system is broken. Please fix it

Ladies and Gentlemen: The current system of municipal government in Portland is ineffectual and outdated. If we look at well-run cities of comparable size, we can see that we need: (1) a strong mayor with all of the executive power - i.e., all agencies and departments should report to him and serve at his pleasure. (2) a responsible legislative branch, which means a city council with councilors elected from separate, geographical districts. I would not have more than 12-15 city councilors. All of the legislative power, including the power to tax and to spend, should be in the city council. (3) I tend to favor making the school board a department under the mayor, with the superintendent of schools appointed by the mayor. (4) Voting should continue to be one person, one vote, and the candidate with the highest total on Election Day wins. I'm strongly opposed to ranked-choice voting because it's extremely unrealistic to expect members of the public to devote time to learning about a whole bunch of weak candidates. The result is that a small percentage of the public, the activists, gain voting power far out of proportion to their numbers. (5) Give the mayor and city councilors 4-year terms, and hold municipal elections in Presidential years, which have much higher voter turnout.

Portland needs to try a strong mayor government structure. It may not improve things but we could at least try it and see.

It is my understanding that you are analyzing Portland's commission style of government. I support Mingus Mapp's proposed changes to Portland's form of government that he outlined in his platform.

(<https://www.mingusmapps.com/charter-reform>.) In particular, we need a City Manager system to oversee the day-to-day operations of city bureaus. We should hire someone who has actually managed other cities.

The professional city manager should be selected by the mayor and subject to council approval. ("Report Suggests Fixing Dysfunctional Portland Government With a City Manager and Twice as Many Commissioners", Aaron Mesh, Willamette Week, Feb. 10, 2019, <https://www.wweek.com/news/city/2019/02/10/report-suggests-fixing-dysfunctional-portland-government-with-a-city-manager-and-twice-as-many-commissioners/>.)

Right now our commissioners form our city council. Our city council members should not both craft policy and serve

as the head executive of the bureaus. It is too difficult to both manage city functions and to decide political issues brought before the council. (Id.) Quite frankly, this leads to ineptitude and dysfunction.

For evidence of this ineptitude and dysfunction, we need look no further than Ted Wheeler, who is not only serving as mayor but as Portland Police Bureau (PPB)'s commissioner. In 2018 Mr. Wheeler, ordered officers to take a hands-off approach to protesters who had set up a camp in front of the city's Immigration and Customs Enforcement building, trapped federal employees inside, and vandalized their cars. ("Portland's Half-Century of Ruinous Leadership", Mark Hemingway, Wall Street Journal, August 31, 2020, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/portlands-half-century-of-ruinous-leadership-11598915823>.) Just this last weekend, Mayor Wheeler ordered the PPB to stand down in the face of political violence. Mayor Wheeler and Chuck Lovell, head of PPB, had known in advance that the Proud Boys and Antifa were planning to engage in violence in our city. However, Mayor Wheeler's response was to declare that he would "choose love" and ordered PPB to stand down and leave the political violence unchecked. This resulted in a violent brawl that spilled into Parkrose High School and gunfire exchanged in the heart of downtown. ("Gunfire Erupts After Proud Boys and Anti-Fascists Openly Brawl in Portland Without Police Intervention", Ryan Haas and Jonathan Levinson, OPB, Aug. 22, 2021, <https://www.opb.org/article/2021/08/22/far-right-activists-counterprotesters-gather-in-portland/>.) At least one family with young children had to run "to their car to escape the unitions and aerosolized chemicals." ("UPDATED: Far-Right, Antifascist Protesters Fight in NE Portland; Police Refuse to Intervene", Isabella Garcia, Portland Mercury, Aug. 22, 2021 (<https://www.portlandmercury.com/blogtown/2021/08/22/36118630/far-right-antifascist-protesters-fight-in-ne-portland-police-refuse-to-intervene>.)

Another example of the dysfunctional nature of our current city form of government occurred when Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty accused PPB of setting the ubiquitous fires during the political violence that erupted last summer. ("Hardesty Says Officers Starting Fires; Police Chief, Union Deny Claim, Want Evidence", KATU 2, July 22, 2020, <https://katu.com/news/local/commissioner-jo-ann-hardesty-claims-officers-starting-fires-police-chief-chuck-lovell-union-president-daryl-turner-want-evidence>; "Portland Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty Slams Mayor Ted Wheeler, Blames Portland Police for Fires Being Set During Protests", Maxine Bernstein, The Oregonian/OregonLive, July 22, 2020, <https://www.oregonlive.com/crime/2020/07/portland-commissioner-jo-ann-hardesty-slams-mayor-ted-wheeler-blames-portland-police-for-fires-being-set-during-protests-then-apologizes.html>.) As the city's fire commissioner, it was actually Hardesty's job to start an investigation based on her public claims and to provide any evidence that she had to further such investigation. ("Mayor Wheeler Pressures Commissioner Hardesty to Provide Evidence for Her Retracted Claim That Portland Police Set Fires at Protests", Tess Riski, Willamette Week, July 23, 2020, <https://www.wweek.com/news/city/2020/07/23/mayor-wheeler-slams-commissioner-hardesty-for-claiming-portland-police-set-fires-at-protests>.) Hardesty's claims also forced PPB to open an investigation into the crimes that she alleged, at the taxpayers' expense. (Id.) Hardesty eventually retracted her claims. (Id.) However, by then it was too late because the utterance of the allegations had necessarily triggered the investigations. (Id.)

I also support Mingus Mapp's proposal that we have a larger city council/more city commissioners. (<https://www.mingusmapps.com/charter-reform>.) We should have between 8-12 commissioners. ("Report Suggests Fixing Dysfunctional Portland Government With a City Manager and Twice as Many Commissioners", Aaron Mesh, Willamette Week, Feb. 10, 2019, <https://www.wweek.com/news/city/2019/02/10/report-suggests-fixing-dysfunctional-portland-government-with-a-city-manager-and-twice-as-many-commissioners>.) This will allow more diversity amongst the commissioners and provide them with more "time to focus on constituent services and their policy and legislative functions". (Id. (Internal quotation marks omitted.))

The commissioners should be elected by district. (Id.; <https://www.mingusmapps.com/charter-reform>.) This ensures that all of the quadrants and neighborhoods of the city are represented. (Id.)

Thank you for your consideration.

This is long overdue. Our city's issues and opportunities have outgrown our current form of government's ability to manage them. It is time for clearer priorities, aligned resource allocation and execution of work. We need to clean this city up and focus on safety!

Portland needs a form of government that will allow us to create the future picture of our city that we all deserve. The current system is not only ineffective, it creates more problems than it solve (i.e. homeless proliferation).

Abandon the commissioner system and create a city manager and representation government strong enough to solve today issues and work to build a more sustainable future.

Thank you for rising to the challenge. Have the courage of your convictions

Dear Charter Commission members,

First, I do not envy you. Your task is immensely complex and of critical importance to the future of Portland and its residents, and I thank you for your decision to serve in this role.

I am a white, male, home owning, advanced degree holding (in public administration, no less), Portland resident working in a relatively senior position in an Oregon state government agency. I cannot think of a set of attributes that equip one better to be advantaged by an opaque, byzantine government structure as we have here in Portland. I also have lived previously under mayor-council, town manager, and hybrid systems of government, and grew up in a state where 200 person representative town meetings still serve as the legislative body for large towns. So, from this perspective I'll just say: Portland's system of government and elections absolutely sucks.

But you know this. You know it limits the ability of agencies to develop long term strategy. You know it limits accountability. You know it invites heavy-handed corporate influence. You know it's inequitable. You know it's paralyzing. You know we have to do something, and I applaud you for trying to figure out what that something is. Here are my thoughts:

1. The number of elected representatives needs to be dramatically expanded: Portland has grown up. The ratio of residents per legislative member is about on par with the number of residents in an Oregon State Senate district. It's hard for a resident to get a legislative member to care about a hyper local issue, when the number of hyperlocal issues each legislative member needs to care about is immense and overwhelming to even the most proactive member and office.
2. Legislative members must represent districts: As a Montavilla resident, my issues are different from those of a Pearl District condo owner, or the most recently annexed residents of far-South Southeast Portland. My issues are different from those of the Black Portlanders in Northeast Portland. We all must have a voice in legislating, and we all must have confidence that there is someone in government whose central job is to care about the issues in the communities in which we live. It should be easy to run into my councilperson at the farmers market or at the park. And if my councilperson doesn't show up to the market to talk with constituents, it should be easy to target that person for defeat in favor of someone who will. While Portland's East side and minority representation on the council happens to be good now, the history of having the median vote on the council being a white, corporate West side resident has led to inaction on issues many residents care about. This fair representation should be baked in, not accidental.
3. The legislature and the executive must be decoupled: Running a large city is a complex endeavor, and executive management and technocratic expertise are valuable skills. They're also very different from the skills that make for a successful legislator: community organizing, coalition building, relationship management, and advocacy. We should not chance the fact that an elected legislator may be successful in running an executive department.
4. The buck must stop ... somewhere: Anywhere! It's no wonder we have a rich tradition of hating the mayor and screaming at council meetings. Every council member has the ability to say, 'not my department.' Imagine a system where citizens can enforce actual accountability, and even have the ability to ::gasp:: like a mayor and reelect them based on their performance in managing the whole of government? Is that Utopia? No, it's Cleveland.

Thanks again for the hard work you're doing to make Portland work better. I truly appreciate it.

Portland MUST change to a professionally managed City Manager structure. The City Councillors do what they can, but they are just not trained or experienced in running multi million dollar city organizations. The constant flux with elections, even during a single administration, compounds a very bad situation. The Council can continue to provide oversight, but our City requires a professional manager. Thank you

Hello, As a longtime resident, I have been concerned about the lack of effectiveness of our commission style government. As we grow, and embrace the future it would serve us to update to either a mayor-council or council-manager system with a strong mayor, city manager or both. Of the 30 largest cities in the United States Portland is the only one still using this archaic and inefficient form of governing. Please consider this as we move forward. Thank you.

This system is simply not working anymore and it makes no sense to not have representative districts at the local level. This absolute dysfunction at City Hall needs to end. Nobody speaks for my neighborhood or ANYTHING east of Cesar Chavez.

Portland desperately needs a city manager form of government and professional, skilled managers running each bureau along with geographically elected representatives. The events of the past year, from rampant homelessness and crime to Chloe Eudaly's abject mishandling of ONI, has demonstrated that Portland's elected politicians are not skilled managers.

Could we try a new form of government? A form that hasn't been done before? Like Democracy (not representative democracy)? I'd say the overwhelming majority of Oregonians have access to a computer. Each one could submit ideas- they would need to be electronically be promoted until they reached a certain number of the citizenry before they could be put to an electronic vote (say 100,000 signatures).

Our gem of a city continues to deteriorate from the blight of violence, graffiti, trash, and bodies and tents everywhere from the plight of the homeless. It has become clear that Portland's government structure is the main obstacle in solving these persistent and growing problems. We must (a) reform government to empower a professional city manager along with professional managers of city departments, and (b) combine the overlapping city and county governments for better efficiency and reduce citizen confusion over who does what.

The Commissioner System of government in Portland is fundamentally ineffectual and needs to be replaced immediately, if not sooner. At a time when we need leadership and change the most, every single current elected official has failed Portland miserably (and then some). We are in the throes of a humanitarian and environmental crisis to which City Council has shown total indifference. Portland leadership has completely abdicated their duty in every conceivable and measurable sense. On top of an already-devastating year (see: global pandemic), Portland is experiencing chronic homelessness, polluted waterways and greenspaces, skyrocketing crime and gun violence, and landscape that is a graffitied landfill. And what do we see from Portland elected officials. Total inaction. "The City That Works?" Try again.

Please finally fix our outdated Government system of city councils with too much power, no experience and a Mayor with no power.

Enough is enough. It's time the Public was educated on our outdated commissioner system. Portland is stuck in gridlock and our city is falling apart.

The majority do not even know how this city is managed and if they did, they would vote this system out. It's from the 1900's written by Texas!

Time to make a real change to protect this city! Have the courage to be bold and do the right thing.

--

Recall the current Council and revise our current form of City Government.

In the interim, we should have our major corporations donate a total of 5 top level executives to run the City, with full power to fix the problems that have destroyed our City and Civilized Society 

Please review this short summary clarifying the differences between the "Strong Mayor" and Council/Manager forms of government. The Council/Manager form is a community engagement model vs. the Strong Mayor which centralizes power with the Mayor. The Commission form of government has long been recognized throughout the US as the most expensive and ineffective form of government. While it had worked well for Portland for many years, the complexity of our society today no longer provides that luxury. I would strongly urge your committee to get professional, objective advice so that there is no bias from the individuals explaining the differences. Here's the link:
https://icma.org/sites/default/files/302618_Council-Manager%20or%20Strong%20Mayor%20-%20The%20Choice%20is%20Clear.pdf

The present structure of Portland government has not worked in the interest of the citizens and has resulted in failure of the government to provide basic municipal services, in deteriorating conditions throughout the area and in a lack of representation. A change to a manager-council form of governance is essential and past-due. Thank you.

Dear Charter Commissioners:

I write to you, the Charter Commission, about the City Charter review.

1. Number of councilors: The City Council should increase from 5 to 7 members. With Portland exceeding an estimated population of 650,000, 7 seems more proportional, and there would be enough worthy candidates to campaign for and fill all 7 seats. Having 7 seats would also better accommodate representatives reflecting the various and sometimes competing interest groups in the city. (That said, more than 11 councilors would be too many for a council to agree enough to accomplish much.)

2. Districting: Second, for districting there should be at least 2 at-large positions. It's always good to have some councilors who aren't almost wholly beholden to constituents of a single district and feel freer to consider issues less parochially. Regarding the remaining 5 seats that would be by district, I suggest district delineations of:

- West side (NW, SW including downtown, and soon-to-be S "quadrant")
- SE, excluding outer east
- NE, excluding outer east
- N; and
- Outer east side (more or less east of I-205 because dividing along 82nd Avenue would be too awkward for property owners and residents along the road).

I think most people could get around to agreeing on what the boundaries of these would be.

3. Staggered terms: Regularly scheduled Council elections should be limited to even-number years the same as the usual date in November for federal presidential and mid-term elections, and that the staggering of terms be such that in a given election year, no more than 3 of the 7 seats could turn over.

4. Term length: A term being defined as 4 years would suffice, and while I'm against term limits, if term limits should come to be, I'd ask that the Charter Commission recommend a limit to be no more stringent than 12 years total and ideally a generous 20 years total.

5. City administration/management: I'm noncommittal about whether the Council should directly supervise bureaus, remaining without a city manager, or whether it should set law and policy and let a city manager administer accordingly. My overall concern is that an objective of charter reform should be that the electorate knows who to hold accountable for implementing policy and who receives complaints and requests to change policy – particularly administrative policy, not just law.

6. When normal terms begin: Newly elected councilors should take office during the first regularly scheduled Council meeting in the January following the November election. People would remember this easiest because it would mimic when a President of the United States takes office. Additionally, it rightfully gives the existing council and staff some time to wrap up adoption of projects before new councilors take office. (For special springtime elections, taking office should be during the first regularly scheduled Council meeting in the following month.)

7. Council meetings number and frequency: The Charter should require a minimum number of Council meetings and recommend a maximum, e.g. minimum 24 meetings yearly and recommended maximum of 42. There seem to me to be way too many meetings too frequently for councilors to keep up with agendas, never mind the public. The Charter should guide the Council about how often is too little and too much.

8. Charter review period: Reset the next and each subsequent 10-year charter review period to be around the time the federal government requires the U.S. Census Bureau to release the decennial Census numbers, e.g. late 2030 and every 10 years thereafter.

9. Emergency ordinances: I frown upon adoption of emergency ordinances because it seems both the legislature and

Council use the tool too often and frivolously. First, the Council should amend Charter Sect. 2-120 to define and limit invocation of emergencies. It should be limited to a few specific examples, namely declaration of emergency by the governor, domestic insurrection or rebellion, invasion, war, natural disaster, epidemic or pandemic disease, threat to public health because of problems with potable water or sanitary sewerage, severely polluted or smoky air, heat wave, insubordination or subversion by the Police Bureau or its members, or obstruction of Council business by a number of councilors such that the Council lacks a quorum to conduct business (a “walk-out” by some councilors). Second, the Council should amend Charter Sect. 2-123 that if the Council were to adopt an emergency ordinance for any other situation, then the ordinance would be subject to referendum.

Dear Charter Commission Members,

Can you please investigate what alternative models of city government look like in cities that are similar to Portland and propose shifting to the most effective model?

Our city is in dire straits. It seems the current structure is not up to the task of effective leadership over such crises as low morale for police officers, lack of mental health support for the homeless, the homeless problem itself and the growing number of camps, rising crime rates, a dying downtown, violent protests that harm individuals and cause property damage that are ignored/tolerated, the list goes on and on. We need bold, effective leaders with a strategic plan and innovative vision to get the City back on track. The current system is clearly not up to the unprecedented challenges of the moment.

My name is Marla, I'm a social worker, student, and resident of SE Portland. I live near 82nd Avenue and it is apparent that the area of the city that lies to the east is largely forgotten by our legislators. Garbage, potholes, gunshots, street racing are just some of what we deal with every day. I love my neighborhood; I love the diversity, the small businesses, the cheerful neighbors, the realness! But we want and need our legislators to care about us. This is why I strongly advocate for a change in the charter that calls for more representatives (at least 10) who each represent a geographical region of the city. Additionally, city departments and bureaus should be run by individuals who have the relevant knowledge and experience to do so-and can be appointed by the city council members. As a social worker, I know the importance of thoughtful public policy.. It is no secret that homelessness,, mental illness, and addiction are huge challenges for Portland but I fear those in charge are bogged down by lack of knowledge and understanding of the issues and these decisions should be turned over to people with the expertise to effect change. Cities change, and Portland is no different. Change and growth can be hard, but it can be easier if we plan for it in advance. We need to expand the representation at City Hall and bring more voices and knowledge to the table.

I would like to encourage the commission to put a vote for a city manager and district based councilor system up for a vote. The diluted decision making authority and lack of professional bureau management is failing the city in my opinion and we would be better served with a different government structure that is more in line with other major cities in the US. As a North Portland resident the city-wide councilor structure has left me feeling underrepresented and I'd appreciate the opportunity to vote for a reorganization of city structure. Thank you.

No more commission based system, let's replace it with a City Manager.

The citizens of Portland have no representation on the council. We demand a council entirely comprised of people from all of our neighborhoods, each representing a small district determined by population. They must be empowered to hold the mayor and the heads of the City's bureaus accountable.

We need to get rid of the city council and have a city manager. Mayor should not be police commissioner.

I would prefer to see Portland's city government transition to a Council-Manager system, in which the City Council seats are based on geographic representation. This could either be drawn from existing neighborhood boundaries, or new districts created based on population. Either way, every Portlander should be equally represented at the city level. City Council members should hold short, 2-3 year terms.

Strong mayor-council with an electives chief administrative officer, plus police commissioner separate from mayoral position

Hi there, I think the commission style of government Portland uses is inadequate for a city of its size, and that a change to something such as a city manager model would help different parts of the city get their voices heard, and let the city as a whole function more efficiently and effectively.

Portland needs to move away from the "weak mayor" system. The commission system exists today in less than 1% of cities and is mostly found in cities with populations under 100,000. The more complex problems of the large urban area Portland has become requires a system more appropriate for our needs, such as Mayor-Council or Council-Manager.

I believe our commission system is failing to get things done in Portland. We're using an antiquated form of city government and should adopt a proven model of Mayor Council with strong Mayor powers.

Portland needs to get rid of this outdated and useless form of government based on a commission or council with the mayor having very little power. Ted Wheeler sucks but our form of governments sucks even more! We must do better! Portlanders deserve better. The city has turned into a lawless place with white supremacists, street racers, the mentally ill and drug addicted doing whatever they want with no consequences. I'm so frustrated that no one seems to be able to DO ANYTHING to change this!

The council-manager or mayor-council forms of government would let the City govern and run much more effectively than the current form of government. This change would let the bureaus operate in tandem to address some of Portland's biggest problems.

Councilmembers should be elected fully by district throughout the City. The wealthier west side of the river has historically had an unfair influence on city governance. Travel through this City for a day and you can easily see that there are dozens of different geopolitical areas made up of everything from working class families to millionaire NIMBYs. We need geographically based political boundaries that represent the differing neighborhoods of Portland on City Council. As a bonus, it would be much easier to run and win as a progressive candidate if you could run on a district level. It also allows councilmembers to be more responsive to their constituents.

Portland's form of government is for the benefit of the wealthiest members of the City. It's for the benefit of out-of-City companies and lobbyists who can manipulate the weak system in a way that they see fit. It is for the benefit of the extractive status quo that depends on citizens not participating in their government. We need all of the participation we can get right now, or else the parties who have steered society to this precipice will continue to steer us off of this cliff toward extinction. We can do better, and we must!

We need to change from a city commission system to include a city manager.

The current commission-style government Portland has does not work anymore. We need either a Council-Manager or a Mayor-Council style.

Please remove the commision based system and move to a strong mayor approach like nearly all cities in the United States. Very little accountability in the current structure of government.

Thank you for taking on this challenging task. I appreciate the willingness to address something so challenging.

Given this overview from the National League of Cities (<https://www.nlc.org/resource/forms-of-municipal-government/>) Portland is one of the largest cities to run by commission and to NOT run itself by either a Mayor-Council or Council-Manager model.

In my opinion the structural problems our city faces means that it is pressing for our governance model to be changed for better functioning. I believe some version of the Mayor-Council model would work well for Portland, with emphasis on having a city manager and a clear role for the city council (e.g. budgeting, overseeing the administration) as well giving enough power to the mayor to both do their job and to be held accountable for their actions. Above all, I would prefer that we move away from city council members as commissioners responding to specific areas of city governance. We have professionals who do that work and we should ask our city counselors to focus instead on the larger governance issues.

Thank you for your work on behalf of the citizens of Portland.

We need a city manager like most normal cities! Having each commissioner/one-fifth-mayor run entire departments of the city leads to siloed projects and poor cross-departmental planning, and almost no real long-term vision for the city beyond banal corruption and mismanagement. I prefer the better degree of corruption and mismanagement we could have with a proper city management organizational structure, lol.

City Council should be the primary executive with the Council Chair functioning as chief, elected by members of the council after each election. Bureau heads should be elected by the employees of that bureau except for Police Commissioner, which should be elected at large.

Portland commissioners should be elected based off the area in which they live. East Portland is not currently adequately represented by our commissioners.

The city of Portland should also consider hiring a City Manager to provide continuity to city bureaus as commissioners come and go.

Hello, I've been a Portland resident for 11 years. Portland stands to benefit by shifting to a mayor-council government system and rank choice voting. There are many issues facing us that need swift policy change---e.g., homelessness crisis, litter, right wing vs left wing violence, gun violence, law enforcement, climate crisis, infrastructure, schools---but decisive action seems to be stifled by our commission system. Revamping our governance system would help make progress on these issues.

We need a new form of government in Portland. We are too big for the current set up. It is not working anymore.

Please strengthen the power of the mayor, have commissioners who represent districts instead of at large representation. Add more commissioners to better represent the unique pockets of the city. A city manager is needed.

It is so frustrating to have people running bureaus who have little to no experience with how they work.

Also, let's do away with primary elections and move to ranked choice voting (save time and money).

I'm writing to express my strong support for this Commission's findings and recommendations, particularly with regard to switching to some sort of Council-Manager form of government (either with or without a Strong Mayor component).

The Commission form of government fell out of favor in the first half of the twentieth century, leaving the Council-Manager (or modified variant) the dominant form of local government in the United States. Concentrating the executive functions of the city government in a city manager would bring Portland in-line with the majority of American municipal governments and all of Oregon's large municipalities. An appointed city manager would allow bureaus to focus on furthering the City's mission and values. Furthermore, a shift in the form of government to council-manager would also provide the cohesion between bureaus necessary to deliver and expand city services.

In addition to the city manager component of the recommendations contemplated by this Commission, further expanding the number of councilors (currently City Commissioners) and establishing some sort of district representation are also vital to our community. My only hesitation with district representation is the potential to entrench representation from certain neighborhoods/districts which could result in an inequitable power imbalance on city council. Our community should ensure that districts - if implemented - are designed in such a way that does not exclude our marginalized and historically under represented communities, but rather brings those communities to a table at which they have traditionally been excluded. Furthermore, Portland is growing and changing rapidly, with the cost of living continuously on the rise, the districts of today may look far different in five to ten years - flexibility to adapt to a growing city will be critical.

Lastly, I would like to thank each and every Commissioner for their care, interest, and commitment to making the City of Portland be the best that it can be. As a local government professional and Portland resident, I cannot thank you enough for this important work that largely goes unnoticed by the general public.

Please change to a Mayor-Council form, in which council members represent districts within Portland, and form a legislative body. The mayor should be elected, and act as chief executive and manager of the city, and carry out the council's legislation.

I have lived in Portland almost 10 years. I am interested in seeing a change from the commission style of government here in Portland. I believe that a Mayor-Council system with a strong mayor and several city council members elected

from across the city would better represent Portland.

I want our city to be the best that it can be. Right now, our leadership is failing us. Portland has grown into a large city and change is overdue. I believe that a big change in the style of government would help us resolve issues more quickly and also would ensure people all across Portland are being heard.

Some issues that are overdue in being addressed are the houseless crisis, gun violence, and street racing. Portland at present is not the bustling and productive city it was just a few years ago. A more effective government would change that. Please prioritize this and help us fix our city. Bring back the Portland we loved. Don't let it slip away.

I missed one part of my previous comment. Here is a summary of what I would like to see in Portland; 1. Mayor-Council system, 2. City Manager, 3. Elected City council members that represent the entire Portland population.

Portland is no longer a small town. We are a big city! This improved structure would help us to better manage our city

If the worth of a tree is judged by its fruit, Portland's system of government should be pulled by the root. Or at least it should be dramatically changed.

First, the city should be broken up into wards using census data of equal approximate size – I think 50,000 people per ward is a good number, but this could be debated. As Portland has approximately 650,000 people, there should then be 13 wards. Each ward would then get one City Counsel member. As the city grows, or shrinks, the number of wards and their geographic boundaries would change as they would be reassessed every 10 years when new census data comes in. This will eliminate the problem of having some parts of the city being unrepresented on the council. It will also increase the number of people on the council so that there may be a better diversity of thought on the council. The number of wards should always be odd so the number of people in each ward would be adjustable as well. This would prevent tie votes.

Additionally, the whole councilors-as-head-of-bureaus needs to end. Councilors should be policy makers only – not administrators. Hire professional administrators to head the departments and make them answerable to the council. Finally, the position of mayor should be eliminated and Portland should move to a city manager-based system. This would help take the politics out of the office of our chief executive's office. This would allow the city manager to make some tough decisions without fearing voters coming after them at the ballot box. The city manager would, of course, answer to the city council. If you want to keep the position of mayor around, then have it be a city council member who runs meetings and attends ribbon-cuttings but otherwise has no special duties beyond the duties of the other councilors.

State capital should be moved from Salem to PDX.

Mayor should be fully empowered to make changes within scope of power. Analysis should be done of mayors, both effective and ineffective, to determine what is within scope.

Eliminate or lower state income tax, replacing with sales tax tied to tourism and non essential items.

Property taxes should be revisited. Homeowners should not be bearing the brunt of state, county and city costs.

Enhance security downtown. Police need presence on every street for resident and business to feel safe.

Use move of state capital to help revitalize downtown.

Take steps to address homelessness, crime and trash. Violent protests should not be acceptable. If police don't have funds to support than there is an issue. Anarchy should of be acceptable.

Eliminate the commission role or change to advisory support only.

Portland's current form of government works poorly. I propose a better design. There should be a mayor elected by all of Portland's voting age residents. The mayor should be the CEO of the city. There should be a city council consisting of perhaps 6 councilors representing the city's neighborhoods. Each neighborhood area would vote for their councilor. The council's job would be to advise the mayor about policy issues. The mayor and council should hire a professional city manager who's job would be to supervise leaders of the various city administrative departments. Each city department would have a professional manager hired by the city manager with the city's mayor and council having veto power. This design is well tested and used by almost every city Portland's size in the US.

Abolish the current structure of government. Replace it with an elected Mayor and a hired City Manager and hired bureau heads.

I support a total reform of the Portland city government. This city is much too large to continue on with this ineffective commission style government. This style is more suited for a small town or village, not a major city.

This city needs to be divided into at least 13 wards or districts, each representing about 50,000 people, each electing their own council person, with an at-large weak mayor. The mayor must only be allowed a tie breaking vote and the power of veto and proposing the draft city budget. Council presidency must rotate among the council members on a quarterly basis, and the president of the council sets the agenda but cannot prevent votes from taking place. A city manager needs to be in charge of the day-to-day, with directors assigned to each bureau to prevent this morass we currently suffer. The wards need to be grouped along neighborhood boundaries, as each neighborhood has a distinct cultural make-up, in order to prevent dilution of the more diverse neighborhoods. Wards must be redefined with the census results every ten years by a community redistricting commission and without interference by sitting council members.

There needs to be the creation of a city-wide waste management bureau, and migration away from this private sector mess we have now. No one is responsible for waste collection throughout the city, unless it's in a waste container. This is leading to a massive trashing of this gorgeous city, because no one is responsible. We can't rely on volunteer clean up events.

The Portland Police Bureau needs to be dissolved and replaced with a Bureau of Public Safety, that focuses on crime and poverty prevention and social resources rather than a heavy handed and lethal armed military style police force. This bureau can and should contain a small contingent of peace officers, tasked with responding to violent crimes and investigations, but the vast majority of public safety needs does not need a armed officer. The peace officers must be required to reside within the city limits of Portland. The Portland Street Response must be authorized in the charter as the primary means of public safety.

The new police accountability board must remain at all costs to monitor the peace officers within the BPS.

PBOT needs to have written into the charter a immediate refocus on alternative transportation, diverting money for pavement into expanding the streetcar system throughout the city, using the already existing street car blue print from the early part of the 1900s. In addition to this, focus on creating large car-free zones, and prioritizing pedestrian, biking, and public transit infrastructure over cars. The climate crisis is upon us, the charter can implement immediate and drastic changes to reduce carbon emissions.

Vacant lots and parking lots need to be taxed heavily to spur dense development of these underutilized lands.

And finally, all Portland residents 18 and over, regardless of citizenship status, must be allowed to vote in city elections.

Hi Charter Commission, let's see the city move to a form of government where the commissioners represent geographical regions (instead of the current at-large commissioner system) and give the mayor some real power. City manager would be even better. Enough of the weak mayor non-representative-commissioner system!

Our current system is failing its city and citizens -- our system is just not resolving our problems. I can guarantee that a different system will improve things because I've lived in cities where a more effective system works. That system is one where a mayor is elected by all citizens, council members are elected by citizens in their district, and a city manager is hired to oversee all of the city day-to-day business. That will allow the mayor and council to focus on developing budgets and policies/policy changes.

Portland is the only major city in America with this completely outdated and inefficient form of government. The mayors get celebrated for doing good when it's a council effort, or taken down for doing poorly when it's not under their control. Too few Portlanders even understand that this system is failing us. It's just ego on the part of the commissioners to keep this form of government in place at all. It does not work.

Commissioners or council members need to be elected from districts. We need a city manager form of city government with a stronger mayor. Commissioners do not need to be running city departments.

We absolutely should have a City Manager to ensure city projects are being completed in a timely manner and on budget. Otherwise city council should be taking on this role, from a citizen's perspective it currently seems like there is no accountability for where tax dollars are going on projects that have already been funded but have yet to reach completion.

It is time for the City of Portland to abolish the Commission system of city government and move forward with an more equitable way to govern the City. The Commission system puts our political leaders in charge of the operations of Bureau's that they are not experts in the subject matter. Additionally it allows a political agenda, oftentimes every 4 years, to disrupt long term visioning and planning that is essential to a functioning bureaucracy. There is no way to increase the efficiency of government when you must come to a full stop, and then restart and go to 90 mph in a new direction every 4 years.

Furthermore we need to have our city council members equitably represent the regions of our city and their needs. Electing persons solely from Inner SE, NE, SW, NW Portland who have what they need and live around those that have what they need will not move us forward. We need to increase the number of council members and have a stronger Mayor. It may also be beneficial to hire a City Manager to be in charge of the Bureau's so the Council can simply set policy and not meddle in the day to day operations of our government.

Hello, I am writing to express my concern with the established commission-style structure of Portland's city government. The commission-style system of city government appears to be ill-suited for Portland. We are one of the the last cities in the US, of any comparable size, to use this method of city governance. I would ask that the Charter Commission seriously consider alternative forms of government, such as a district-style system, that could more effectively represent the Portland citizens desires and problems, as well as more elegantly represent the diversity in Portland's citizens. Please consider how to empower the districts of our city to take meaningful and decisive action. Thank you. Kind regards

I believe we need a city council whose members represent districts. I have lived in NE Portland and now in North Portland. I have seen with my own eyes have underserved these areas have been and are by Portland. The only way to get that representation in any reliable way is to make it systemic. Hence, the need for districts. I don't know how many districts there should be. Considering Portland's growth, I would suspect more than ten districts will be needed. The mayor and deputy mayor should be elected citywide. I'd hold off on going for a strong mayor who can veto city council as there is a lot of mistrust about more recent mayors, who seem to tangle up and slow down necessary reforms.

If we are to give a mayor the veto at some point then city council should have the ability to override that veto with a two-thirds vote.

Draft a new charter to replace the current antiquated charter.

Council appointed City Manager to oversee administrative functions.

Expand elected Council to 8 members, each to represent equally apportioned geographic Districts.

Council members to advocate for policies specific to constituent District needs and collaborate with colleagues to provide Citywide services as required.

We need a city manager and council elections by district. Commissioners should not have direct control over city bureaus. It is time to abolish the antiquated weak-mayor form of government so we can effect the urgent changes Portland needs.

Our city commission form of government appears to be somewhat unique for a city our size, and it clearly isn't working. Please, please, please change our city's form of government to something more workable. A professional city manager who reports to a strong mayor might be a good place to start, but I'm assuming that the Charter Commission has a number of well-thought out ideas to choose from. Pretty much anything other than what we currently have would be better. Thank you.

Portland needs to move away from the "weak mayor" system. The commission system exists today in less than 1% of cities and is mostly found in cities with populations under 100,000. The more complex problems of the large urban area Portland has become requires a system more appropriate for our needs, such as Mayor-Council or Council-Manager.

Our current form of council government is inefficient and puts people without needed skills in charge of the city. Portland has changed frantically in the last 10 years and our form of government also needs to change. We need a

Mayor that has the power - and accountability - to make needed change and we need a city manager that can help ensure the city functions. I actively tell others not to move to/visit Portland until our city can get a handle on its issues. Our current form of government has clearly shown it doesn't do that.

The current form of government is unresponsive to the needs of the tax paying citizens of Portland. It mainly serves special interest groups and small vocal portions of the city. The rest of us who want clean parks, navigable sidewalks/bike paths, police response to actual crimes, and laws enforced are ignored. There needs to be a restructuring of the city government to be responsive to the majority. The experiment in progressive ideas has failed to the detriment of the public. It may be time for an accounting of the wasteful practices of the city that yields nothing but the status quo. Time to be rid of an archaic form of government.

City of Portland should use rank choice voting.

Ranked-choice voting is used for state primary, congressional, and presidential elections in Alaska and Maine and for local elections in more than 20 US cities including Cambridge, Massachusetts; San Francisco, California; Oakland, California; Berkeley, California; San Leandro, California; Takoma Park, Maryland; St. Paul, Minnesota; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Santa Fe, New Mexico; Portland, Maine; Las Cruces, New Mexico; St. Louis Park, Minnesota; and New York City, New York.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

This City should have a highly qualified City Manager to advise and guide the council. There appears to be a strong diversification of power with governmentally inexperienced council people. This dissipates leadership and direction and compounds the Mayor's ability to lead.

The current charter outlining the current system of running the city needs to be completely overhauled. We should have a mayor who hires professional managers of the city's bureaus. A city council should be elected by geographical region and have budgetary influence and generally act as a legislative branch.

Hello,

I am pleased to have a voice in this regular self-improvement process. Thank you for listening.

I have been frustrated with the seeming lack of power that the mayor, or whomever is tasked with overseeing the police bureau, to remove or discipline the police chief and executive team when warranted. I see this as a systemic issue, and not just one that rests with the mayor him/herself and their politics. I believe that the police bureau has outsized ability to obstruct the mayor and the commissioners. I think Portland's unique commissioner based city government system is outdated. None of the 70 largest US cities are structured this way. Portland's administrative reputation nationally is in tatters. Is getting more difficult to recruit top tier people to Portland, and people (like me) who used to take pride in showing visitors around downtown certainly don't do that anymore. I think our inefficient city government structure must accept a large part of the blame for this. I'm like for voters to have "one throat to choke" (pardon the expression) on the ballot. It's too easy for the mayor and commissioners to point at someone else. Thank you again for listening.

City councilors should be based in districts. Under our current system vast swaths of our city have no representation. Also we need to move beyond the terrible commissioner style government that we have. Ideally it would be a mayor - council or city manager style.

Portland must have a CEO leader that is both empowered and accountable to the voters, to make needed changes. A strong mayor is the only form of government that will provide that. No city manager. A true chief executive Mayor. I could go on for many pages, but this is bottom line. Please.

I would like to see city council members not be in charge of bureaus they don't have experience leading. I would like to see a city manager. I would also like to see all citizen views represented. Like have council , Members represent Democrats, Republicans and independents. I feel that the current council is too weighted democratic and that other citizens views not of the council's persuasion are not heard or valued. We have a current council that is not productive and effective. Let's also get back to fixing a broken Portland. City hall which needs to move faster on critical issues facing the city. The tax payer has provided billions of revenue dollars with little results to show. We need a more politically balanced city. Not all citizens voices are heard or sought to be heard. Critical issue city hall should tackle are to take a stronger position on illegal camping, restaff the police force, clean up the city, trash, graffiti, etc. make Portland business friendly. It is bogged down by too many regulations and red tape. We need a stronger mayor too. He isn't effective. Thank you

The current form of city government with the mayor and city council elected at large do not work for a big city like Portland. Most council members do not have experience in running the departments they are assigned. We need a city manager who knows how to run a big city, let the mayor and councilors review and set policies. Also we need representation in different parts of the city.

Most or all of city council should be elected from each district so there will be representation and the elected officials will understand the needs of their district.

May be just a few positions can be elected at large.

Our city council should not be elected at-large. We should also have several more city councilors. There should be perhaps as many as 8 city councilors elected from neighborhoods or boroughs based on population.

City councilors should change the levels of oversight for their respective bureaus. Management from the bureaus should nominate themselves or another coworker to lead the bureau. City councilors could approve or deny those appointments to reflect the will of their constituents. City councilors should be a form of HR to ensure workplace violations don't happen and that general shifts in ideology of constituents are respected. But having inexperienced elected officials in charge of direction of a bureau, sometimes for as little as 4 years, is a bad idea.

Why is Mayor Ted Wheeler the Police Commissioner?.... This city has become too big for a mayor to also serve as a police commissioner effectively, both jobs require 100% dedication, attention to detail and unwavering intent to serve.

It feels like this crime wave is out of control. I have a lingering fear my catalytic converter will be stolen or be robbed for my well-being. It is clearly being allowed and children growing up around it. Some creepy guy in their backyard with a knife. Social lessons are not the first thing on your mind. I am a lifelong resident.

I'll be brief and to the point: The current form of Commissioner-based government structure needs to be completely unworkable, resulting in lack of equitable representation, inefficiencies in bureau management and confusion and inertia over "where the buck stops." This City needs a Mayor, city councilors elected by district, AND a City Manager with actual tested city administration management skills, who oversees the City's Bureaus. The current structure has been unworkable for decades, but has now completely paralyzed the City, which does not, by any stretch of the imagination "work" any more. The state of this City now is deteriorated more rapidly than anyone could imagine in the past few years. If we don't change the form of our government soon, we will never recover, will lose a significant portion of our tax base as businesses leave and residents with the means to do so move out.

I believe that ranked-choice voting is the superior form of democratic vote, and would like to see it used in city elections.

I think the City leaders to step up... I mean crime is getting worse.. it's like living in the wild west.. you bend over backwards to cry babies.. and defund the police etc.. be a government and govern the damn city .. stop making excuses for stuff. And do your job because in the end you're held accountable

I'm no expert on city government, but I do know two things: 1) Portland is the last city of our size with a commission-style council, and 2) "The city that works" is a joke both liberals and conservatives can agree on.

I see two major problems with our current system:

- 1) without a direct representative in the council, who can a specific community/neighborhood seek out to solve their problem? And who can they hold accountable?
- 2) The Mayor and Commissioners all seem to be in charge of a lot of departments/bureaus. How can they also represent the people's interests too?

Portland has a wide variety of sub communities, more than I've seen in any other city. This is part of what makes this city so great. It's also why a one-size-fits-all approach to governance does not work. Our representatives MUST live and care for the parts of the city they represent. The mayor should be able to make city/metro-wide changes (to an extent) without the council's approval. Our mayor should matter as an elected official, and be more than a figurehead.

Elected officials should not be citywide elections; they should represent a geographical area of the city. The only ones that should be an "at-large" or citywide election are the mayor and the auditor. Those are the only two. If commissioners are elected from a geographical region of the city, they will be beholden to those voters to do the job that they were voted in to do. That is true representation of the people. Our current system allows for special interests and wealthy groups to put their candidates forward. The majority of the people of Portland don't get a

chance to have their voices heard at The ballot box. None of the elected officials should be running City bureaus. Most have no capacity to supervise or lead or run any kind of business, that should be done through a city manager. It is past time to pull our collective heads of our collective butts and run the city in a much more efficient and professional manner.

The present form of government promotes paralysis. I have long thought we need a city manager, and recent events just seem to highlight this.

Please remove the 5 commissioners and let's have the city run by a Mayor so we can hold someone accountable. Add a City Planner/Manager and a Police Commissioner in order to remove unnecessary political agenda from these roles. Portland's antiquated system doesn't work. Just walk downtown and in SE or N Portland to see the incompetence of a failed system.

Portland's current form of City government is no longer functional for a city of it's size and needs to be changed. Using City commissioners, inexperienced in running a city department, to run City operations, is ineffective, leads to silos, a lack of accountability, and a lack of continuity. For a city this size and diverse to not have a representational government is also leading to inequities. I live far southeast Portland. I rarely see a policeman in my neighborhood, the roads need to be repaired, all the parks have broken playground equipment-the list goes on. I believe we need to change the government so that commissioners are elected to districts and so are accountable to their constituents. Their job would be to make policy, not run departments. The City needs a professional (and hired, not elected) City manager whose job it is to run the day to day operations of the City. The City manager would be accountable to the mayor and/or the commissioners. And the mayor's job would be to ensure that policies made are what is best for the whole city, balancing the needs of the districts and constituents. If these or similar changes are not made, i do not see this city being able to be successful and continuing to meet the challenges of the future.

The current form is ridiculous and ridiculously ineffective as compared to every other major city Portland's size NOT using Portland's commission form of government. The absolute hubris that "Portland knows best and is smarter than every other major city" is an indicator of just how far the city has fallen in just my 10 years of living here. No real accountability. City Government only talks the walk not walk the talk.

I believe that law abiding taxpayers are NOT represented by the current at large council members. Neighborhoods and businesses are NOT represented either. This mayor and city council govern on behalf of minority interests, while totally ignoring the 95% majority. I BEG YOU to put single member districts on the ballot so the voters can decide. Thank you.

As a nearly 30 year Portland resident I'm distressed about the current state of our once beautiful and liveable city. I firmly believe that the inaction we're currently seeing to the crisis of homelessness, garbage, deteriorating roads and lawlessness is rooted in our outdated form of government.

First the election of commissioners at large allows both connected interests, fringe activists and narrow agendas to have an outsized role in city policy. At the same time entire regions of the city such as far east Portland are ignored due to a complete lack of representation.

Second, the assignment of commissioners to run the large and complex city bureau which they have no direct experience fails even the most basic test of common sense. The elected officials should set direction and vision and not be involved in the day to day management of basic city functions.

Years ago when Portland was an overgrown small town the more collaborative, citizen involved commission form of government worked and helped keep Portland "weird". However we've grown to the point where we have big city problems and it's time to move on.

The clear answer to this dysfunction is to move to a council, mayor, city manager form of government. At the same time enlarging the council and electing them by district so that neighborhood concerns are better represented.

Having a city manager who oversees day to day operations will both allow for more professional management of the basic functions of government but also allow politicians to be more engaged in both the long term vision and needs of their constituents.

I strongly encourage the city explore and, hopefully, move the city to a strong Mayor-Council form of city government. Give the mayor veto authority. The current structure is outdated and not effective in solving 21st century issues facing Portland. I'd also recommend increasing the size of the council and making it representative of the entire city. While I live in the Reed neighborhood I believe Portland will only thrive if all parts of the city, especially East Portland, are cared for equally.

I think it is embarrassing how minimal power the mayor of a major metro area has. Our city council setup gives minimal true executive function to our mayor. As a result, it allows our city to be paralyzed by special interest groups who themselves hold city council positions at knifepoint. The result? Little to no improvement in any of the major issues affecting our metro area. Further, the agendas of the few (and the loudest) are put ahead of the majority as the Mayor has to acquiesce to build collaborative majority within the city council for any significant policy changes.

Typically, cities and their governments are agile and able to navigate the tumultuous and rapid changes of civic urban life. Our city, on the contrary is like steering a barge. Given the paralysis existing at the local and state levels, watching politics be further stagnated by diffusing power away from the mayor into the city council is anger-inducing. It makes me want to move my family (and leave my medical practice) and move out. Please diminish the power of individual city council-people and increase the power of the mayor to make unilateral real change and improvement.

would like to see Portland adopt a strong mayor system of city government, where the mayor is responsible for the appointment of bureau chiefs and formation of a budget, etc. Our present council-weak mayor system discourages leadership creativity, hampers those leaders with good ideas, and makes it too easy to avoid necessary changes. Under this system, I believe our city would best be served by bureau chiefs who serve at the pleasure of the mayor and are established, fully trained professionals in the particular bureau they are hired to lead, under the authority of the mayor. I believe our city has been poorly served by its current form of leadership, and it is only very rarely that our city council seems unified and mutually supportive. It seems there are often power-plays at work, and even a subverting of the mayor's (weakened) authority, to the effect that many significant problems we are facing simply seem (at present) impossible for our city to address. I also believe that our current system has allowed for community advocates and special interest advocates to attain levels of influence that are best set aside when determining the good for the whole city.

I would suggest that the charter commission consider adopting these recommendations:

1. Change to a city manager form of government, with professional directors of city bureaus. The elected members of the council can provide policy, oversight, and accountability to voters, while professionals can manage the day to day work of the bureaus. Portland is too large and complex to have well-meaning but inexperienced council members managing day to day activities.
2. Expand the number of city council members, with each elected by different wards that they represent. This would increase the accountability of the city council members to their constituencies, rather than having all members seeking support city-wide. Several seats, including the mayor's seat, can be elected at-large, but the majority of the seats should be elected by ward.

Thank you for considering my comments.

When I moved to Portland seven years ago, it was from cities where the corruption of public officials influenced much of civic life. There, as an everyday citizen, it felt impossible to have an influence on municipal progress.

Portland, it seemed, offered something different: a more open, participatory form of government, and a positive shaping of the future. But it turns out our charter is just as stifling to progress as corruption.

As our charter stands, we're bound to a past that couldn't possibly have planned for how important city government has become, and how unsuitable the rules and codes that governed a small town would be for organizing a big city.

With critical overlaps among bureaus blurring lines of responsibility, and huge swathes of the city under-represented, it's clear the charter has failed.

For too long, Portland's promise has been hindered by our antiquated form of city government.

We must move beyond our present commission system and amend the charter for the 21st Century.

We, the citizenry, now have you, our representatives, to shape a structure not based on efficiency but resiliency, shared responsibility, and fitness for the future.

The path forward is with modern, tried-and-tested methods, most notably:

- a bigger city council, featuring districts with multiple representatives, selected by ranked-choice voting, presided over by a mayor who acts as chairperson
- a city manager and teams of professionals who are firewalled from politics tasked with running their bureaus with technical expertise

You, the Charter Commission, hold the hope of municipal innovation to match Portland's promise, and have the trust and confidence of the citizenry to take us forward.

It is sad to watch Portland spiral downward as it and this past 1.5 years should be a case study on what not to do. Defunding police was obviously a huge mistake crime is rampant now. Portland likes touting 'public safety' but it is getting very unsafe. Letting homeless cause chaos including the trash, drug dealing, stealing etc is in the rest of the country illegal, not Portland. There used to be a 24 hour camp ordinance that magically disappeared. Remember this: if you give an inch people take a mile and Portland is excellent evidence of this.

Districts: I slightly lean towards all at-large seats with no districts (vs multi-member districts defined in CCoP report), as I think drawing districts is a tricky business. In an ideal world, there would be a separate set of districts for each different political issue, but this is impossible to implement. Districts are inevitably a compromise that will split up voters non-optimally down some political issues. The nice thing about at-large voting is that voters are effectively creating their own districts and those districts change with preferences of the voters. However, this comes at the expense of not having an obvious commissioner to address based on geographic area. This would also require elections to happen all at the same time, where for a district model they could happen separately. The individual voter would have more choice for a city wide election, but smaller candidates that could have run in regional elections might be pushed out of the race.

Commissioners: I'm for more commissioners to increase minority representation. The nice thing about STV voting is that the city could use metrics to see if a large enough portion of voters were relegated to their secondary or third choices to determine if more commissioners should be added. However, the flip side is that the budget of the city to hire commissioners isn't unlimited. I'm also against part-time pay for commissioners or councilors.

Government Structure: The commissioners should become purely legislators and the mayor purely executive.

Commissioners should stop leading departments they don't have expertise in, but should still retain the ability to fire new directors if they choose.

Question: Does the city know why the public has continued to select the commissioner based government system? Realistically how big of a change could be made to the city government in one go (legally and in the eyes of the public)?

I feel the mayor should have more autonomy and authority.

The loudest voices are being listened to, and it seems out of balance with people who aren't extreme in their views and are just trying to live their lives. I feel I am being ignored due to the volume of others convictions.

It seems like city government acquiesces to volume rather than logic or practicality.

I'm a single female who recently moved to the Pearl, bought property, from California. I always feel in danger when walking, I'm always dodging people with mental disorders who often approach and or try and engage with me in an aggressive manner.

When I speak with my neighbors, this is common. I don't feel it should be.

A few camps went up on 12th between Marshall and Johnson last week. Already there is detritus, and garbage scattered about all around them. I've spoken just to say hi to the people living there, and they're okay but one of the guys sits with a sign saying why do you have a home and I don't... I want to be able to let him stay there to be safe, but as the garbage accumulates everyday, and myself and my neighbors start to avoid the block completely while out walking our because there's broken glass and trash and food and hair cuttings, clothing... I just wonder what kind of benefit is for Society in general for people to be allowed to live there. They need a place to go and live on the street

when they're creating such unhygienic and dangerous conditions... I guess I don't understand why their rights supersede mine or my neighbors. Does guilt for being able to function in society make it okay for them to take over a block, that is essentially theirs now? Does my voice not matter because I am not disadvantaged?

I don't care whether the places that people with mental disorders and Drug addictions go are private or are public, but I believe at a point they must be housed. I believe that there should be a line drawn. If someone is not capable of taking care of themselves and their endangering the health and the safety of the community around them, they should not take precedence.

In my neighborhood a female Barista was punched a few weeks ago by a homes who lives in it neighborhood, I watched a couple get attacked by a person seemingly out of their mind with a rock and fields park at 10:30 am, I called 911 and they never answered. Why is this normal?

The buildings down here are hiring private security. So we're paying taxes and we're also paying for increased security cost due to the fact the city has swung in the direction of not funding our police force.

I know that things need to be fair but right now I feel like too many people who have worked hard to be able to have a home and hold a job and try and support their household are actually in danger.

We need a strong mayor with real authority. We need to take bureaus aware from council members & have them led by professionals. We need to elect city council members from districts rather than all of them selected at large. As our city government stands now, it is unequal to the tasks facing Portland.

Representative government! East Portland needs not just 1 voice, but several votes. Geographical districts, like every other city in the United States

The current Portland city charter has resulted in inaction by our elected leaders due to the model. We must move to a model where the mayor has more authority to act.

Recommendations from the City Club make a lot of sense to me. The current system is not responding well to the rapid changes in the city, and needs more rapid and flexible tools.

I find a lot of the communication with our local officials to not be very natural here in Portland. I think it is because our local officials aren't actually very local as in they are either at-large (city) or represent a very large district (county). The easiest communication I have is with my State Rep. In fact isn't it ironic that the most representative elected officials in Portland are our State Reps? I think they are about 10 State House districts within the city (overlapping with areas outside since the city boundaries are not relevant to district boundaries). So they are more State Reps representing Portland than city commissioners. All other cities I lived in were like that at the local level as well (district reps). You could go out in the street, at some community event, and you would see your local city rep and talk to them. The barriers were much lower. Here city (and to some extend county) commissioners hide behind a really heavy layer of protocol. I have certainly never seen any of them in the streets of my neighborhood, and as for the city commissioners, they represent their bureaus more than they represent us.

So yes the Charter commission could be an opportunity to change this. A lot of what is needed has already been discussed and can be found in the Portland City club reports, so there is some feedback fatigue going on. The bottom line is a lot of us just want a city council with local district representative just like most cities have. That would be a good start. Then hire bureau managers and let the city council oversee bureaus as a group. It's absurd the competition we have been out commissioners each representing their bureaus. They have no incentives to work together. If I could ask for more, then I would also love some of the services being decentralized at the geographic level. Neighborhood services points are pretty typical in European cities, in fact a lot of European cities even have neighborhood level governments (under a Central City government) that deal with proximity services. But that's asking a lot. I would already be happy if I could have a city rep whose district is about the same size as my State House rep.

The Commissioner System of government in Portland is disjointed, ineffectual, and wasting tax payer dollars. This city needs leadership to approach the houseless and trash crisis like the emergency that they seem to say it is in their meetings. Our communities are watching a humanitarian and environmental crisis unfold with zero action to take corrective measures. Portland residents have the right to managed & effective sanitization services to keep our neighborhoods clean and safe. Waterways and natural spaces are being polluted daily with litter from houseless encampments and people dumping their trash. Portland leaders (if we can call them that) and the Commissioner system are useless. Our elected leaders have abandoned their posts or are paralyzed by analysis and fear of lawsuits. It is time to prioritize taxpayers wellbeing and mental health and mitigate the difficult issues in our city. The emotional stress of driving through the city and seeing graffiti, houseless encampment, houseless persons using our neighborhoods as toilets, and the never-ending accumulation of trash is overwhelming to many Portlanders. We need to change the system, reduce time before elections, and demand immediate action to clean up the once beautiful Portland.

Our city of Portland form of government is archaic and must be done away with. Our city is unable to complete basic city tasks because politicians instead of experts run bureaus. Our mayor is ineffective because they are essentially just a vote on a commission instead of being a mayor. We must change!!

I am writing to express support for a re-structuring of the city charter to move away from the current form, which I believe places too much power over city agencies in the hands of councilpersons who are elected for short terms and who have little or no experience in the activities of the agencies they are overseeing. Further, it is apparent based on our city's inability to respond to the many pressing issues it faces that this form of government is not functioning well for our city. I would like to see Portland follow a Mayor-Council type structure, with greater powers placed in the mayor and professional managers in charge of city agencies.

This is the time to act to save Portland from a dysfunctional city government. Please abolish the commission form of government. We need council elections by district (not city wide), a city manager, and councilors should not be allowed to manage bureaus directly.

In theory, these changes will allow for more dramatic and effective action by the mayor and manager on issues like homelessness, crime, graffiti etc

Having grown up in New York City I've seen how parochial district representation can be on City Councils. I encourage you to consider a hybrid that has both local and city wide Council members.

Kind Regards,

Chairs and members of the Charter Review Commission,

I'm writing to share with you some experience in Baltimore with some of the issues that you're charged with evaluating. I served on a commission similar to yours which led, indirectly as I'll explain, to a complete reordering of the Baltimore City Council in 2003. I am willing to connect the Commission with some of the leaders of the Baltimore reform efforts, and to try and track down some of the documents if you believe it could be helpful.

In short, based on the Baltimore experience, Portland would do well to add council members, elect by districts, and the districts should elect a single member. The Commission meanwhile, if it fails to act boldly enough, risks being outflanked by a parallel competing citizens' initiative, as occurred in Baltimore.

Prior to 2003

Baltimore's City Council, prior to the reform efforts in 2003, consisted of six council districts, with three council members per district, elected by district. There were (and are currently) no term limits. The Council President, who presides over the Council, is elected separately, citywide. All city offices are up for election at the same time, every four years. (Previously in odd years, now in the Presidential election year.)

Citizens were frustrated with Council representation. Because there were three members per district, there was no direct accountability to any one council member for any constituent problem. Moreover, the three members usually voted as a block, and usually campaigned together as a slate. Incumbent slates and lack of individual accountability

was extraordinarily powerful in keeping the same set of council members for decades. When turnover occurred, it occurred with hand-picked successors to run on the existing slates. The Baltimore City Council was the definition of "entrenched."

The Commission

With citizen frustration bubbling up, a commission was appointed to study the possibilities of changing the size and structure of the City Council. Hearings were held, studies were completed, and the Commission came up with a recommendation to cut the number of council members from 18 to 14, and change the six three-member districts to seven two-member districts. The Commission retained the four-year terms, but the two members would run independently in staggered elections held every two years rather than four. The Commission believed that this would increase representation and accountability. The Commission's recommendation went to the City Council which voted to put the question to voters as "Question Q" in the 2003 City election.

A Competing Proposal

Once the Commission proved the idea that the problems were actually fixable, but then many people believed that the Commission's recommendation didn't go far enough. A group of grassroots organizations (labor unions, League of Women Voters, ACORN, among others) took a variation of the Commission's proposal directly to the ballot by gathering sufficient signatures under the rules for an initiative. The competing "Question P" also reduced the council from 18 to 14 members, but created 14 single member districts, for four-year terms, all elected in the same election.

A lawsuit and the 2003 election

Unfortunately for the Commission's "Question Q", the incumbent City Council and Council President botched their process, and open meetings violations resulted in a court voiding the question and removing it from the ballot. Ultimately Question P passed with 67% of the vote, despite opposition from most of then-existing Mayor, Council President, and council members.

Currently

By all accounts, the 14 single-member districts have led to more competitive elections, younger leadership, better neighborhood representation, more independent voices, better accountability, and much less reliance on political machinery.

Anyway, I'm following along with interest in the work of the commission, and if I can be helpful, please call on me. I'm relatively new to Portland, but it is very clear to me that the Portland city government is broken. It has always been the responsibility of good citizens to fix what's broken, and I'm glad you've taken on that effort. I wish you the best as you navigate these issues.

Please move the city into a city-manager form of government. The city cannot effectively operate under the current form given its current size. It holds citizens hostage to the political leaders ideologies who are running bureaus and changing every few years. Hired personnel that are qualified via experience and education should be running the city's departments.

Thank you for conducting the charter review process. Given the size of our city, I do not believe the commission form of government is effective. I hope this review leads to changes to our city government structure to be a council - manager or mayor-council form of government which would be more appropriate for our needs.

Thank you,

I think we need to re-structure our city to governance under the principles of Jeffersonian Democracy, which would vest power to the smallest geography capable of wielding it: neighborhoods. We should empower neighborhoods to make decisions around the style of buildings allowed through by-right construction within their boundaries; to levy on-street parking charges to help control parking availability; and to use a portion of these funds for neighborhood improvement projects, such as tree planting, pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, benches, or however they see fit. Other functions of government should also be up for devolution, including, potentially, more control over public

safety and parks. Neighborhood boards and district coalition boards should be elected on the same paper ballots as city commissioners, and city commissioner districts should correspond to district coalition boundaries. This will allow the neighborhood system to become the farm team for City Council, and allow City Council to be more responsive to local needs. It will also allow pathways diversity, inclusion, and accountability within this evolved neighborhood and city gov't system.

We need to change our antiquated form of city government. We need action, serious action, to deal with crime, homelessness, squalor, garbage, rats, etc

I feel our current system of a "weak mayor" is antiquated. Putting city council members in charge of bureaus in which they have little knowledge or expertise seems like a poor way to run a city.

I am in favor of trying the council form of government.

As a lifelong resident of East Portland I've seen firsthand the neglect our form of government has resulted in for us. The priorities of the wealthiest residents and largest businesses are prioritized over all others. City Hall is distant and dysfunctional and people are alienated from the political process. To be sure these are problems shared by American government at all levels, and for that reason we must be bold in seeking a solution, because there is no safe bet to be found in imitating other American cities' form of government.

I think that what is necessary is to return to the basic form of collective self-government - an elected assembly. Give people direct, democratic control over their city, as much as is possible within the limited role of a local government. Turn the neighborhood associations into voting districts electing a number of representatives based on population, forming a City Assembly from those representatives. Apply and actually enforce the campaign finance and public funding laws already passed (plus any necessary modifications) to those elections. Pay those representatives a living salary to ensure people of any background can serve. Executive functions to be filled by appointees serving at the pleasure of the Assembly.

It's surely not a system that will be favored by the current City Council, and that's one of the best arguments in its favor. Government by a very few, even if they are democratically elected, naturally leads to an alienated government. The input of the city's residents cannot just be passively requested in the course of governing but must be part and parcel of the governing process.

The wonderful city of Portland that we moved to 8 years ago has deteriorated into a dirty, unkempt, chaotic, poorly managed place to live. The proliferation of folks living on the sidewalks is unacceptable as well as being inhumane. We continue to pay the same in taxes and feel something is very wrong if our city leaders cannot provide for a more civilized environment.

Hello Commissioners,

In listening to the discussion at tonight's Form of Government meeting, there seemed to be a lot of interest in understanding what other jurisdictions have done, or where they have landed. Some of you may already know this, but here's a summary of what happened in Boston over the years:

Between 1909 and 1981, Boston shifted back and forth 4 times between at-large, district (ward), and hybrid models for city council. Drawing district boundaries in 1981 was not defined in the referendum and was done later by a districting committee, which had conflicting goals among its members (protecting neighborhood unity vs creating predominantly minority districts to give minorities a voice in local government). (More info at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boston_City_Council.)

What struck me was the shifting around among the different FoG models over the years. Why did this happen? What gaps or deficiencies weren't obvious when they made their initial transition, and were only learned "on the job"? What can we learn from this?

BTW I haven't heard Boston mentioned as a "model" city for FoG and Election Method, but they are about the same size as Portland and their recent mayor, Marty Walsh, was regarded by many as a very effective leader. [Joe Biden thought so, he tapped Walsh to be his Secretary of Labor]

Where can I find documents referred to during the Sept. 7 meeting of the Form of Government Subcommittee of the Charter Review Commission?

Our current form of government seems ineffective and unequal...as someone who grew up on the West side and now lives on the East side, I'm shocked and disgusted by the garbage all around my area, and wonder why the city has let this happen. It sounds like our current form of government is simply not up to the task of dealing with the issues facing our city these days. Most cities of this size have a city manager, according to many people, which is more effective at solving problems and moving forward. It's definitely time for a change.

It is past time for the City of Portland to do away with their current Commission form of government and give management by professionals a shot at bringing back a safe and vibrant city to those of us who love Portland and believe that we deserve something better.

Our city agencies need to answer to people who have business acumen, not someone who simply thinks they have the right to manage because they want to. I can't even begin to tell the number of people who work in our police department who believe that their agency is headed by someone other than the actual person who has assigned that agency to himself.

I believe Portland would be best served by adopting either the Council-Manager or Mayor-Council form however our most pressing issue is finding candidates for any positions who are suitable, knowledgeable, smart, businesslike, and willing to roll up their sleeves and fight the good fight to clean up the mess that Portland has become. Thank You

This form of city government just does not work. We need a professional city manager and we need to city Council that represents the different districts of Portland.

This city has to modernize its form of city government as it stands right now it is obviously not working.

Our current form of government doesn't work for the size of Portland today. I propose an elected Mayor, elected city council members representing districts in the City with professional managers running the city departments and not the council members. And a Professional City Manager. That change in our city government needs to go to a vote to the Citizens of Portland. What we have now no longer works. Thank you for allowing my input

Comments regarding elected official portion of the charter

I write to urge you to make substantial changes to the current city charter with respect to the election and powers of the mayor and council members. I want to begin by noting that, by way of my background, I served as a school superintendent for a regional school district and later served 6 years as a city council member and nearly 12 years as mayor in Ketchikan, Alaska. I say that only for the purpose of noting that I have some experience with boards and city councils, and have some familiarity- including with respect to forms of government in a number of other communities, with what seems to be effective and accountable forms of governance.

It is clear to me that, in large part due to the existing provisions regarding the elections and roles of elected officials, the citizens of Portland are not well-served. In my opinion, the existing model in which the mayor and commissioners, regardless of qualifications and experience, are in charge of city departments is a poor model of government and contributes to what many believe is a failed system. Regardless of why it was established in the first place, a model with essentially 5 elected executives has clearly outlived its usefulness in effectively dealing with the myriad of critical issues and problems faced by the city today. Why?

In my opinion, each commissioner being assigned to be in charge of city departments regardless of qualifications results in:

(1) persons with no qualifications being in charge of a department. All one has to do is ask oneself if such persons with the same qualifications would be hired to be in charge of a given department. Clearly, in most cases the answer would be no.

(2) commissioners being siloed into their respective departments.

(3) at least an appearance that the siloed commissioners operate in a "you scratch my back and I'll scratch your back" fashion, so that commissioners are almost always able to get support from other members for what they are proposing for their respective department(s), actions they took in a given department, and so on regardless of the actual merits of the proposed action.

(4) perhaps most importantly, this results in a lack of general oversight by the mayor and council of all city departments and functions.

In sum, I believe that the current structure of city government per the charter does not lead to the high levels of

equity, effectiveness, and accountability necessary to move Portland into the future as a great city.

Recommendations for improvement:

I. Mayor:

1. Change to either (A) a “strong mayor” form of government, wherein executive and administrative powers are vested in the mayor or (B) a mayor/manager form of government, in which executive and administrative powers are vested in the mayor and the mayor hires, subject to council confirmation, a manager hired solely on the basis of professional qualifications. The manager, who would serve at the pleasure of the mayor, would be responsible to the mayor for the overall conduct of the administrative functions of the city. The manager would be required to be a Portland resident while holding that position but need not be a Portland resident at the time of appointment. Under either option, the mayor would not be a member of the council. While the mayor may participate in all council meetings to the same extent as a council member, the mayor may not vote.

2. Veto power: The mayor has veto power over ordinances, including line-item veto power, i.e. may by veto strike or reduce items in a budget or appropriation measure. The council, by a supermajority of its total membership, could override within a certain time, e.g. 21 days, after its exercise.

II. City Council:

1. As noted above, the mayor is not a council member, so that there would be 5 council members in addition to the mayor.

2. Create election districts for all council positions. Alternatively, create election districts for most council positions, with the remainder elected at large. As you probably know, Seattle has a mixed election district/at large system. The Seattle City Charter states: “To ensure members of the city council are closer to the people they represent, to enable voters to better know their Councilmembers, and to provide a mixed system of district and at-large representation, the City Council shall consist of nine (9) members, with positions 1 through 7 elected by districts and positions 8 and 9 elected from the City at-large.”

While it may be that the charter commission is considering increasing the number of council positions above 5, I trust that in any such scenario costs for salary and benefits of additional council members and staffs will be estimated (in addition to the same for the 5th council member I suggest above by removing the mayor as a council member). This will help voters make a decision as to whether increased costs, if any, are warranted by the perceived benefits in an improved city government resulting from a charter change.

The current one year residency requirements would continue. Candidates seeking a district seat would have to have been a resident of that district for at least one year prior to the date of the primary election, and at large candidates would similarly have to have been City residents for at least a one year period prior to the election (and of course U.S. and Oregon residents). See Section 2-202 <https://www.portland.gov/charter/2/2#toc-section-2-202-qualifications->. A person elected to a district and who subsequently resides outside of the election district would automatically forfeit the position, which will be declared vacant and filled per relevant provisions of the charter and ordinances. With respect to residency, it must be made clear that a person must be a bona fide resident of a district, not merely maintain a residence but actually live outside the district, i.e. the person must maintain a physical presence in the district other than occasional vacations, employment-related tshort-termnesses and other short term absences from the home in the district.

If election districts are created, they shall be formed of compact and contiguous territory containing as nearly as practicable a relatively integrated socioeconomic area. The council shall be reapportioned whenever it becomes malapportioned. The council shall determine and declare by resolution whether or not it is malapportioned within a reasonably short period, e.g., two months from the adoption of a final state redistricting plan under art. IV, sec. 6, of the Oregon Constitution.

3. Legislative power would be vested in the city council.

4. City commissioners will no longer be appointed to be in charge of any City department or agency. i.e. they would have no executive or administrative powers.

5. The city council will annually select one of its members to serve as presiding officer at council meetings. The chair will serve at the pleasure of the council.

Thank you for your work.

To the Subcommittees: some questions and suggestions.

Other jurisdictions: the Boston hybrid. Will the subcommittees be looking at Boston to learn about hybrid city councils? Boston has a combination of district-based council members (9) and at-large members (4). It has had that structure since 1983, so more experience, I believe, than many other hybrids.) One resource on Boston is Jim Vrabel, The People's History of the New Boston.

Other ballot measures: Metro 26-218. I've heard several references to review of past charter measures defeated at the ballot. I recommend the subcommittee work groups also look at the recent (2020) defeat of Metro 26-218, the omnibus proposal which embodied plenty of vision and community engagement but still didn't pass. Yes, it included a payroll tax; that could have been the main reason. But some think it would have had a better chance of passing if it had been split into smaller packages, introduced through a carefully sequenced set of proposals over several years. I hope CRC will consider that defeat as a warning against trying to do too much, ballot-wise, in November 2022.

Hello Commissioners,

The discussion at yesterday's "Electioneers" meeting regarding the Neighborhood Associations was interesting to hear, and I'd like to offer a few observations based on my lived experience (admittedly, limited to my local Neighborhood Association).

Neighborhood Associations do seem like a bit of an odd duck, not fitting neatly into any one of the Workgroup categories. NA's are large, as mentioned at your meeting; there are 94 NA's, and my NA has about 500 members. If we are "average" sized then the total NA member count across the city is a little under 50,000. A large number when viewed against the backdrop of votes "in opposition" to prior Form of Government ballot measures.

NA's themselves do not receive direct funding from the city. The neighborhood coalitions do receive funding but they may or may not pass it through to the NA's. For example, my NA has not received any funding since March 2019. Our neighborhood coalition gets about \$250K from the city and we get some basic services from them related to our status as a 503(c) (tax prep, etc.).

Regarding stakeholders: Much of my NA's activity over the past several years has focused on giving the city our perspective on proposed changes within our geographic boundary. This feels like a very different perspective than city staff and politicians, who act in a legislative and executive (administrative) capacity. While the NA's are stakeholders for Form of Government and City Council Elections reform, we receive services while the city provides them. As an analogy, Amazon customers have very different perspectives and needs compared to the people who work for Amazon.

In summary, I think this difference in perspective and roles would translate into us not being lumped into the same Electioneer workgroup as city staff. But we are also different from many (most?) CBO's; we are "district based" and most of the CBO's seem to be "at large". Perhaps a tweak to the workgroups to have "district" stakeholders in one group and "at-large" stakeholders in another group might end up resolving the "NA dilemma" as well as highlighting affinities that today are not obvious.

Dear Commissioners,

Portland is broken. We are in a crisis. We have already had more homicides in 2021 than in any year since 1994¹ and black Portlanders are being killed at a rate 12 times greater than white Portlanders². Through July in 2021, we've had more than 705 shooting incidents reported to the Police compared with 891 in 2020 and 388 in 2019³. The city is trash strewn⁴, graffiti laden⁵, and filled with homeless camps⁶.

Rather than leading the development of plans with measurable milestones to measure progress in dealing with them, rather than communicating with the citizens of Portland to let us know what they are doing to solve these problems, the current city council is passing resolutions to not do business with Texas⁷. Don't get me wrong, I think the Texas law out lawing abortions after a fetal heartbeat is detected is a horrible law. However, our city council has their plate

full with the problems at home, I'd like to see them act like it.

It is clear that our city council is not up to the job, but your task is to address the question of the form of our government. I assume you are aware of the City Club of Portland's whitepaper "New Government for Today's Portland: Rethinking 100 Years of the Commission System" which addresses this topic⁸. As they outlined there are multiple problems.

- Commissioners without domain experience running city bureaus
- A small city council that does not represent the diverse voices of our citizens
- All commissioners elected at-large so no regional representation occurs

I agree that these are substantial issues and need to be rectified. Clearly, the current form of our city government is not working and we should try something else. Let's move to a City Manager/Council form of government and bring some professionalism to our highest managers. Let's set up regional sections within the city that elect city council members. Let's expand the city council beyond 5 people to get better representation of all the city. This form of government will allow the city council to concentrate on policy and not trying to run bureaus that they have no experience with.

1. <https://ktvz.com/news/2021/08/09/portland-records-most-homicides-in-more-than-25-years-after-2-weekend-shootings>
2. <https://www.wweek.com/news/city/2021/08/11/black-portlanders-are-more-likely-to-be-murdered-than-their-peers-in-cities-better-known-for-crime/>
3. <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/police/81203>
4. <https://www.oregonlive.com/news/2021/03/dumptown-how-portlands-trash-problem-spiraled-out-of-control.html>
5. https://www.kptv.com/news/odot-doesnt-know-when-growing-graffiti-problem-will-be-addressed-on-portland-freeways/article_e97f4c1c-8070-11eb-9c3e-c76145366fa3.html
6. https://pamplinmedia.com/pt/510277-408122-our-opinion-its-time-for-portland-to-address-most-dangerous-homeless-camps?wallit_nosession=1
7. <https://www.oregonlive.com/opinion/2021/09/editorial-portland-city-councils-pointless-preening.html>
8. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1y74WRaWJA3j2QEYqsAOtZwcLOvT97VcZ/view>

The police bureau along with the city attorneys office need to be shielded from political influence. The city auditor should oversee both the city attorneys and police. This will depoliticize both bureaus and make them accountable to tax payers.

I support updating Portland's commission style form of government. We need to have a city manager with expertise in managing bureaus and not having them assigned to elected officials who lack the expertise in some areas.

I've been a resident of Portland since 1991. I've seen the city grow and change before my eyes. The beauty of our neighborhoods has diminished due to lack of participants in how we government. One of the pivotal moments in the weakening of government came with the systematic dismantling of our neighborhood associations. If you want more participants, give us back some voting power in neighborhood government.

I spent 10 years developing shelters and transitional housing for families experiencing homelessness, and found working with numerous bureaus managed by commissioners extremely difficult. The lack of communication and coordination among bureaus delayed our projects for up to six months resulting +G176+G173

We need to move to a City Manager system, with the City Council being elected by wards. Aside from the obvious failures of the current system, ward elections will be less expensive than city-wide campaigns, allowing candidates who don't have massive financial backing to run. It will also make City Council members responsible to the voters who elected them. Increasing the size of Council to 7 or 9 would also be good, but less essential than a city manager system and ward elections.

If the Charter Review Commission is to come up with an equitable outcome for a vote of the people that includes geographical City Council representation, the key element to making a new structure work better will be how many quadrants or districts are proposed (such as not too many or to few), and where the division lines will be drawn. Since land use, transportation and other issues differ widely depending on a neighborhood's distance from the central city, and since these issues have a great deal to do with livability within a neighborhood, for the best possible representation the division lines of quadrants or districts should be drawn related to the distance from the central city

and NOT gerrymander as spokes of a wheel from the central city.

On another issue, the Charter Review Commission should consider tackling is the make up of city citizen and advisory committees. Currently with just one city council member in charge of each bureau, these committees have become divisive and stacked one-sided decks with many voices left out having no seats at the table. To better balance these committees, an equitable requirement outcome to include a diversity of voices and opinions across various ethnic and user groups would be to have dedicated seats at the table for taxpayers who foot the costs specifically related to the subject of the committee.

The current commission form of government has outlived its effectiveness. A strong Mayor/City Manager to coordinate City Services and end atomized commissioner run bureaus would be a good starting place. This would be enhanced by a Council elected by district charged with only legislative duties.

We need to change the form of government. Commissioners should become a City Council who represents specific areas. The Mayor should manage the council on policy issues. The council should be able to override the Mayors actions with a strong majority. The mayor should supervise a city manager who would be responsible for day to day management of the city's bureaus.

I think it is long past the time for a city of this size to have a council form of government. I hope the commission will recommend we begin the process to elect only a Mayor, and let the mayor hire professionals to run the departments.

Is there a central place (website) that explains Portland's commission form of government and what other forms of government could look like in Portland? For those of us who aren't very familiar and end up down an internet black-hole when we try to research?

Thanks!

Sara

It doesn't make sense that Portland's City Council members both craft policy AND serve as the head executive of City Bureaus. To function effectively, Portland needs a City Manager system to oversee the day-to-day operations of city bureaus, something that most modern cities have.

Thanks for considering this input.

I am fine with a Mayor on the City Commission with a 5-year term, plus 5 Commissioners elected for 3-year terms from districts in the City. These districts would be apportioned much like congressional districts after each Census. I would also have 2 more Commissioners that are elected citywide with 5-year terms. Each Mayor and Commissioner continues to have one vote each, and the Mayor chairs meetings and sets the agenda. This structure would allow for geographic representation for the majority of the Commission, while also having citywide perspectives from the minority of the Commission. The staggered terms would also lead to stability on the Commission, though I would have only one citywide Commissioner/Mayor elected in any single election and would also stagger the terms of the majority of the Commission. I would also have the Commission hire a City Manager and have professional management of City Bureaus. The Commission would function as a legislature providing direction to the City Manager, rather than managing City functions. Thank you.

The government does not necessarily need to change. It is the politicians who lack common sense. This defund the police idea is the hallmark of ignorance. An orderly society begins with law and order where people can recognize our differences, tolerate one another, respect one another and explore solutions without censoring one another and burning the house down. This city and the country is headed in a very bad direction. Any student of history can see the similarity. We just need good common sense leadership. Not the feel good, or I am going to get as much for myself or my people as I can get attitude. Government can only do so much. Then the people must fine tune life for themselves. Side note, years ago the media here in Portland had Town Hall which dealt with local issues. Much better than Jerry Springer. This would be one avenue of communication. We just need a change in leadership. I also believe we need to screen these politicians who are running for office.

Our Commission firm of government needs to be replaced with a City Council. We need to be able to elect local representatives from our part of the city so that we have a diverse city council and also have our neighborhoods receive the same services as other parts. We need an advocate that works for us not just the parts of Portland where the commissioners live. Currently, the East side of Portland is neglected with unimproved roads, a lack of sidewalks, less parks, less trees and other inequities. If we had elected officials that worked for us, we would see a city that works for us. Please amend the city charter to include a representative City Council and toss out the Commission.

Hello. As a resident of the Portland downtown area and a long time citizen, I have seen the homelessness, drugs, and trash causing our beautiful city to lose its sense of community and civility.

I have written our mayor every week showcasing the impact of homelessness on our parks, our streets, and our cities general beauty. We cannot criminalize addiction, but we can criminalize a lack of civility by addicts. Our government needs to enforce laws equally amongst all citizens, put safety of our families first, and ensure our urban core (the lifeblood of our revenue) is clean, safe and vibrant. The current government lacks accountability (too split between the council and the mayor), does not have strong enough oversight on budgeting and spend, and fails to invest in key infrastructure (like trash cans on every corner and rights of businesses to protect their patrons). We love this city, but will leave within 12 months if change doesn't happen. And, we are not alone.

We need to expect civility of every member of our community, need to apply laws with equity, and need to ensure the rights of tax payers and businesses are weighed above those who are choosing a different path. We have a responsibility to help those who are trying, but not those who seek to simply live outside the law or in total disregard for the civility and community respect that is the lifeblood of any city.

Something must change and soon. Or Portland will go the way of Saint Louis and other cities that waited too long. Your most coveted citizens will go to governments and communities that respect them.

Here to help,

I fully support moving away from our current commissioner style of city government and strongly suggest we look a more representative form of city council with either a strong mayor or city manager at the head.

Our form of city govt obviously is not working. Portland has gone from nbr 1 in the country to the bottom. We need a city mgr to resolve the overwhelming problems portland is facing.

I believe it is time for the city to consider either a strong mayor structure with a separate more traditionally elected city council (a position I prefer) or in lieu of that the current electoral structure but the inclusion of a professional, paid city manager selected by the council. Also, I actually like the city wide city council districts but believe given the growth of Portland it would benefit from having the city council expanded to 7 or even 9 members. Thank you.

Representational city gov now!! Give me my own alderman who actually lives in my hood!!!

City manager PLEASE! We need to change our city government. A city manager form of government will help Portland to accomplish more.

I am in favor of a stronger Mayor or City Manager form of government. The present system is weak and ineffective

The City counsel is so out of touch with what is happening in various parts of our city. For instance, in SE Portland, we are now constantly victims of theft, there is an increase in violent attack, our streets are choked with homeless campers, Garbage is stacked in mountains that reach 20x x5 feet x 6 feet.

We can't have a single city counsel person who sees this as their problem. They don't attend neighborhood meetings. They don't come to check on victims. Our issues have not been on their agenda once this year.

Turn the running of the city offices over to professionals. Get the city council to represent districts of voters. Put their accountability back to us.

I have signed up to testify at the 9/23 Charter Commission meeting.

1. At age 30, I was the first woman elected to the Beaverton City Council—City Manager form of government
2. At age 32, I was elected Mayor. In the same election, the form of government changed to strong mayor (A new election was required—my sons were 4 and 6, so I decided not to run. Instead, I ran the successful campaign for the first person to an fill that role)

3. I am an award-winning turnaround expert who has been Interim CEO for 20 companies

Can you please tell me the format the testimony will take? Are specific amounts of time allocated to each person?

Thank you in advance for your help.

Is the Form of Government City Club report with their recommendations available to citizens on line now before the meeting on Sept 8th? If so can you send me an electronic copy I could not find it in this email?

Our family would like to see the city of Portland's charter updated to match the rest of the country. We'd like a strong mayoral position, less power to city council, and a city manager put in place. Thank you.

The current form of government in Portland is outdated and not working for the majority of its citizens. Portland's city government in need of significant reform that will bring more participation and more representation to Portlanders who have been left out of decision-making for far too long. While I see many things that could be changed, the following two seem critical to reforming our system of government.

I therefore urge the commission to make changes to the city charter to ensure the following changes:

1. Hire a non-political appointee as city manager to lead the equitable and professional administration of bureaus and delivery of services. The city's day-to-day bureaucratic administrative functions should be handled by a professional, non-political city manager whose function is to effectively implement the policies and budgets approved by the city council.

2. Increase the size of City Council to put Portland more in line with cities of similar size.

Elect City Council members in district-based elections, rather than the current "at-large" commissioner system.

No more public space camping allowed. No camping on sidewalks. No more protection of private property for homeless. If they arrested their junk stays where it is and if it's not there when they get back to bad. Deal with this homeless situation it's out of control and getting dangerous for the community. Also where is our gang control unit

Disband Portland commission government

My whole entire life I've lived in the city of Portland besides working outside the city when need to be I've never seen anything dysfunctional in my life. As a Portland resident of lack of action by the city council to clean up these messes and camps garbage cleanup that's not getting done graffiti. Beyond this ridiculous and cities like Berkeley have set up dumpsters and bathrooms they're way ahead of us. The homeless takes care of their garbage by putting it in dumpsters and we can't even make that happen here. Voters approved a levy I don't see where the money's going. Obviously it's not working. Somebody needs to resign from office as soon as possible and get somebody in that will do this properly. Bored need to take a look at this and make something happen for the city of Portland because it's not working. Call 911 you wait 10 minutes for a 911 call that I've done recently that's asinine. Recently I called in on a homeless guy that threw a garbage can out in the street start naked jerking himself off making a scene of himself at a TriMet Bus Stop on MLK and Lombard and it took a couple minutes just to get through to 911.

Portland desperately needs to change its form of City Government. Portland is now known as the City That Shirks because it cannot seem to do any job assigned to it. We have no law enforcement, we have homeless camps squatting on our sidewalks, parking lots, riparian areas, wherever. We do not enforce traffic laws, vehicle registration laws, and we allow criminal gangs to run roughshod over this city. It is unsafe to be a pedestrian, bicyclist or motorist. Noise control is non-existent and garbage piles up everywhere. How did Portland become this dysfunctional?

I was born, raised and retired in Portland and lived here all but 6 years of my life. I have never seen a crisis like this in our city and the crisis IS NOT homelessness or the pandemic. The crisis is in how our city is run. We need a city manager that is hirable and fireable, and we need to have city commissioners NOT running bureaus for which they are not qualified, but elected by districts of the city. I cannot urge you enough to devise a plan that will radically alter the way our city is run before we start the same positive feedback loop that ensnared Detroit and so many rust belt cities in the past. We need serious action on this issue, please!

I have followed pretty carefully several former efforts to consider seriously a change in our form of City Government. It seems to me that we should make two major changes:

1. Elect 5 or six people from 5 or 6 districts with equal population

Elect a mayor city-wide

2. Mayor would select department heads and Council would confirm them.

Thanks for the best job you can do.

Your city structure is totally foreign to me as I have lived here only five years. In that period of time the city has, in my opinion, changed and not for the better. The gun violence is stunning. The homeless situation and drug usage and trash in the streets and sidewalks is just not something that I believe residents can continue to live with and support. Throwing more dollars at the problem seems not to be working. A city I loved to walk around in has now made me afraid and timid. It is such an issue that I fear we will have to move away from Oregon all together. Something just must be done. Thank you for your attention and time to these comments.

I sincerely hope that you are considering changing the format for our present city government of elected Commissioners and Mayor. It is not working, and has not for many years as Commissioners/Mayor run as policy makers, but then are expected also to be managers that oversee the several city agencies. Some are very good at it, but most are not capable of the dual role of setting policy and then using it to manage the large and complex agencies. Administrators need to be hired to run the agencies. And, there needs to be a mayor who can really be the head of the city's government and not just one of five.

Funny thing about Portland is that every problem ends up on the Mayor's desk. This is because he only delegates authority when forced to do so. This is OK for a rural township. Fundamentally change the job description of the city council members from managing agencies (that would be done by city manager) to making policy and allocating money to implement policy. The Council maintains legislative power but not administrative duties that would be left to the City Manager. What would the Mayor do? Solve fewer problems.

Letter Attached.

Attached is my written testimony to the Charter Commission for its September 23rd meeting. Please confirm that it will be distributed to the Charter Commission members. My contact information is included in the testimony

Please remove Portland's unique form of government, Commission form of government. When we elect our Mayor, we want that position to be able to function and be able to do the work they need to do to govern our city without needing to work with a council that was elected at another time. While the overlap is good for not having all new council at one time, it also confuses the goal of elections in the eyes of the voter because the candidates are not all elected at the same time, and thus could result in a mixed leadership that has conflicting goals and causes a halt in the work of the mayor.

Good morning,

I have a couple of questions about the Charter Commission. Are what points will there be public input? For example, there is a City Council Elections Working Group meeting that is public, but does that mean public participation? Secondly, which members of the Charter Commission are on the City Council Elections Working Group?

Thanks for your help!

The city government system is antiquated and ineffective. Citizens are no longer safe. Please change the system

Our system of government is outdated and more suited to towns from 100 years ago. We need a Mayor with power. We need commissioners for each neighborhood answerable not to the entire city, but to your particular neighborhood. We need the heads of bureaus to actually have expertise in those fields. Police. Water. Parks. We need action in a timely manner on housing, police accountability, crime and so many issues. Nothing ever happens quickly. Meetings after meetings. Talk talk talk no action. It is an endless cycle of elections with no results. Portland is now in a downward spiral. Police are not responding to basic needs of the citizens they serve and there is no accountability. At the least we should be able to enforce vaccines for Police officers. Cameras. The right to have a say in how we as the public are policed...what is the answer defend the police and start over? The police relationship and system is broken beyond repair from my view. Our entire city runs like some bad comic book. All this comes back to our horrible system of government a the pieces are broken at all the levers of accountability and power. We need to rework everything. Maybe scrap this entire commissioner system in favor of a more modern accountable system. I

WILL NEVER UNDERSTAND HOW COMMISSIONERS ARE HANDED BUREAUS LIKE WE ARE JUST DEALING OUT CARDS EVERY FEW YEARS! It is nuts.

The Commissioner system is broken. We need real fixes to the real problems this city is facing. Crime is rampant and brazen. The Police response is "what do you want us to do about it?" Homelessness is a huge issue and the trash that comes with it is out of control. You drive into Portland from Vancouver and it just looks crazy. We need solutions now! Fix the broken system so we can get the work done now. Portland needs a real police commissioner, a real parks commissioner, etc. We need a district council structure and professionals to run the city departments. Time to grow up Portland.

This City is an absolute mess. Crime is rampant. Our form of governing the city is so ineffective and obsolete. We're afraid in our own homes. The city government is completely unresponsive, Ill advised and Not equipped to handle the explosion of property theft, gun violence and the homeless camps that are blatant about hoarding stolen cars, bikes etc. The extreme filth, massive " criminal/ homeless " camps , graffiti and more is quickly turning this city into a replica of the south Bronx of the 1970's. Each agency either does not answer calls, responds to emails or just passes the buck. The charter ISN'T WORKING. We need a complete overhaul of the city government.

As I'm sure the city council and the charter commission are aware, Portland is the only major city in the US with a commission government. I believe that form of government is a major reason our city government feels so completely impenetrable and unaccountable to the people of Portland--and why such a "progressive" city routinely ends up being run by a small cabal of milquetoast centrist rich guys whose only interest is protecting other milquetoast rich guys' businesses. Recent years have seen a few exceptions to this general rule with the elections of Jo Ann Hardesty and Chloe Eudaly, but the fact that my vote can't count towards electing a city councilor who would specifically represent my interests and those of my neighbors in Sellwood--that my vote gets lumped into the same bucket as voters in the Pearl and the west hills--means that the council as a whole will always skew towards the status quo. My neighborhood if far from being the hardest done by this inane system--what of the more heavily working class and Black, Latinx, and Asian neighborhoods east of 82nd? Their interests will never be represented in a system where people can't come together with their neighbors to choose who represents them. The system we have now is quite literally non-representative. It's farcical that a city of this size uses this form of government.

I would also like to voice my support for the adoption of ranked-choice voting in local elections. Our current wet saltine of a mayor was elected by a minority of voters because the number of candidates meant his opposition's vote was split. Voters should be able to give their second and third choices to prevent this kind of undemocratic result.

I applaud the Commission for forming subcommittees, defining issues, and reaching out to the public. The process seems off to a good start.

I have two hopes for the charter revision:

- (1) Future City Council members represent specific, geographic districts. Our different neighborhoods have such diverse concerns. Geographic districts would make council members more responsive to their constituents. My State representative and senator are very responsive to our concerns. The Portland City Council members not so much.
- (2) Have a strong mayor and city manager. Let the City Council legislate and set policy/strategy, provide oversight.

I am a small business owner in Portland, residing here since 1998. From my point of view, the City government has been chronically inept in the two decades that I have lived here. Vera Katz was the last decent mayor. Portland has grown, and it has outgrown its system of government. I fully support all of the City Club's recommendations for (1) a professional city manager (2) forming geographic election districts and abandoning the at-large system of electing commissioners, (3) expanding the number of commissioners. The sooner the better!

Charter Commission Members, thank you for taking this on! I am impressed with your qualifications and I think you all bring important strengths and perspectives. I am counting on you to recommend a larger city council, elections by district, and a city manager style of government. Portland is a large and diverse city, and all of our communities are entitled to representation. We also need the professionalism and accountability of a city manager/chief executive that is appointed by a representative council, who can hire and fire her/his/their department heads. I and my friends are happy to advocate for this, door to door if necessary (of course with masks). Thanks again for your work!

Marian

Suggestions to the City of Portland

I'm not sure of the scope of your public comment but here are my suggestions to make Portland once again a livable quality city.

12 City Council members are needed to properly represent each part of the city.

Mayor's office neighborhood point person. This person would coordinate with neighborhood representatives and city council members staff to solve and follow up with neighborhood issues. Encouraging block parties and neighborhood events to build a positive relationship with the city neighborhood by neighborhood.

Portland Police Department needs 1 spokes person to develop a relationship with its residents via the local media and possibly the national media. My friend Lucky Lamons was that person for several years in Tulsa. Overall, I feel it helped the community to have a better relationship with the local police department and for the local police department to have a better relationship with its citizens. Also, there should be a survey of the current PPD staff here to make sure they want to fulfill their oath. I have had an unfortunate conversation with an officer that suggested moving out of the city. That they don't live in the city and live in the county and how wonderful it is there and how bad the city is. They also communicated to me that the DA of Portland won't do anything and won't prosecute anyone. That is a lie since I have had direct contact with the DA in a case that they took up. If this officer hates it so much here in Portland, why are they here "Protecting and Serving". Seems to me this person is serving misguided ideology rather than their oath. Officers like this make the whole look bad! I know a professional officer when I see one and I have met many who have their oath in the right place. Removing or reassigning officers like the one I described above is a good idea since they have an agenda and could be working against the DA and other city officials and or offices.

Speeding and loud exhaust pipes – In European countries they have electronic speeding scanners that read your license plate and if you reach a destination prior to when you are supposed to you get a ticket in the mail. I'm not sure if it takes a picture of who is driving or if the car is responsible, but I know it's being used on the Freeways there I'm not sure if it's being used in the city limits. But it's an idea to free up officers and keep them safe from traffic stops. Loud exhaust pipes on vehicles should be prohibited in the state of Oregon and if not the state in the city limits. I think many of us here on the Southeast side of Portland are sick of the racing in the middle of the night waking us all up.

Encourage Neighborhood Watch Programs – I know this is already happening here and there but with the point person above and neighborhood watch officers this is another way to build bridges with the community and the police department. All positive interactions between the two are needed especially at this time.

Obtain an agreement between boarding states and with local business to lock up their supplies of spray paint with an age limit on who can buy it. I know it won't help the over 18-year-old, but it could reduce the amount of graffiti overall. Require businesses to cover graffiti on their businesses within 24 hours. I realize this is a big ask or requirement of businesses but in the past, it's been proven to reduce graffiti overall if it's handled immediately rather than encouraging more gang graffiti.

Make prostitution legal. I realize this is an extreme idea but, in several countries, I've visited it is providing empowerment as well as better regulated health for the sex workers. It would also provide the city with another stream of revenue since it would be taxed. It doesn't solve sex trafficking, but it makes it less fun when it's legal. Strip clubs absolutely must pay their dancers. What happened to the minimum wage? It's ridiculous and I don't care that they are being tipped. As the law states they must report the tip. Again, a taxable industry that should have regulation, oversite and will bring revenue to the city when enforced.

Stop city residents from putting household items on the curb for others to take. This is a huge waste of taxpayer dollars. When residents put items out the homeless procure the items then the city ends up having to dispose of the items. It should be the residents who are responsible for hauling those items to donation centers or dumps. This is the only city I have lived in that has allowed this type of behavior. In no way should this be allowed to stand and there should be littering fines when people are caught. If the city feels it needs to provide a pickup service for those residents who can't afford to dispose of items an application can be provided with a reduced fee for the city to come around and remove those items. This can be executed through existing trash pickup services.

Bramble currently is allowed by the city on private property. This should be revised as Bramble causes harm to surrounding neighbors. If property owner cannot maintain their property and are allowing their yard either front or

back to grow uncontrolled Bramble, they need to be required to remove it if it impacts a neighbor. Currently, I have that issue and the out of state owner doesn't care and uses it as a retaliation action against us and other surrounding neighbors.

Tarps – same as above. To skirt current city ordinances of storing indoor items outside a neighbor has tarps over said items. This is causing a rodent problem and is also causing homeless to come onto the property to take a closer look at those items. Requirements should be to keep indoor items in, and outdoor items allowed. Tarps should be allowed for only a period of time. Allowing residents time to remove items not just an open-end date and never doing anything about it.

No Parking on the day the street sweeper comes through your neighborhood. It's a waste of money to not have cars move when you are running a street sweeper. No parking signs can enforce this policy as well as noncompliance could generate some revenue.

Planting trees with non-surface roots between sidewalks and the street. Friends of trees should already be suggesting this but just in case.

Hauling trash trailers behind vans as to pick up the trash bags when finished with picking up the trash instead of wasting time and money coming back for bags that then are partially open and trash again is being spread where they are waiting to get picked up.

I know my suggestions are a little out there, but I really want Portland to be a success and the shiny light on the hill. Please contact me with any questions.

I want to start first by saying thank you for your work. I appreciate the opportunity to give you some input on how I think we could improve our city government.

My first request is to do away with the commission form of government that we currently have. I vote for City Council and Mayor based on their overall ideas on how to run the city. People don't run on their ability to manage the fire department. I recently voted for a city council member who had good ideas on homelessness. Working with homeless people was something they knew about. They weren't put in charge of that bureau. They got to spend their days solving day to day issues with a bureau they didn't know as much about, instead of thinking about how to solve the problems of the city. There are people that are good politicians and leaders and then people that are good managers of departments. They often aren't the same, nor should they be.

So let's elect people to govern the city, and hire people to run the departments.

Next we need a larger city council. I don't know what the optimum number is. I do know that 5 people representing the city of Portland is not enough to actually let anyone feel like the government is for them. It really does feel like the current government is set up just to amplify the loudest, richest voices in the room.

As far as elections go, winner take all is a bad system. We should implement ranked choice or star systems. Our last Mayoral election saw the mayor get 46% of the vote. That is a lot of people that didn't want Ted as mayor. Ranked choice or star would at least be a way of checking to see who most of the voters are ok with. Yeah, people might not get their first choice, but they would also be less likely to get someone they really didn't want. At least a majority of people would get that.

I feel all of these ideas help to make the city government more responsive and answerable to the people of the city. In its current form the government just seems like a chance to keep the status quo. We don't need the status quo we need better and we can get better if the people have power.

I agree with the broad recommendations of the City Club re changing the Charter. The current council structure is unfortunate and outdated. Several changes could help, if thoughtfully executed. 1. Elect councilors to represent districts within the city as opposed to taking on the responsibility for specific bureaus. This could lead to better representation of all areas of the city and could avoid the problem of councilors naturally trying to maximize the budget for their specific bureau. 2. Move to a council plus city manager structure, so that a professional administrator is in charge of day-to-day management and there is more continuity over time. The direction/strategy of a bureau should not be subject to the preferences of a single councilor, which can mean that it fluctuates wildly depending on who was elected. 3. Along with the move to councilors that represent districts within the city, elect more councilors

so that each major area within the city is represented by at least one councilor. Thank you for considering my comments. This is a really important issue, and I am glad that the city is considering it

Commissioners must have experience, the mayor needs real power, and the city commission needs a manager

I live in downtown Portland. I'm in favor of changing the city charter to a mayor-council system and to elect council members by district.

I was a navy submarine officer, and I n that community we have a saying, "If you can't point the finger at who's responsible, then no one's responsible." We need an accountable mayor to point the finger to, and we need to separate the executive and legislative branches of city government. I know that most commissioners will oppose a charter change because they'd likely lose power, but we need change in this city.

Happy to offer further comment if desired. I'm a US Naval Academy grad and Wharton Business School grad. I'm a strategy consultant.

I moved to Portland in 2019 after having lived in major cities across the U.S. such as Boston, NYC, Austin, and San Antonio. I have been really stunned by the completely ineffective government here in Portland. Nowhere else have I paid higher taxes, and yet everywhere else my calls for city services such as fire, police, and other services like parks, historic preservation etc. were responded to promptly and professionally. I find it remarkable that this city which taxes residents so highly provides so little in return. And, that communication between taxpaying residents and their representatives is completely non-existent. I have never even received a response from anyone other than Mingus Mapps. I think that having city council members that are responsible for finite districts, as I have had in other cities, is much more effective, as these people actually listen to their constituents and represent their interests.

I am writing today as a 12 year resident of the City of Portland. I implore you to please fix our antiquated form of City Government which has been abandoned by nearly every other city in the United States.

Please increase the number of commissioners significantly and return to district positions rather than "at large" positions. Please require a city manager to run the city government rather than individual commissioners overseeing individual bureaus for which they may or may not have any knowledge.

Considering the record levels of inequalities locally and globally, we need economic democracy. We should amend Portland's [Charter](#) to create and expand public utilities like broadband, electricity and banking. Many places have them and provide excellent and more affordable services with no profit extraction out of the local economy. Sandy's public broadband was created when corporations would not provide services since they couldn't make enough of a profit. Forest Grove and Hood River have public power providing lower cost service than the average in the state, while Portland pays [higher than average](#). There are [seven Electric Cooperatives in Oregon that are engaged in providing broadband](#) Internet access services. The Bank of [N Dakota](#) generates [hundreds of millions](#) in revenue annually and many localities are working to create new ones.

Remember when Enron owned PGE scammed rate payers, employees and investors? How can we tally up how much Portland loses to investor-owned broadband, power and bank oligopolies' profits, in addition to executive salaries, as well as wasteful marketing? Also, as we face the climate crisis, [investor-owned utility, PG&E in CA, was a cause of numerous disastrous fires](#), as they prioritized profits and executive salaries over maintenance.

And what could we do with those millions of dollars for the public good? Public utilities can provide better services, and jobs while creating public wealth and economic democracy, that can help expand more public services and facilities, from broadband, [banking](#), electricity, community land trusts, and housing. Many services that are not yet public utilities are [monopolies](#) that allow private enterprises to exploit both customers and workers for profits. Public utilities can ensure that residents are not left out of essential services and generate community wealth, rather than profiting out of state corporations. This would also mitigate against growing economic [inequality](#) and boost people's confidence in democratic governance that is accountable to the people, and run for the benefit of the people, unlike investor owned enterprises.

This will also counter the trend towards [privatization](#) of utilities by Wall St and [private equity](#). Private companies even threaten our political landscape, as reported by the Oregonian's [Polluted by Money](#) series: "Portland attorney Dan Meek said he became an advocate for campaign finance restrictions after winning a case proving illegal billing by Portland General Electric, owned at the time by Enron, the corrupt Texas energy giant. PGE and Enron went to the Legislature, which passed a law to invalidate Meek's ratepayer victory."

We need a more democratic and accountable economy, that will benefit all in our local economy with [public enterprises](#), utilities and property including community land trusts and public housing. Other cities already have the governance and election changes being considered by our commission, yet still struggle with racial, political and economic inequalities. Public utilities can be an important counter to the growing inequality in our city and world. We should amend the charter to facilitate this work.

Hyung Nam
Portland Metro People's Coalition

Rate comparisons

Portland (investor owned) **Residential Electricity in Portland**

The average residential electricity rate in Portland is **10.72¢/kWh.**^[1]

This average (residential) electricity rate in Portland is **9.39% greater than** the Oregon average rate of 9.8¢/kWh.^[2]

The average (residential) electricity rate in Portland is **9.76% less than** the national average rate of 11.88¢/kWh. Residential rates in the U.S. range from 8.37¢/kWh to 37.34¢/kWh.^[2]

<https://www.electricitylocal.com/states/oregon/portland/>

Forest Grove (public)

The average residential electricity rate in Forest Grove is **6.54¢/kWh.**^[1]

This average (residential) electricity rate in Forest Grove is **33.27% less than** the Oregon average rate of 9.8¢/kWh.^[2]

The average (residential) electricity rate in Forest Grove is **44.95% less than** the national average rate of 11.88¢/kWh. Residential rates in the U.S. range from 8.37¢/kWh to 37.34¢/kWh.^[2] <https://www.electricitylocal.com/states/oregon/forest-grove/>

Hood River (public)

The average residential electricity rate in Hood River is **7.08¢/kWh.**^[1]

This average (residential) electricity rate in Hood River is **27.76% less than** the Oregon average rate of 9.8¢/kWh.^[2]

The average (residential) electricity rate in Hood River is **40.4% less than** the national average rate of 11.88¢/kWh. Residential rates in the U.S. range from 8.37¢/kWh to 37.34¢/kWh.^[2]

<https://www.electricitylocal.com/states/oregon/hood-river/>

Chapter 10 Public Utilities and Franchises



"A Brief History of the Hood River Electric Cooperative

...
About 2,000 people attended an outdoor meeting of the People's Power League held at Bonneville on August 29, 1937. Speakers advocated state and municipal ownership of electrical systems and urged the formation of committees throughout the state to carry out an active campaign for publicly owned power.

...
Today, HREC serves approximately 3,900 electric accounts and 2,400 internet accounts held by about 3,400 members. Nearly 75 years after its formation, the Co-op continues to carry out its mission:

To provide affordable, reliable services to members using sound business practices and following the cooperative principles."
<https://hrec.coop/about/history/>

See more public power providers on these sites. Note that there are numerous cooperative, public and municipally owned electric utilities in Oregon alone, compared to just a couple Investor Owned Utilities.

<https://www.oregon.gov/energy/energy-oregon/Pages/Oregon-Utilities.aspx>
<https://poweroutage.us/area/state/oregon>

[The Oregon Municipal Electric Utilities Association](#) (OMEU) represents eleven municipally owned and operated electric utilities in Oregon. OMEU supports the collective interests of its members and their customer owners at the state legislature, state agencies, various trade associations and the Bonneville Power

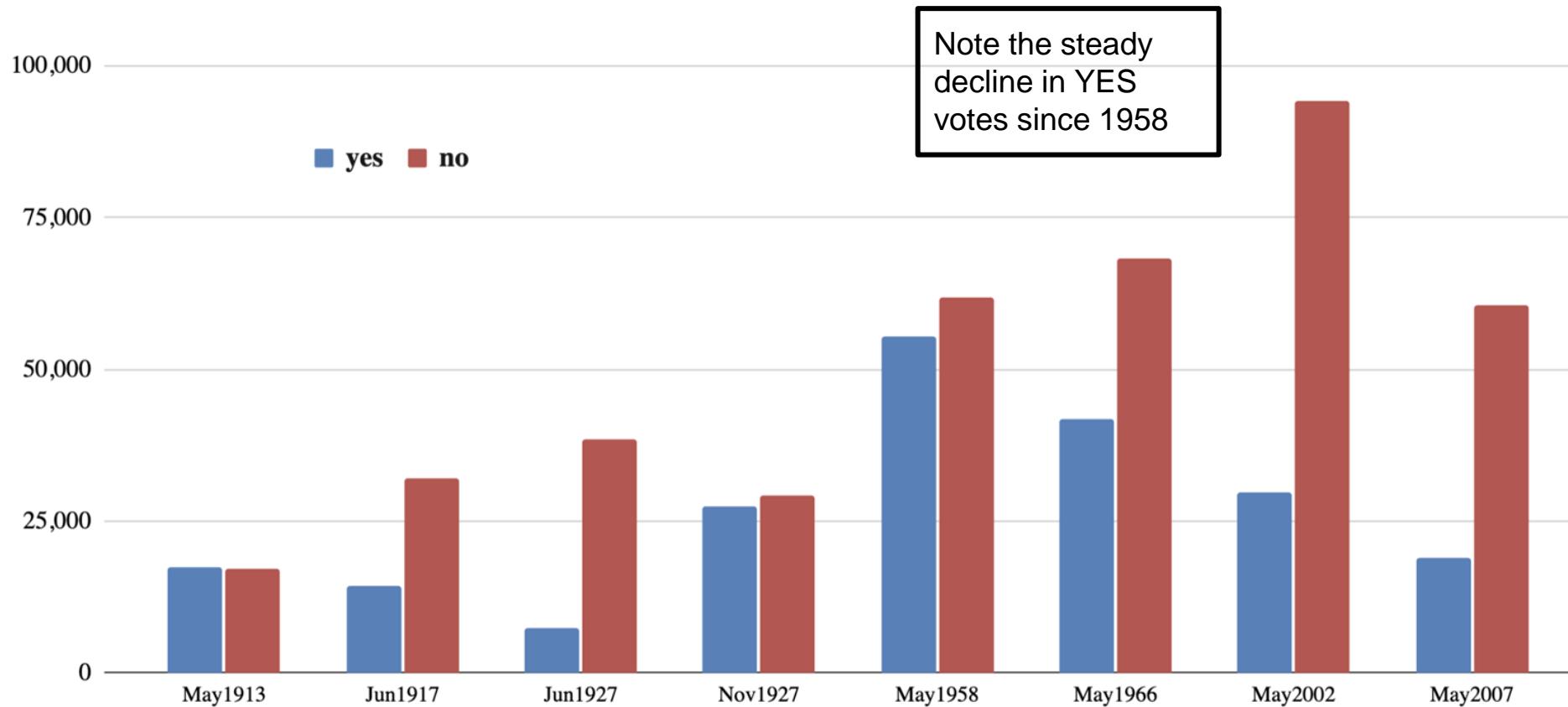
[Northwest Public Power Association](#) (NWPPA) is a not-for-profit association of over 155 public/people's utility districts, electric cooperatives, municipalities, and Crown corporations in the Western U.S. and Canada.

[Oregon Public Utility Commission](#). The mission of OPUDA is to benefit customer owners of PUDs, influence state legislation, regulation and policy and provide focus on related interests of its member PUDs by networking, idea sharing and educating each other.

How Did We Get Here?

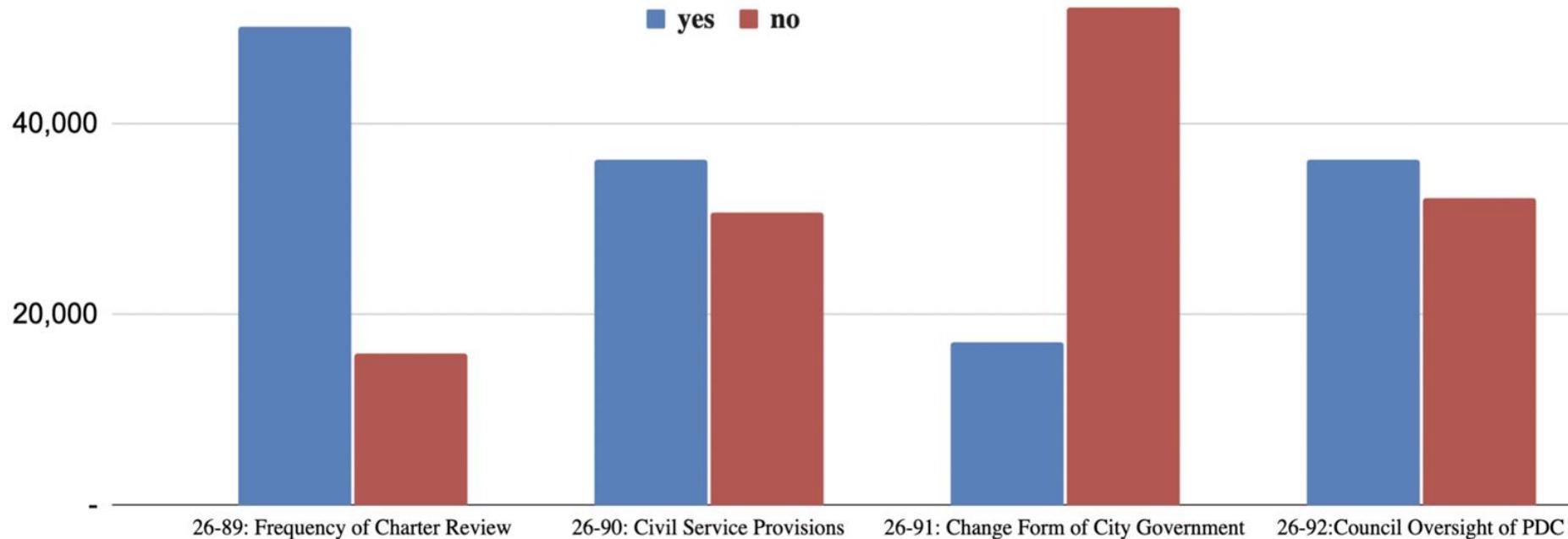
- Well-known history:
 - Our commission form of government was established 1913
 - Multiple ballot measures to reform/replace since then, all failed.
- Why?
- Any useful take-aways to have a successful outcome this time?

Prior Elections



Focusing in on 2007 - 4 charter ballot measures

Note that $\frac{3}{4}$ of the measures passed, so perhaps the light overall turnout was not a major factor for 26-91 being strongly rejected. A higher turnout may not have mattered.



2004-7: getting a ballot measure

- Tom Potter elected mayor in Nov2004 w/ strong voter support (61%), a progressive and popular figure in Portland
- Charter reform was very high on his list of goals, also initiated a large “[bureau innovation project](#)”
- Charter review commission membership finalized March 2006, 26 volunteers with a mix of backgrounds (“*The mayor's aides are going out of their way to find ethnic minorities, women and people who don't normally participate in City Hall forums and focus groups*”, Oregonian 8/31/05), \$400K budget
 - 100 public meetings including 30 “diverse community and neighborhood organizations”
 - 2000 hours of testimony
 - 15 months of work

2004-7: getting a ballot measure (cont'd)

- Significant (and very public) split from the beginning in city council regarding the possibility of moving away from commissioner form of government
- Charter review commission presented a draft that addressed form-of-government but not the council election method
- Significant pushback/questioning from council members
- Draft revised, charter review committee vote was 12-4 and so it went to city council
- Council was divided and for a while it looked like there might not be 3 votes to send it to ballot...but things changed (Sam Adams was the swing vote)...it became ballot measure 26-91

2007: the campaign

- Several council members did not endorse 26-91 publicly, although they had agreed it could go to ballot for voters to decide - created a mixed message for voters?
- Other well-known voices opposed it: League of Women Voters, Amanda Fritz, Charlie Hales, Bud Clark...
- Significant fund-raising and spending by “In Favor” and “In Opposition” Political Action Committees...each PAC raised & spent ~\$250K
- “In Favor”
 - Top contributors were **business owners, including developers**
 - Focused on **improving efficiency**, policy consistency, freeing up council members to have more time to spend with Portlanders
- “In Opposition”
 - Top contributors were **unions**
 - Focused on “**the mayor would have too much power**”, “it’s not broken, don’t fix it”, “it’s different and that’s why we’re known as an exceptional city”

2007: the campaign (cont'd)

Top campaign contributors

- Supporting 26-91:
 - Williams and Dame Development Inc., \$25K
 - Robert Ball, \$20K
 - Melvin Mark, Jr., \$10K
 - Fox Tower, \$10K
 - Schnitzer Steel Industries, Inc., \$10K
 - Timothy Boyle, \$10K
 - Harsch Investment Corp., \$10K
 - Mark Edlen, \$10K
- Opposing 26-91:
 - Local 48 Electricians PAC (4572), \$25K
 - Oregon AFSCME Council 75, \$25K
 - Portland Police Association / 3182, \$24K
 - Portland Firefighters PAC, \$20K
 - AFSCME Local 189, \$20K

Things to Think About

- 2007 showed the importance of both the ballot measure and the campaign, two sides of the same coin
 - 2007 PAC spending was balanced but the “In Favor” campaign didn’t capture **voters’ hearts and minds** as well as “In Opposition” did
- A different outcome might require a different approach
 - Is a single ballot measure containing both Form of Government **and** Council Elections **required** to address the issues that arose in 2007?
- Would early, proactive outreach to groups **who were opposed** in 2007 help create a ballot measure with a better chance of being passed?
- There’s quite a bit of material on the web that captures the “In Favor” and “In Opposition” viewpoints from 2007...would knowing more about this prior effort help brand/frame the issue for voters this time around?
 - Oregonian, Mercury, and WW archives (articles, opinion pieces, letters to the editor, etc.)
 - Voters’ pamphlet for the 26-91 ballot measure
 - Web sites such as nwlaborpress.org

AMENDS CHARTER: CHANGES FORM OF CITY GOVERNMENT.

QUESTION: Shall executive authority be transferred from Commissioners to the Mayor, and Council exercise legislative and quasi-judicial duties?

SUMMARY : The measure changes the structure of city government adopted in 1913. City Council members and Mayor currently share all executive, legislative, quasi-judicial and administrative functions. This measure distributes executive and administrative functions to Mayor and legislative and quasi-judicial functions to Council. The Mayor remains a voting member of Council, but does not have veto power. The Mayor prepares the budget, distributes work among offices, hires and discharges most employees, subject to civil service. Council adopts the budget and strategic plans, and exercises legislative oversight through investigations and hearings.

The measure authorizes Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to manage and coordinate city operations, administration and personnel, under supervision of the Mayor. The Mayor hires the CAO, subject to Council confirmation. The Mayor may fire the CAO.

Bureau directors are currently hired by individual Commissioners. The measure transfers responsibility for performance, including hiring and firing of bureau directors, to the Mayor.

The measure also changes the process for filling vacancies in City elective office. This measure is effective January 1, 2009.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

This measure is one of four recommendations by the 26 citizen-member Charter Review Commission.

The measure increases coordination of City services by centralizing City management in the chief administrative officer.

Background

In November 2005, Portland City Council appointed a panel of 26 Portlanders to take the first comprehensive look at the City Charter since 1913. This independent volunteer citizen committee – the Charter Review Commission – represented a wide range of ages, ethnicities, experiences and backgrounds.

To facilitate its work, the Commission held over 100 public meetings, collected information from a variety of sources, including review of written reports, invited testimony from legal and academic experts, and public testimony, including:

- Testimony from current and former elected officials of Portland and other municipalities, city employees, community organizations, neighborhood associations and other stakeholder groups and individuals;
- Testimony from outside experts in government studies and public administration; and
- A survey of comparably-sized cities.

What does the measure do?

Portland's current form of government was adopted in 1913. This 'commission' form of government combines the legislative and executive functions together in a five member commission. It requires that specific administrative responsibilities be divided among five elected City Commissioners, or City Council members, in addition to traditional legislative and oversight responsibilities. When elected, City Council members assume full time administrative roles as department heads of City bureaus.

The measure:

- Directs the Mayor, subject to City Council approval, to appoint a chief administrative officer to oversee the delivery and coordination of all City services and bureaus.
- Directs the City Council to oversee the budget, set strategic direction and policies, exercise oversight of City operations through investigations, committees and hearings, and provide constituent representation.
- Directs the City Council to retain legislative and quasi-judicial authority.
- Maintains a City Attorney appointed and removed by the City Council.
- Retains the Mayor as a voting member of the five member Council.
- Does not provide the Mayor veto authority over Council actions.
- Requires appointments of all bureau directors be approved by the City Council.
- Requires all appointments made by the Mayor be approved by the City Council.
- Maintains an independently elected Auditor and staff.

This measure replaces the current form of government where City Council decides public policy and administers City bureaus. It replaces the current form of government with a governing structure where the mayor is held accountable for a chief administrative officer who runs the day to day operation of the City and City Council members focus on setting policy, approving budgets, exercising legislative and quasi-judicial authority, and representing the citizens of Portland.

This measure if passed is effective January 1, 2009.

Submitted by:

Mayor Tom Potter
City of Portland

Measure No. 26-91 | City of Portland

ARGUMENT IN FAVOR

PARENTS, TEACHERS, ACCOUNTANTS, RETIREES, COLLEGE STUDENTS, PARKS SUPPORTERS, SCHOOL ADVOCATES, CONSERVATISTS, GRANDPARENTS, AFFORDABLE ACCESSIBLE HOUSING ADVOCATES, SMALL BUSINESSES, PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICERS, PUBLIC ADMINISTRATORS, COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS, SENIORS.....

WE ARE CITIZENS TO REFORM CITY HALL*

Skye Bordcosh
Mahhew Aasen
William David Shepherd
Philip H. Lowthian
Carole B. Von Schmidt
Vaughn De Lorean
John L. Trachtenberg
Barbara J. Trachtenberg
Clara Padilla Andrews
Kris Hudson
Elmer Bancud
Sherry Fishman
Barbara Joan Hansen
Jamey Hampton
Bob Ball
James Vukanovich
Scott Andrews
Harry L. Newton
Kevin Kohnstamm
Andrew S. Estrada
Gale Castillo
Namrata Singh
Vera Katz
Debbie Kitchin
Kilong Ung
Bertha M. Ferran
Jacqueline Mercer
Claire Oliveros
Linda Castillo
David Kelleher
Janet Campbell
Patricia McCaig
Bernard V. Foster
Teresa M. Bliven
Grant L. Jones
Melissa Crawford
Sarah Shepherd
Becky Bilyeu
Herbert Hansen
Kevin Little
Melanie C. Davis
Brianna Wilson
Karin Hansen
Beverly Newton
Dana Estrada
Kyle Chown
Nichole Maher
Paul Meyer
Steffeni Mendoza Gray
Sen. Margaret Carter
Kyle Harrington

Linda L. Martin
Carolina Perkins
Robert Schmaling
Harold C. Williams
Allyson Spencer
Jackie Lowthian
Marta Guembes
Jay Clark
Bruce Harder
Michaela Bancud
Steve Oster
Maren T. Walta
Tom Walsh
Rodney Page
Scott Floyd
Tom Potter
James A. Meyer
Jason Lim
Jaime Lim
Lisa Naito
Shirley Minor
Madhusudan Ramachandran
Lauren Rhoades
Bob Strader
Carol Blanusa
Marie Lisa Johnson
* a partial list.

We hope you'll join us....

For more supporters go to www.ReformCityHall.com(link is external)

(This information furnished by Kyle Chisek, Citizens to Reform City Hall)

The printing of this argument does not constitute an endorsement by Multnomah County, nor does the county warrant the accuracy or truth of any statements made in the argument.

Measure No. 26-91 | City of Portland
ARGUMENT IN FAVOR

A MESSAGE FROM TOM POTTER

Real Reform at City Hall

Dear Neighbors,

Two years ago I campaigned for Mayor by asking for your help in changing how City Hall works. You told me about the problems you had in accessing City services. We've made a good start together, bringing a renewed sense of openness and transparency, and making City Hall more welcoming to everyone.

Now it's time to finish the job.

We have a once in a lifetime opportunity to adopt four reforms proposed by an independent committee of Portlanders that will increase accountability, achieve more efficient use of tax dollars, and bring more community oversight to City Hall.

I'm proud to support this volunteer commission's recommendations for real reform at City Hall. Their reforms include some of the most significant changes to our City since 1913. And, it's about time!

- 89: Provide you the opportunity to review city government every ten years and allows the public to vote on community recommendations;
- 90: Streamline and modernize public employee provisions – eliminate outdated, confusing and conflicting rules;
- 91: Eliminate duplication of City services and improve communication and coordination between City bureaus by allowing managers to run City bureaus, and hold them accountable; and
- 92: Give the City Auditor more authority to conduct financial and performance audits on the Portland Development Commission;

Reforming City Hall will take hard work, but that's what you've elected me to do.

I need your help.

I hope you'll help me bring more accountability and citizen oversight to City Hall by supporting Reforms 89, 90, 91 & 92.

Take care and thank you,

Tom Potter
Mayor

(This information furnished by Kyle Chisek, Citizens to Reform City Hall)

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**Measure No. 26-91 | City of Portland
ARGUMENT IN FAVOR**

**IT'S ABOUT COORDINATION & ACCOUNTABILITY
AT CITY HALL**

Streamline and modernize City government

Portland is the last big city in America where politicians still run huge, highly technical bureaus....with little or no experience. That's in part why taxpayers pay \$2.8 million a year for the four commissioners' staff on top of bureau management costs.

Our politician--run bureaus promotes a duplication of services, erects barriers between bureaus and creates blind spots that produce disasters like the Water Bureau's \$ 10 million billings fiasco and a tram that cost four times the city estimate.

"....then each commissioner rules over his or her collection of fiefdoms. Remember, each commissioner is a politician first, and usually has no expertise in any of those departments. No wonder other large cities reject this problematic scheme."

The Columbian, 2/25/07

"The city's form of government invests extraordinary power in each city commissioner, often at the expense of the city as a whole."

The Oregonian, 3/5/2007

The package of reforms proposed by the independent volunteer commission will:

- provide coordination between city bureaus;
- implement consistent administrative policies in all bureaus;
- bring more accountability and citizen oversight to city government; and
- deliver more efficient services to taxpayers.

"We have a good city but changing the form of government would make it even better."

The Oregonian, 2/5/2007

Please support Reforms 89, 90, 91, & 92.

www.ReformCityHall.com(link is external)

(This information furnished by Kyle Chisek, Citizens to Reform City Hall)

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Measure No. 26-91 | City of Portland ARGUMENT IN FAVOR

WHY?

For years Portlanders have asked....

Why can't we do a better job coordinating City bureaus?

Why don't we have consistent administrative policies between City bureaus?

Why are we wasting taxpayers' dollars by duplicating services and personnel between City bureaus?

Why?

Because our form of government is obsolete and inefficient. **No other large city in the nation still has politicians in charge of City bureaus. They just can't afford to.**

Reforms 89-90-91-92 will end business-as-usual at City Hall:

- **Increase coordination:** Replace a system where the Water Bureau can withhold critical internal memos from other bureaus that foretold a multi-million dollar billing problem. The result? A \$ 20 – 30 million billing fiasco that cost ratepayers.
- **Increase accountability:** Establish clear decision-making authority and hold managers accountable if they do not perform – and end the excuses that allow the price tag for the tram to go from \$ 15 million to \$ 55 million, and no one knows why or is held accountable.
- **Increase citizen oversight:** Finally bring citizens back into government. Establish citizen oversight to review how our government is working and make recommendations directly to Portland voters.

Citizen Inspired, Citizen Led Reforms

A package of reforms to bring more citizen oversight, accountability and efficiency to city government.

Vote YES on Reforms 89-90-91-92

(This information furnished by Kyle Chisek, Citizens to Reform City Hall)

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Measure No. 26-91 | City of Portland

ARGUMENT IN FAVOR

POLITICIAN-RUN CITY BUREAUS— WASTE MILLIONS

Duplication Costs Taxpayers

In our outdated, politician-managed government, City bureaus change hands every few years with new politicians....

And that's costing taxpayers millions.

In the last 6 years:

- the Water Bureau has been managed by 5 different City Commissioners;
- the Transportation Bureau has changed hands 7 times ; and
- the Sewer Bureau 6 times...in the last 6 years.

Each time a new politician takes over, the bureau lurches off into a new direction—the politician can hire, fire, move personal staff into bureau positions, conduct studies, approve contracts and leases, all without coordinating or communicating with other commissioners, the mayor or any centralized clearinghouse.

Politicians think our system is great, and so do the special interests that elect them....

But there's a reason every other large city in America has abandoned the politician-managed bureaus – it is just too expensive:

- Today we pay \$ 640,000 a year to keep City-owned space vacant while eight different bureaus rent private office space.
- While that space remains vacant, the eight bureaus pay \$ 2.5 million a year for downtown offices.
- Four City bureaus don't even use the City's payroll system.
- Two different bureaus paid for multi-million dollar studies at the same time on the same issue, and over the same piece of property.

Bring accountability back to City Hall.

VOTE YES on Reforms 89-90- 91-92.

(This information furnished by Kyle Chisek, Citizens to Reform City Hall)

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**Measure No. 26-91 | City of Portland
ARGUMENT IN FAVOR**

IMPROVE COMMUNICATION AT CITY HALL

"Bureaus bicker (especially when their respective commissioners are at odds), and some bureaus, in effect, run themselves, creating blind spots and disasters..."

The Oregonian 2/5/2007

After 100 plus public meetings, 2000 hours of testimony, and 15 months of work, the volunteer independent committee concluded that Portland has outgrown our politician-run government.

They recommended a package of reforms designed to increase efficiency and accountability and give Portlanders a voice in improving City Hall:

- **89:** Give the community a chance to review how the City is working every ten years and then let the community vote on the recommendations.
- **90:** Streamline and modernize public employee regulations – eliminate outdated, confusing and conflicting rules;
- **91: Eliminate duplication of City services and improve communication and coordination between City bureaus. Allow experienced managers to run day to day operations, but hold them accountable for performance; and**
- **92:** Give the City Auditor more authority to conduct financial and performance audits on the Portland Development Commission;

"Just as a city needs experts running police, fire and other key departments, a city hall needs a competent, non-political, public administration expert running daily operations."

The Columbian, 2/25/07

VOTE YES ON REFORMS 89, 90, 91 & 92

www.ReformCityHall.com(link is external)

(This information furnished by Kyle Chisek, Citizens to Reform City Hall)

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Measure No. 26-91 | City of Portland ARGUMENT IN FAVOR

More Community Access, Oversight & Representation

(Five Times (5X) More Access)

The independent Charter Review Commission's proposed reforms deliver:

- increased efficiency; AND
- more community access, representation and responsiveness.

Today, special interests take up too much time at City Hall. A neighbor with a problem, a senior with a question, a family confused about a water bill – we all have a hard time being heard.

Whether it is a problem with an abandoned car, too much traffic on your street, or you need to get the right permit to remodel your garage... **you have to depend on the good graces of the one politician in charge of the City bureau to get anything done.**

Reforms 89-90-91-92 change that.

An ordinary person could approach ANY City Council member for help. And all City Council members would have a stake in providing a response, not just one. **The chances of getting something done are multiplied by five.**

The package of reforms proposed by the independent commission puts the day to day management in the hands of experienced managers and allow City Commissioners to actually get out of their office and talk to real people about real problems in their community.

City Commissioners would have:

- the time to focus on people; and
- get out of their offices, be part of the community; and
- learn about the needs of all Portlanders.

That's the experience we desperately need at City Hall.

Vote Yes on Reforms 89-90-91-92

(This information furnished by Kyle Chisek, Citizens to Reform City Hall)

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Measure No. 26-91 | City of Portland ARGUMENT IN FAVOR

GIVE PORTLANDERS MORE OVERSIGHT OF CITY HALL

And Give Voters a Voice

Today the City Council decides when, or if, community members can review the document that defines how the City provides services. Under the current system any changes to the Charter must be approved by the City Council before being referred to the voters.

That's just not right!

That's why an independent volunteer committee has recommended bringing more oversight to City Hall and requiring community recommendations to be passed on directly to the voters.

Community Oversight

Reform 89 provides more community oversight by directing the City Council to appoint an independent committee of community members at least once every 10 years to review how the government is working.

Give Portlanders a Voice

Reform 89 creates a process that allows the community's recommendations to go directly to voters--without City Council approval!

This recommendation is one of four reforms designed to increase efficiency, bring more accountability and provide you more oversight of City Hall.

IT IS YOUR CITY AND YOU DESERVE A VOICE IN IMPROVING IT!

Vote Yes on Reforms 89, 90, 91 & 92.

For more information: www.ReformCityHall.com(link is external)

(This information furnished by Kyle Chisek, Citizens to Reform City Hall)

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**Measure No. 26-91 | City of Portland
ARGUMENT IN FAVOR**

NO FALSE PROMISES

No new money needed to implement reforms.

(And ending duplication and inefficiency will save money.)

Rather than coming with their hand out again, this package of reforms will bring some common sense savings by making City Hall act the way the rest of us do who have to work within a budget, look for bargains and not spend money on things we don't need or already have.

Imagine a system where:

- We're not paying to have five different bureaus renting space in private buildings while a City-owned building sits vacant – essentially paying twice for everything.
- We're not humoring bureaus that want to run their own customized computer systems – costing all of us an extra \$10-15 million every year.
- Bureaus aren't fighting over who owns what while they spend millions duplicating, studies on the same topic at the same time.

This package of reforms won't cost a dime in new money – but it will save us millions

Vote YES on Reforming City Hall – 89-90-91-92.

www.ReformCityHall.com(link is external)

(This information furnished by Kyle Chisek, Citizens to Reform City Hall)

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Measure No. 26-91 | City of Portland
ARGUMENT IN FAVOR

**REFORMING CITY HALL IS NOT
FOR CAREER POLITICIANS**

Portland city commissioners must suppress the urge to protect their political turf and instead allow voters in a May election to decide the fate of recommendations from a citizen-led charter review panel that considered how City Hall can best operate in the future.

Portland Tribune 1/11/2007

Local career politicians have been lining up to come out against the citizen-led reforms that will bring more oversight, performance audits and efficiency to City Hall.

That's no surprise. After all, an independent volunteer committee is asking voters if they would rather have skilled and experienced managers look after our City's resources. If the answer is yes, we will replace a system where politicians now exercise total control with no oversight or accountability.

- **89: Give citizens the power to determine what's working at City Hall and what's not, and vote on changes to make things better.**
- **90: Modernize the Civil Service that protects our workers, eliminating outdated, confusing and conflicting rules.**
- **91: Stop the duplication and waste among City bureaus that often don't cooperate or communicate with each other, and hold more managers accountable for their performance.**
- **92: Give the City Auditor more authority to conduct financial and performance audits on the Portland Development Commission.**

Twenty-six of your neighbors spent 15 months and held 100 public meetings to develop these recommendations.

Now **you** can make these reforms real!

Vote YES on Reforms 89, 90, 91 & 92.

www.ReformCityHall.com(link is external)

(This information furnished by Kyle Chisek, Citizens to Reform City Hall)

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Measure No. 26-91 | City of Portland
ARGUMENT IN FAVOR

**Portland ranked 37th out of 46 cities
in managing City finances.**

As a small business owner on the Eastside, I know that watching the bottom line is crucial.

But, I am also willing to support quality services that make our City better – light rail, street car, clean water, parks and good schools.

These services make a difference to my business, but more importantly, to my family and our community.

I've reviewed the independent Charter Review Commission's recommendations to reform City Hall and believe reform is necessary if Portland wants to meet the needs of our growing population and protect our quality of life.

After 94 years, our government is outdated. It is not designed to meet today's challenges. It is inefficient, stifles communication, and limits coordination.

I have willingly supported increases in my taxes to pay for quality services. But, now it's time for City Hall to tighten its belt.

City Hall simply needs better management...more coordination and communication would help eliminate duplication and save money for needed services. The community proposed reforms do exactly that:

- **89: Give citizens the power to determine what's working at City Hall and what's not, and vote on changes to make things better.**
- **90: Modernize and eliminate outdated, confusing and conflicting public employee regulations.**
- **91: Stop the duplication and waste among City bureaus that often don't cooperate or communicate with each other, and hold more managers accountable for their performance.**
- **92: Give the City Auditor more authority to conduct financial and performance audits on the Portland Development Commission.**

I'm one of the hundreds of Citizens to Reform City Hall. I hope you'll join us.

Vote Yes on 89-90-91-92

(This information furnished by Kyle Chisek, Citizens to Reform City Hall)

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Measure No. 26-91 | City of Portland
ARGUMENT IN FAVOR

Extensive Public Input

In November, 2005 a unanimous City Council appointed a panel of 26 Portlanders to take the first comprehensive look since 1913 at how the City was working. This independent volunteer committee spent 15 months developing their recommendations and held more than 100 public meetings .

These volunteers listened to over 2000 hours of testimony from:

- Current and former elected officials;
- Neighborhood organizations;
- Senior organizations;
- Minority media representatives;
- Youth organizations;
- City workers;
- Bureau directors;
- Academic and legal experts;
- Public administrators;
- Community organizations;
- Labor representatives;
- Auditors;
- Professional managers; and
- Community members.

The panel developed draft recommendations and presented them to more than **30 diverse community and neighborhood organizations for review and discussion** .

All of the panel's meetings were open to the public and televised . The panel reported formally to the City Council 3 times throughout the 15 months in addition to meeting individually with City Commissioners. The panel's final recommendations were submitted to the City Council in January 2007 and referred to the voters.

Portlanders will have been discussing the need for these reforms for many years by the time they vote May 15 th .

And, these reforms are **long overdue!**

They are the first to be submitted to the voters in 94 years that include more citizen oversight, streamlined government, and increased accountability.

(This information furnished by Kyle Chisek, Citizens to Reform City Hall)

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Measure No. 26-91 | City of Portland
ARGUMENT IN FAVOR

"THE SKY IS FALLING!.....THE SKY IS FALLING!"

"Oh No! Oh No! The Sky is Falling! "

The Sky is Falling # 1: The Mayor can fire the staff of the City Auditor.

The Facts:

"It is clear to me there was no intent to weaken the office of the auditor in holding city government accountable, either by the Charter Review Commission or the Mayor."

Gary Blackmer, City Auditor 3/16/07

"It is my recollection that the Charter Review Commission did not intend to make any changes to the Auditor's authority.....I don't recall any discussion of changing the Auditor's authority."

Linda Meng, City Attorney, 3/12/2007

The Sky is Falling # 2: The Mayor can sell park lands.

The Facts:

"The Charter explicitly requires – and would continue to require – that the Council (emphasis added) find the property is no longer needed."

Linda Meng, City Attorney, 3/12/2007

The Sky is Falling # 3: The Mayor can sell or lease public property with council oversight.

The Facts:

"I believe it would be a reasonable interpretation of the Charter to say that the Council (emphasis added) could set criteria or standards for what City property could be sold, including requiring that the Council make the determine of whether property is surplus."

Linda Meng, City Attorney, 3/12/2007

For more facts go to:

WWW.REFORMCITYHALL.COM

(This information furnished by Kyle Chisek, Citizens to Reform City Hall)

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Measure No. 26-91 | City of Portland
ARGUMENT IN OPPOSITION

The League of Women Voters of Portland Urges a NO Vote on 26-91.

For nearly 100 years, Portland has operated successfully under the current Charter, our Constitution. Changing it should be done carefully and with maximum public participation.

Measure 26-91 contains questionable provisions.

- Transfers significant power to the Mayor and an unelected Chief Administrative Officer.
- Inadequate checks and balances on the power of the Mayor leave him/her with control over all bureaus and staff, yet continuing to vote as a member of Council.
- The Mayor would appoint all members of all citizen boards and commissions.
- The current Charter requires a 4/5 vote of Council for sale of city property. 26-91 eliminates that requirement.

Measure 26-91 was rushed to the ballot.

- The proposal was unveiled January 18, and quickly sent to the ballot on February 7 by a divided City Council.
- Proponents have not provided a clear explanation of the cost of implementing 26-91.
- Little consideration was given to improving our current form of government.
- Short timeline prevents informed and inclusive public debate.
- 26-91 targets an election day with likely low voter interest and turnout. May 2005 turnout was 16.91%.

Our current form of government is accountable, responsive, and innovative.

- Elected Commissioners are directly accountable to voters for their bureaus' performance and service delivery.
- Commissioners hire professional bureau managers.
- Commissioners develop and implement innovative programs within their bureaus. Portland is a national and international leader in alternative transportation, green building, and ending homelessness.
- Five elected Commissioners work directly with the community on issues we care about, reinforcing our city's culture of civic engagement.
- The Mayor assigns bureaus, optimizing each Commissioner's strengths and assuring sound management.
- Excellent candidates run for office because they have the authority to make a real difference.

Credible change requires a well-crafted proposal and broad public discussion.

Keep Portland's government accountable.

Reject Measure 26-91.

(This information furnished by Carol Cushman, President, League of Women Voters of Portland)

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Measure No. 26-91 | City of Portland ARGUMENT IN OPPOSITION

Measure 26-91: Still a Very Bad Idea

Seven times over the past 90 years, Portlanders have voted NO on changing our successful commission style of city government – most recently in 2002.

Now, we are now being asked an eighth time. Once again, the answer should be NO.

In fact, this proposal is even worse than the others. Just some of the problems:

This Measure Puts FAR Too Much Power in the Hands of the Mayor

- If 26-91 passes, the mayor would be the only person in charge of appointing all of the city's boards and commissions. For example, a future mayor could stack the city planning commission with developers and other special interests, allowing them to wield too much power.
- Currently, the Charter requires a four-fifths vote of the city council and mayor to sell city parkland. This measure removes this requirement so that there is no council vote required for the final sale of city property. The mayor can make the final sale on his or her own.

Throughout history - including in the White House – we have seen that too much power in the hands of one person is a dangerous thing. Power in the hands of one is not accountable government.

This Measure is Costly

Measure 26-91 makes government put too much power in the hands of one person, make government less accountable and open our city up to control by developers and other special interests. It will also cost us money . Estimates for the transition to this form of government start at \$2 million every year, and may end up being much more. We have better places to spend the money.

Portland has become a model U.S. city because of its unique form of government. There is an old saying: if it ain't broke, don't fix it. Measure 26-91 doesn't fix anything. But it could break the city we love.

VOTE NO ON 26-91

(This information furnished by Mark Wiener, Portlanders for Accountability)

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Measure No. 26-91 | City of Portland
ARGUMENT IN OPPOSITION

Hi Portland Voter,

I'm Bud Clark. I was your mayor from 1985 to 1992. **I oppose the proposed charter changes to Portland's unique form of government.**

Our current charter is a major factor in the creation and maintenance of a livable city admired by people across the nation and the world. It's extremely flexible and adaptive to changing circumstances – ideal for the 21st Century. **To change to a form used by many cities across our nation, who do not enjoy the livability we do, is a step in the wrong direction.**

I campaigned for Mayor Tom Potter. I agree with most positions he has taken, **but not this proposal**. Our current charter allows Mayor Potter to take all the bureaus, as he did when first in office, and appoint a city manager. The proposed charter changes would do this by writing it in "stone," losing the flexibility and adaptability that has served us so well.

When I was mayor I considered taking all the bureaus and appointing a city manager. If I had done that, I would have lost the passion of my commissioners for work and innovation. To name just a few of their/our accomplishments: Mildred Schwab for the Performing Arts Center; Margaret Strachan for the Central City Plan; Dick Bogle for the heliport; Earl Blumenauer for recycling, traffic calming, and the streetcar; Mike Lindberg for park improvements and energy conservation; Gretchen Kafoury for homeless and housing programs. I focused on building the Convention Center and the introduction of community policing.

We accomplished a lot by setting goals and dividing up tasks. We did it together by consensus. Portland was recognized in 1992 by Ambac, an international insurer and financier of governments, as the "Best managed City of its Size in the Nation".

The "proof is in the pudding." **Please vote NO to changing our flexible, adaptive, and innovative charter.**

WHOOP! WHOOP!

BUD

(This information furnished by Bud Clark)

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Measure No. 26-91 | City of Portland
ARGUMENT IN OPPOSITION

Charter Review Commission Members Urge No Vote

We were honored to serve on the Portland Charter Review Commission. After participating in hours of information gathering and deliberation we respectfully disagree that the Charter amendments on the May 2007 ballot are ready for voter approval.

- The ballot measure would significantly change the distribution of power in City government. Portland's citizens deserve a deliberate and inclusive opportunity to learn about this change. The decision to rush to the May ballot does not afford this opportunity.
- The proponents of the strong-mayor form of government did not demonstrate to us that changing the distribution of power in City government will make Portland a better place to live, work and play.
- The proponents of the strong-mayor form of government did not demonstrate to us that changing the distribution of power in City government would enhance citizen participation in government decisions or improve government responsiveness and accountability to tax payers' concerns.
- The Commission discussed many ways the existing form of government might be enhanced to promote efficiency, effectiveness and citizen participation. These alternatives deserve public discussion before amending the Charter to consolidate power under the mayor and a lead bureaucrat.

We voted against recommending an amendment to the City Charter to create a strong-mayor form of government. Please cast your vote for a great Portland and a better process. Vote no on 26-91.

Portland Charter Review Commission Members:

Jillian Detweiler
Ed Hall
Peg Malloy
Robin Plance

(This information furnished by Jillian Detweiler)

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Measure No. 26-91 | City of Portland ARGUMENT IN OPPOSITION

TOP TEN REASONS TO VOTE "NO" ON MEASURE 26-91

by

Jewel Lansing
Former Multnomah County Auditor (1975-1982) and
City of Portland Auditor (1983-1986)
Author, Portland: People, Politics, and Power, 1851-2001

10. Citizen access to City Hall would be dramatically reduced by shifting so much power to the mayor.

9. Portland is a model of urban livability for visitors from all over the globe. Our revitalized waterfront, vibrant neighborhoods, lively downtown, ever-growing light rail system, a "people's living room" at Pioneer Courthouse Square, and hundreds of miles of hiking and biking trails are the envy of other jurisdictions.

8. Just because we're the largest "big city" with the commission form of government doesn't mean it's not right for Portland. Trust your own eyes.

7. The mayor has plenty of power now – authority to reassign bureaus from his fellow commissioners, power of the gavel, preparing the annual proposed budget, access to the media, a bully pulpit from which to address to the public, and status in the eyes of the world.

6. This measure proposes major changes without enough time for study and debate. It is not ready for the ballot.

5. The new CEO and staff would add a costly layer of bureaucracy in city hall.

4. An 11-member City Club committee concluded, in 1989, after 26 months of study, " The prospect that Portland's city government could be dramatically improved by doing away with its present commission form is not bright enough to warrant the years of turmoil and uncertainty reorganization would cause ."

-- Article by Donald J. Sterling Jr., Oregonian , 5/16/89.

3. Portland voters already rejected similar measures seven times: 1917, 1926, 1927, 1958, 1966, 1974, and 2002.

2. Portland doesn't need a czar.

1. IF IT AIN'T BROKE, DON'T FIX IT!

(This information furnished by Jewel Lansing)

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Measure No. 26-91 | City of Portland

ARGUMENT IN OPPOSITION

DON'T THROW OUT A WINNING FORMULA – VOTE "NO" ON MEASURE 26-91

Portland is a pretty special place. Thanks to involved citizens and a unique form of city government, we do a lot of things better here. Don't take our word for it. Here's what other folks say about our city:

- Best Place to Live in the U.S. – Men's Journal (April 2006)
- Best Walking Town in America – Prevention (April 2006)

- Best Cycling City in the U.S. – Bicycling (March 2006)
- 2006 American Society of Landscape Architects General Design Award of Honor to the City of Portland for the Sustainable Stormwater Management Program/SW 12 th Ave. "The best executed-example of this type of work we've ever seen." -- Awards Jury Comments.
- EPA 2005 Children's Environmental Health Recognition Award to the Portland Water Bureau's Lead Hazard Reduction Program
- No. 2 in U.S. for Sustainable Cities – SustainLane.com (June 2005)
- Top 5 "Impressive City" award for "communities where citizens are making a difference in their environment." – Delicious Living (April 2004)
- Partnership for a Walkable America's 2003 Pedestrian Project Award for retrofitting existing signals with audible signals.
- One of "five cities of the future." The Guardian , London (Jan 2003)
- "The city's neighborhoods have distinctive, lively personalities." -- St. Louis Post-Dispatch (Oct 2002)
- Portland is a vibrant, thriving and friendly urban destination." -- The New York Times (April 2001)
- Portland's Forest Park named "Best Urban Park" in the United States. -- Outside (Oct 2001)
- "Most Livable City" -- Money (Dec 2000)
- One of the nation's 15 hottest spots for new kinds of job growth. -- Time (Jan 20, 1997)
- No. 3 "best managed city in the U.S. – Financial World (March 19, 1995)

Now some people are saying our commission form of government doesn't work, that our city is in trouble. They want to change what has made it possible for Portland to be the "best" in so many ways.

We say you don't throw out a winning formula. Vote "NO" on Ballot Measure 26-91.

(This information furnished by Mark Wiener, Portlanders For Accountability)

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Measure No. 26-91 | City of Portland ARGUMENT IN OPPOSITION

Keep Portland government accessible, flexible and efficient

I'm a native Portlander. One thing I've always relished about my hometown is its accessibility; how easy it is to meet and talk with people. With three calls or less, you can meet and talk with virtually anyone.

Another reflection of this accessibility is our form of government. Not only are our elected officials accessible, you're talking to someone who is vested with responsibility and can make a difference. Portland's government structure requires only three votes to, or undo, anything; and one of these three does not have to include the mayor. This is a remarkably flexible and accessible system, and one that has served our community extraordinarily well.

But some say that we should throw out our system in search of more efficiency. They propose Measure 26-91 which calls for the consolidation of power under the mayor. That's a chilling prospect for our democracy and an invitation to special interests. The most efficient system is a benevolent dictator,

however, this is not the system I would choose. There are ways we can improve bureaucratic efficiency without abandoning the system that has helped keep Portland unique among America's cities.

In his best-selling book, *Better Together*, the sequel to *Bowling Alone*, author Robert Putnam cites Portland, Oregon as an anomaly and example for the rest of America because of our vibrant civic engagement. He cites our "quirky" system of government as one of the reasons.

Rather than abandoning it, I urge my fellow Portlanders to appreciate the gift we've inherited, to reject Measure 26-91, and continue to work through our accessible and flexible system to build on our wonderful community.

Ted Gilbert
President, Gilbert Brothers Commercial Brokerage

(This information furnished by Ted Gilbert)

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Measure No. 26-91 | City of Portland ARGUMENT IN OPPOSITION

WHY PORTLAND CITIZENS SHOULD SAY "NO WAY!" TO 26-91

- Portland is internationally recognized for addressing the issues that confound all urban places. This didn't happen overnight or by accident. There is no evidence our form of government is holding us back.
- Portlanders enjoy unprecedented access to city government – lost if 26-91 passes. All 26-91 promises is someone, maybe, to listen.
- The measure leaves council members dependent on the good graces of the mayor to get anything done.
- The measure gives the mayor the power to sell or lease public land with no council oversight. Imagine your neighborhood park accommodating a drive-thru because it's "good for economic development."
- The measure gives the mayor the unilateral power to hire and fire a new, highly paid city administrator, someone who will keep their job by serving the mayor, not the people.
- The measure allows special interests to easily control Portland politics
- The measure requires the council to plan, but doesn't require the plan be used for anything – a mockery of the planning and citizen involvement that makes community involvement respected and engaged.
- This measure creates a blank check for the mayor. How much will it cost? How much will it save? No data is provided to demonstrate any cost savings, or even that the measure won't actually make the cost of government more expensive.
- The measure claims efficiency by cutting citizens and the council out of decision-making, planning, and politics. If efficiency means greater distance between citizens and their government, then Portland has no need for this "improvement."
- This is a radical and unneeded measure. There will be no debate about merits, only an up or down vote. Once enacted, it can't be easily or cheaply fixed.

Making neighborhoods and citizens less important is not good for anyone. Save our "city of neighborhoods" by saying "NO WAY!" to Measure 26-91.

Ethan Seltzer
Sumner Sharpe
Margaret Strachan

(This information furnished by Dave Mazza, Committee for Accountable City Government)

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Measure No. 26-91 | City of Portland
ARGUMENT IN OPPOSITION

Former City Commissioners Say Vote "No" to Giving Mayor Too Much Power!

Let's be blunt about it: Measure 26-91 is a terrible idea. It was a terrible idea in 2002 when voters turned it down, and nothing has changed. There is simply no reason to change a government that works!!

If voters fall for this shameless power-grab, here's what they will get:

LESS ACCOUNTABILITY

AN EXPENSIVE SUPER-BUREAUCRAT

TOO MUCH MAYORAL POWER

Portland's unique form of government is one reason why our city is such a great city. Why? Because five elected leaders have hands-on responsibility for leading city bureaus. That's accountability. But it's much more than that. Portland's city government, unlike most big cities, puts much of its effort into GETTING THINGS DONE , rather than just endless debate. Many special "Portland" projects have gotten done because of City Commissioners who advocated for and championed them:

Pioneer Courthouse Square & Waterfront Park

The Portland Streetcar

10-Year Plan to End Homelessness

Southwest and East Portland Community Centers

We don't have the space to list all the bad ideas that have failed because three commissioners had the political weight of past mayors, but if you go back in history, you can think of some really bad ideas. We didn't always agree on the City Council, but the energetic discussion and debate were spirited – and that's the way it should be!

Don't fall for this misguided and cynically mislabeled "reform."

Vote NO on Measure 26-91!

Gretchen Kafoury

Charlie Hales

(This information furnished by Charlie Hales and Gretchen Kafour)

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Measure No. 26-91 | City of Portland
ARGUMENT IN OPPOSITION

Protect Portland's Unique Culture of Citizen Involvement

Vote NO on 26-91

The Commission form of government is one of the key contributing factors to Portland's history of active and successful citizen engagement.

Bureaus headed by elected officials are naturally more responsive to citizen complaints, suggestions and involvement. **Don't shield bureaucrats behind a Chief Administrative Officer, one more layer of bureaucracy.**

Portland's system of requiring three out of five Commissioners to agree to adopt policy provides multiple avenues of access for citizens. **Don't put critical decisions in the hands of a single official.**

Not only is Measure 26-91 trying to fix something that's not broken, it would throw out the baby with the bathwater! Citizen involvement is responsible for Portland's quality of life, strong and vibrant neighborhoods and spirit of innovation. **Don't put all this at risk for what someone may claim is a more "efficient" form of government.**

Keep Portland's government accountable and open to citizens. Vote NO on Measure 26-91.

- Chris Smith, citizen activist

(This information furnished by Dave Mazza, Committee for Accountable City Government)

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Measure No. 26-91 | City of Portland
ARGUMENT IN OPPOSITION

COMMUNITY MEMBERS SAY "NO" TO 26-91!

We live in this community. We are neighbors, parents, business people, former public servants and active members of our community who are committed to Portland. We think Ballot Measure 26-91 is a turn in the wrong direction.

This so-called reform of our commission-style government would:

- Place too much power in the hands of the mayor and an appointed chief administrative officer;
- Make our city government less accountable;
- Reduce our community's voice in important decisions for our city;
- Increase the influence of special interests;
- Stifle creativity and innovation with a new layer of bureaucracy; and
- Change a government that has made Portland No. 1 in so many ways.

Ballot Measure 26-91 is a turn in the wrong direction for our government and for our community.

Vote "No" on 26-91!

Jo Ann Bowman

Trudy Cooper

Susan Francois

Amanda Fritz

Ted Gilbert

Justin Gottlieb

Gretchen Kafoury

Jewel Lansing

Dave Mazza

Caroline Miller

Chris Smith

(This information furnished by Dave Mazza, Committee for Accountable City Government)

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Measure No. 26-91 | City of Portland
ARGUMENT IN OPPOSITION

Hello Portland neighbors, we're Amanda Fritz and Dave Lister.

Last year, we ran for City Council because we love Portland.

During that race, we agreed to disagree about many things.

Like public campaign financing, for which Amanda was the first candidate to qualify. Dave chose private financing, because he thought there should have been a vote.

But now, you're being asked to vote to change our form of government to a "Strong Mayor" system.

And on this we agree. We are asking you to vote NO.

Do we want a Mayor with all the power over all city bureaus, and also the power to appoint all citizen committees and boards overseeing those bureaus?

Do we want a Mayor who can sell city property to special interests, without a 4/5 vote of the Council?

Do we want the Mayor alone to "make expenditures from the General Fund" for "assisting private industry and business enterprises in obtaining contracts" ?

Do we want to add another layer of bureaucracy, without knowing how much it will cost to hire more administrators?

And do we want to reaffirm and give to the Mayor ancient powers copied from the old Charter, including the power to "punish paupers" and "to declare from time to time what literature, books, papers, prints, pictures, films, advertising matter and other materials are obscene" ?

We don't think so. And we hope you don't, either.

Portlanders have voted similar proposals down seven times before.

This proposed "Strong Mayor" system gives the Mayor so much power, it would be like making President George W. Bush the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and giving him twenty votes in the Senate as well.

Would this proposed change make Portland better for its neighborhoods, its businesses, or its citizens? We don't think so.

Portland is a great place because the current form of government gives a balance of power.

Please vote NO on measure 26-91.

(This information furnished by Amanda Fritz and Dave Lister)

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Measure No. 26-91 | City of Portland
ARGUMENT IN OPPOSITION

VOTE "NO" ON 26-91!

Oregon Action urges you to vote no on Measure 26-91 . Portland's current city government works well for us and there's no justification for scrapping a successful city government.

Under our current system, Portlanders can reach out to their Commissioners and the Mayor and get their voices heard. Voter-owned elections create an even stronger connection between the public and government. This system is open and accessible – something that it won't be with an unelected city manager accountable only to the Mayor. Charter reform will limit Portlanders access to government.

Proponents of charter reform constantly remind us that Portland is the only major city with a commission-style of governance. If Portland were a failed city, that might be noteworthy. Instead, they are trying to fix what isn't broken. When cities are ranked on quality of life issues, over and over Portland is ranked among the top ten cities – and not just in America, but also in the world. If quality of life measurements indicate what form of government serves the people best, all those other cities should consider changing to our system.

We are in the top ranked cities for sustainability, environmental cleanliness, best places to have a baby, healthiest population, being well-read, best educated, best place to make movies, best for the arts and on and on. Frommer's placed Portland among the top 12 travel destinations in the world. Even more impressive, the European Institute for Urban Affairs ranked it among the 9 most successful cities in the world – the only American city to make the list.

The most common argument in favor of charter reform is that "everyone else is doing it." It's odd that adults, who would never accept that as a reason for anything else, trot out the average adolescent's excuse as a reason to change our government. That argument doesn't work with parents, it shouldn't work with voters either.

(This information furnished by JoAnn Bowman, Oregon Action)

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Measure No. 26-91 | City of Portland
ARGUMENT IN OPPOSITION

Just as major corporations control the White House and Congress, the Portland Business Alliance will control the

Mayor and the General Manager. Currently, this form of government does not work for residents living in Vancouver, Washington, where citizens have no voice in land use issues, or how their tax funds are allocated for parks or road improvements. For 80 (?) years, the City Commissioner form of government has worked well for Portland . In 1970, citizens stopped the Mt. Hood Freeway, and started the Office of Neighborhood Involvement, to hold our elected Mayor and Commissioners to a standard of transparency, accountability and responsibility to the citizenry. Before we throw the baby out with the bath water, ask yourself this: Who will benefit financially from this change? With the passage of 26-91, there will be no point in having an Adjustment Committee where neighborhood association leaders and immediate neighbors can appeal land use zoning issues.

Please join me in voting NO on 26-91.

(This information furnished by Mary Ann Schwab)

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Measure No. 26-91 | City of Portland ARGUMENT IN OPPOSITION

We believe that Portland is a great city not in spite of our unique commission form of government, but rather because of it. As citizen activists, one of the things we treasure most about Portland is the ability to be heard and to see our concerns translated into on the ground action. We do not believe that Portland's unparalleled efforts to build livable communities, protect parks and natural areas, preserve wildlife, and promote a sustainable economy have happened by accident. They are a reflection of the concerns of citizens and the fact that we have a form of government that responds to those concerns.

The commission form of government can be messy and inefficient. That is the nature of democracy. We question whether the alternative, a "strong" mayor" form of government, would be any less so. However, we are convinced that citizen's ability to interact with decision-makers would be greatly limited. The Commission form of government means that there are multiple pathways by which to be heard and multiple voices at the table when the most important decisions facing our community are made.

When each commissioner is responsible for his or her portfolio and the bureaus within their charge, they have a vested interest in ensuring the city bureaus are responsive to the direct involvement of citizens. If Portland were to switch to a "strong mayor" form of government:

- Council members would have less accountability for the impact of their decisions.
- City Councilors would not be steeped in the details of bureau programs which would make it impossible for them to make informed decisions regarding bureau programs and their funding requirements.
- There would be no one who was elected by the public to act as an advocate for individual bureaus.

We're glad that Portland is not like other cities. Please retain the commission form of government.

Mike Houck
Urban Parks and Natural Areas Advocate

Bob Sallinger
Urban Parks and Natural Areas Advocate

(This information furnished by Bob Sallinger and Mike Houck)

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Measure No. 26-91 | City of Portland ARGUMENT IN OPPOSITION

Vote NO on Measure 26-91

What's it about: Control of City Government

A NO vote – Small and creative companies, neighborhood organizations and individuals can influence change. It's about ideas.

A yes vote – Gives big business, lobbyists and moneyed interests more power and access. It's about the \$\$\$.

Why should I care: My Government, My Voice?

A NO vote – Portland will continue on the right track. I wouldn't want to live anywhere else.

A yes vote – Portland will be on the wrong track. I MIGHT AS WELL LIVE IN CHICAGO.

What does 26-91 do: Consolidates power and eliminates Checks and Balances!

A NO vote – CONTINUES a system with multiple layers of checks and balances, creating an environment

of dialogue. Five heads are better than one.

A yes vote – Creates a strong mayor and executive officer without any checks and balances. One person could screw things up royally.

Why 26-91 is so important: **Portland's current City Charter has been effective for 100 years!**

A NO vote – Continues Portland's long tradition of inclusive city government. Parks, Alternative Transit, advocacy, progressive ideas, need we say more...

A yes vote – Tosses out Portland's traditions. We don't know what will happen.

Why 26-91 is important to Business: **Both Small and Large Businesses need access to Government Officials!**

A NO vote – Gives every business, regardless of size and revenue, equal opportunity to have individual issues addressed by city Government. Government is open to everyone!

A yes vote – Puts access in the hands of a very few powerful and well-financed groups and organizations. Government is closed to all but a select few.

On behalf of other Portland small businesses and creative industries, I urge a resounding NO Vote on 26-91.

Sincerely,

Justin Gottlieb – Metro Media, LLC

For more information, visit [TooMuchPower.org](http://ToоМuchPower.org)

(This information furnished by Mark Wiener, Portlanders for Accountability)

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August 6, 2021

Mayor Ted Wheeler
Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty
Commissioner Mingus Mapps
Commissioner Carmen Rubio
Commissioner Dan Ryan
Portland City Hall
1221 SW 4th Avenue,
Portland, OR. 97204

Greetings Mayor and Commissioners:

The NAACP Portland 1120B branch was pleased to see the diversity of those appointed to the City Charter Commission and the intended work of the Commission, specifically its interest in ensuring greater community engagement of typically overlooked, invisible and marginalized groups. That is why, we are dismayed and disappointed by the short time frame and meager funds allotted to a community engagement RFP announced recently by the Commission, and we are especially concerned that it appears out-of-town firms who have no stake in the City of Portland, can participate.

When the Charter Commission announced it would seek community engagement, a component never properly given the type of attention that we believe appropriate for city processes, we celebrated what appeared to be the intention of the city to mitigate its documented history of ignoring or silencing voices from BIPOC and other marginalized populations in Portland and limiting our participation in the governing process. Given the significance of this effort, NAACP Portland 1120B branch looked forward to the opportunity to contribute to the Charter Commission's deliberations through outreach within our membership and the larger BIPOC community, and work in cooperation with other community organizations.

Our organization recognizes the importance of, and opportunities presented by, this once-every-ten-years process that may result in recommended improvements to city governance. We stand on the brink of a decade that will determine whether and how our city will survive the ravages of disasters that face us. Although most of these are not problems the city is able to prevent, the fact that the city appears to have no systems in place to address these multiple imminent and ongoing catastrophes has been made all too clear.

Mayor, City Commissioners
NAACP Portland 1120B Branch
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Further, this suggests it is now even more important than before to be focused on our diverse communities, especially those seldom given access or true voice in decision-making, or not until the very end. We believe they should be unmuted, listened to and heard as they can bring new ways of thinking through and finding solutions to complex, seemingly intractable problems – declining city livability, resource management, dwindling public safety, emboldened police whose biases too often guide their actions and threaten individual safety, housing availability and fairness, and governance that responds to all residents and businesses, not merely the privileged few.

Unfortunately, the release of the RFP for community engagement proposals made clear that there is a serious gap that impacts the stated intention of the Charter Commission and any implementation. The very short time frame allotted to prepare and submit an RFP, deadline August 6, 2021, and the possibility of out-of-towners competing for the contract is problematic. From past experiences and observation, we know what can go wrong when local government brings in competent ‘on paper’ contractors from afar, that lack any connections to or interest and familiarity with Portland’s marginalized communities. Why would organizations with no stake or investment in our city have a chance to play such an important role in this Charter Review process unless they can demonstrate prior success with the missing ‘audiences’ we speak of?

As importantly, the allocation of only \$120,000 for the work required to achieve robust community outreach and engagement is so meager it makes us question whether the city actually supports the Review Commission’s solicitation of input that would honestly reflect the diverse community voices within Portland. That small sum will only result in minimal community engagement unless the Charter Commission relies, as is often the case, on unpaid labor by members of organizations that represent BIPOC, disabled, and other marginalized communities.

Therefore, NAACP Portland 1120B branch must ask:

- How did the stated intent of the Charter Commission’s RFP for community engagement mesh with a short timeframe for producing good quantifiable proposals?
- Why are out-of-town contractors possibly gaining entry to the process that's supposed to increase local input and participation of historically overlooked communities?
- Why are so few financial resources designated to facilitate access by, education of, and engagement with marginalized Portland communities?

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The NAACP Portland 1120B branch embraces the expressed desire of the Charter Review Commission to be open, transparent, more inclusive, and effective in developing a process that will *successfully engage all* Portland residents. But the barriers currently in place to achieve those goals will impede facilitation of a more accountable and transparent local government.

Although statements from our local government have repeatedly proclaimed the desire for more equity and inclusion, this latest effort demonstrates, again, that rhetoric is not sufficient to support intentional comprehensive engagement and representation of marginalized voices that need to be given the opportunity to influence and inform decision-making.

It is our firm belief that these clear concerns must be addressed, and the RFP process re-examined, if the city has any sincere intention of including real opportunity for active, strong diverse community involvement in charting our future. In addition, sufficient funding must be allocated to develop inclusive community outreach and engagement that will ensure the voices of all Portlanders are heard, now and over the next ten years.

We are eager to offer assistance in increasing the representation, voice and more diverse participation in all aspects of our city government, and hope that you will give thoughtful deliberation to the questions we have raised about the process and concerns we have shared.

Sincerely,

Sharon Gary-Smith
President, Portland NAACP
Preferred Pronouns: She/Her/Hers
pdxnaacp.org
1257 Lloyd Center Portland OR 97232 (503.438.7095)
Direct line: 503-272-1452
president@pdxnaacp.org

*"Hide nothing from the masses of our people. Tell no lies. Expose lies whenever they are told.
Mask no difficulties, mistakes, failures. Claim no easy victories."*
~ Amilcar Cabral

Charter Review Commission – Some Research Sources August 18, 2021

Donna L. Cohen, MLIS, MEd, Civics for Adults
dcohen@hevanet.com www.civichinker.info

New Government for Today's Portland: Rethinking 100 Years of the Commission System. City Club of Portland. 2019.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1y74WRaWJA3j2QEYqsAOtZwcLOvT97VcZ/view>

In 2020, they came out with a part 2:

New Government for Today's Portland Part II Rethinking How We Vote. City Club of Portland, 2020.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1K3j7349K8wp24eGmb5odNzDMrSM-x9cs/view>

The City That Works: Preparing Portland for the Future. League of Women Voters-Portland. 2019.

Study on form of Portland government.

<https://lwvpdx.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/City-Gov-Report-LWV-Portland-9-2019-Final.pdf>

Does the Structure of Local Government Matter? Fels Institute of University of Penn. Dec, 2017.

<https://www.fels.upenn.edu/recap/posts/1475>

Governing Magazine has some interesting articles.

<https://www.governing.com/> For example:

Growing Cities Swap Council-Manager, Mayor-Council Governments. Mike Maciag. 6/25/2012.

"Data shows that as population rises, cities often look to change their form of government."

<https://www.governing.com/archive/government-mayor-council-manager-form-changes.html>

National League of Cities – Resource Library

<https://www.nlc.org/resources-training/resource-library/>

Some results: Cities 101 – Revenue Structure

Cities 101 – Forms of Municipal Structure

Cities 101 – Forms of Local Government

Cities 101 – Mayoral Powers

“ Type of Local US Governments

“ Delegation of Powers

Municipal Research and Services Center: City and Town Form of Government.

<https://mrsc.org/Home/Explore-Topics/Legal/General-Government/City-and-Town-Forms-of-Government.aspx>

If you search Google add <site:edu> to your search string. Every result will be from an educational institution:

E.g. <"forms of municipal government" site:edu>

Ditto <site:org> for nonprofits and <site:gov> for governments

Charter Commission Written Testimony for September 23, 2021 Meeting

To: Charter Commission Members

From: Richard Perkins, Retired Downtown Resident

Re: Items I Hope You Will Address in the New Charter Proposal

As a 32-year resident of Portland, the last 16 of which have been spent living in Downtown, I am strongly supportive of changing the current Commission form of government, preferably to a City Manager form with political representation by Districts within the City, rather than by the city-at-large. The Pandemic has highlighted the challenges the city has in cooperating internally to most resolve problems, even those so theoretically simple as trash and litter.

Acknowledgement.

Most of these issues outlined below are issues that would typically be addressed through City policy, ordinance or other action or at least during Phase II of the Charter review process. My reason for presenting them here is that they are issues that the City is grappling with today ineffectively. Your research on a new form of government for Portland will introduce you to other cities that are also faced with the same issues. It also seems that you can see how each location has solved or addressed these and other issues Portland faces and whether or not specific components of the city charter can help or hinder how they are dealt with.

Thank you so much for volunteering for this effort. When you succeed, it will help to save Portland. You are true heroes in my mind.

Cross Department Coordination

A new form of government alone is not a panacea. Portland government needs to attract competent people and retain them. That requires the government be supported by the people who fund it. We need a government that demonstrates competence in solving the problems its citizens identify as important. But there are many problems we currently face that cannot be solved with a structural change in City government alone.

Homelessness is an apt example. As I believe you know, it is a complex issue to solve, involving not just affordable housing opportunities, but mental health resources, criminal justice reform, drug addiction services, educational opportunities and job training and health services. Some of the resources will inevitably cross bureaucratic lines of the new government organization. Many will also be outside the city government's direct control, and will need federal, state, county and even Metro solutions. It seems that structural mechanisms should be in place within the new Charter to highlight these areas and facilitate needed coordination between departments as well as seeking regular input from residents of Portland.

Other examples would be programs to ensure racial equity or criminal justice reform. Perhaps there should be an annual review process established to identify these cross-department issues, scheduled public listening sessions and a process to ensure better or continued cooperation. This could be built into the Charter to ensure that they are not ignored. It would

Charter Commission Written Testimony for September 23, 2021 Meeting

be critical that any programs designed to address these issues include measurable goals that could be reported on annually.

Cross Government Coordination.

The coordination needed with other levels of government is more difficult, but also needs to be addressed or at least kept in mind. Again, with homelessness as an example. We are in the only state that has de-criminalized drugs. In doing so, we increased the funds for treating addiction, but decreased the ability to compel treatment. Multnomah County is prioritizing criminal justice reform, and reducing incarceration as a solution to criminal behavior. Low level property crimes are met with minimal fines, but no jail. As a result, these crimes are de-prioritized by Portland Police, resulting in minimal enforcement. Eventually, they are not even reported by victims. As a consequence, Portland has become the most attractive location in the Metro area for homeless camping, vehicle camping and doorway sleeping, since the other Metro counties and cities have policies that are relatively less tolerant. Looking at license plates on vehicles attached to street camping, it appears we are attractive to other states as well. We need a process to gather information about where the unsheltered are coming from that is Metro-wide and then participate in a Metro-wide plan to address the issue equitably. This is consistent with Metro's role in land use arbitration. We also need a comprehensive periodic census of the unsheltered population at annual points in time that includes not just where the camps are, but the characteristics of the people within the camps, so we know some of the obstacles these people have which are preventing them from being housed. How do we fix a problem without having good data on the causes?

Public Employee Unions.

Unions and emergency powers are also something I hope the Charter Commission will keep in mind as it looks at alternative forms of government organization. Public employee unions have a legitimate role, but they are unique in that the people they serve are funded by the public they serve, and the public's willingness to fund government service is directly related to its perception of the quality of that service. During periods of significant emergency, such as the Pandemic and the extended Direct-Action protests, it may be necessary for unionized workers to do things outside of their negotiated responsibilities to keep the public safe. It seems that there should be some mechanism to re-open contacts and negotiate public service protocols and reasonable compensation in the event the city or the State declare a state of emergency. It would also seem reasonable (I am no attorney, so it may not be possible) to require that the City insist upon certain provisions when negotiating contracts with unions representing City employees, requiring cooperation between members of the various unions around safety and livability issues especially. I am constantly frustrated when, say a Park or PBOT employee says that reporting graffiti on PDX Reporter is not his job when they are in the perfect place to see and report the issue. This is the kind of thing that drives the general public crazy and gives government a bad reputation.

Charter Commission Written Testimony for September 23, 2021 Meeting

Community Policing.

Community-focused policing has been a stated priority for the city and it is one of mine as well. I believe that currently a number of public employees involved in public safety live outside City boundaries. It would be preferable if we could find a way to incent these employees to reside within the city they serve, perhaps with wage stipends or other justifiable incentives to compensate for the higher cost of living within City boundaries. We need to find a way to ensure that public safety is imbedded in the community.

Public Speech and Graffiti.

Portland has a growing graffiti problem. It also has a much-deserved reputation for protests that turn violent. Part of this is because Portland is growing. Larger cities have more social conflicts and these are symptoms, to some degree. But that does not mean city governments are powerless to influence this. Providing a set of sticks and carrots to provide many safe and creative outlets for public speech and protests may help alleviate the problems, strengthen the communities and even beautify the city. Some of these may fall within the scope of the Charter Commission's work, either in Phase I or II. Some ideas:

- Providing “white boards” in every neighborhood for public expression. These can allow public visual and written discourse which can be periodically “recycled”. These would be more pronounced in the central city where protests occur most regularly.
- Provide designated places and routes for public protests which can be easily secured and surrounding areas kept safe. Provide “white boards” on these routes.
- Enforce tagging laws and divert offenders to public service cleaning graffiti. Assign them a long-term assignment to keep the area they were accused of tagging clean.
- Encourage social protest murals painted by activists and graffiti artists throughout the city and even along freeways, through a permit system and with commissions paid to approved artists. These murals are seldom tagged out of respect and painting over graffiti is expensive and futile.
- Ban the sale of hard to remove epoxy paints in the city except to those legitimate users with licenses to buy and make it a misdemeanor to distribute the paint to unauthorized users.

These actions may help reduce tagging until the city can deal with the extremes in social inequity that are the real causes. It won't stop the violence at protests, but it may help contain it and it seems consistent with the Keep Portland Weird culture.

Gun Violence.

It is no secret that Portland is all of a sudden plagued with gun violence and despite efforts to contain it, it is not abating. This is a nationwide problem in most big cities, apparently with the possible exception of Boston. Portland's ability to control the sale, possession and use of guns is largely controlled by Oregon law, but it would be helpful to know what other cities are doing

Charter Commission Written Testimony for September 23, 2021 Meeting

and how Boston is bucking the trend. It would also be worthwhile to see if there can be any way that charter revisions could give Portland greater flexibility to control gun possession.

Gentrification and Its Impact on Social and Racial Justice and Equality.

It would be beneficial to imbed a focus on Gentrification in the new Charter to ensure that the city is tracking the impact of re-development, which is necessary for many reasons, on housing affordability, Community cohesion and racial and social equity as lower income communities are displaced. This is so that the impacts can be fairly mitigated. It may also help to determine how to draw the districts of the city to ensure that lower-income areas receive fair and equitable representation in the new City Council.

Climate Change.

What can be imbedded within the new Charter that will focus virtually every policy decision the City make on the actions effect on the climate? It will necessitate that all of us to change how we live, get around, work and recreate. Given our population, we will have to live in denser, smaller housing with smaller footprints and more energy efficient spaces. We will need to walk, bike, scoot or take public transit to get around. We will need more and varied public spaces to recreate, meet and converse. And all of these will need to be secure. Change is hard, and people will resist. Older housing stock will need to be replaced with newer, upending neighborhoods. Public protests will increase. We need a Charter that allows the city to navigate efficiently and fairly through these changes.

I have just given 20 volunteers a number of new balls to juggle in an already daunting effort, but I believe that now is the time to consider these possibilities. By floating these issues, I am simultaneously volunteering to help, at your direction, do legwork.

Richard Perkins

richardperkinspdx@gmail.com

503 313-4594