

**Charter Commission
City Council Elections Subcommittee
November 4, 6:00 p.m.
Minutes**

Attendance

Subcommittee Members					
Name	Present	Absent	Name	Present	Absent
Anthony Castaneda	X		Raahi Reddy	X	
Becca Uherbelau	X		Robin Ye	X	
Bryan Williams Lewis	X		Salomé Chimuku	X	
Candace Avalos	X		Vadim Mozyrsky	X	
Debbie Kitchin	X		Yasmin Ibarra	X	
Debra Porta	X				

Staff Present	
Julia Meier	Sofia Alvarez-Castro

Welcome + Committee Business

Sofia welcomes the group and provided housekeeping information about the meeting.

Co-Chairs Ye welcomed the group and gave some opening remarks. The group approved the October 13th meeting minutes. Co -Chairs Ibarra took a minute to review the agenda for the evening. Co-Chairs Ibarra reminded the group of the timeline and highlighted key dates through July 2022.

Co-Chair Ye reminded folks of the desired outcomes for the City Council Elections subcommittee:

- More voices being heard in elections
- Councilors who are easy to reach
- Councilors who look like the community they represent
- Councilors who understand your community needs
- Councilors who answer to the people
- Councilors who safeguard democracy

Work Group Presentations & Discussion

Co-Chair Ye introduced the next agenda item and shared the order folks would be presenting in. As each workgroup shared a slide show presentation to accompany their findings. The following summarized the groups thoughts:

Multi-member districts: Anthony, Becca, Bryan, Debbie

The following work group focused on researching 1) How many districts should be draw in the City? And 2) How many city Council members per multi-member district? The group walk through a variety of Portland census maps by demographics and shared their analysis that helped informed their findings. The group walked through their recommendations, intersections, considerations, and arguments against. The group recommended:

- How many districts should be draw in the City? At least 3 multimember districts
- How many city council members per multi-member district? At least 4 members per district

Council size: Debra and Yasmin

The work group focused on 1) council size and 2) comparable cities to Portland. The group walked through constituency size, comparable cities, and identified further areas for consideration.

Multi-member districts: Melanie

This workgroup looked at the same questions of the first multi-member district. The workgroup walked through maps of Portland and through their proposed solution.

- How many districts should be draw in the City? 4
- How many city council members per multi-member district? 3

Timing of elections: Raahi and Robin

The group looked at 1) timing of elections and 2) should city council be elected all at once? The workgroup walked through their recommendations and analysis. The group recommended the following:

- Timing of elections? November General Elections on presidential Years (e.g. 2024, 2028, etc).
- Should all city council be elected at once? Yes, all city council and mayor should be elected at once.

Form of voting: Bryan, Candace, Salome, Vadim

The workgroup looked at Ranked Choice Voting versus STAR voting. The workgroup walked through the differences of the two voting options and their analysis. The workgroup walked through their rational pro and cons against STAR voting and Ranked Choice Voting.

The group discussed the different workgroups presentations and identify areas of agreement and areas for further research.

Next Steps

Co-chair Ye reminded folks about the next City Council Elections subcommittee meeting on 12/2/2021. Commissioner Ye then walked through the homework for next month, and broke into two groups for next months homework: Form of Voting & Councils Size and Constituency

Meeting adjourned, 8:00 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted,
Sofia Alvarez-Castro, Charter Commission Engagement & Communications Coordinator

Question & Answer

Note: The following answer below does not denote full Charter Commission and/or subcommittee agreement.

Jan Carpenter 06:20 PM

For later: Terry Harris outlined problems with multi-member districts, based on his experience in Baltimore. What do you think of his ideas?

Robin Ye 06:51 PM

I read Terry's public comment and I spent a decent amount of time on the web to try to find more information about the exact system prior to 2002 that existed. Would be great if Terry could help us locate those direct primary documents about what the system was for further consideration. I will say that it could both be true that it didn't work for Baltimore and that it doesn't mean multimember districts wouldn't be a good solution for Portland

Sean Sweat 06:33 PM

Multi-member districts isn't something I'm familiar with. What mechanism allows/How do they enable representation for historically marginalized groups? Wouldn't the majority in the district continue to elect each of the members in the district, similar to how our commissioners are elected at the citywide level today? (Apologies if this was covered and I missed it.)

Salome Chimuku 06:40 PM

There are many different structures and mechanisms that can shape outcome. the idea of having position 1, 2, 3, and 4. Or selecting the highest 4 votes. There is also voting for pairs. This is why depending on the way we vote can deeply impact this.

Terry Harris 06:33 PM

Why wouldn't this provide an advantage to partisan politics? Aren't political parties an organized minority that would get almost automatic representation?

Robin Ye 07:11 PM

Professor Latner had a good take on this in our September full commission meeting that I resonated with -- political organization is a part of democracy, political parties are a type of political organization, for sure, but there are many others that would have a more fighting chance to elect candidates of choice. They could organize to get representation, but with more proportional representation system they couldn't simply dominate the representation by repeatedly winning the same majority winner-take-all. I don't think the goal is to suppress organization (that's Democracy) it's about undue influence and avoiding systems that could lead to outright domination. That's my personal take

Terry Harris 06:34 PM

Doesn't the size of the district dilute the clear desire for geographic representation? Why not 12 districts?

Robin Ye 06:53 PM

I don't quite agree that creating some geographic districts dilutes the desire to have some districts (compared to not having any now). I think we approached the question as not just "Districts? Good or bad?" but if so, how many and why and under which principles.

Anonymous Attendee 06:38 PM

PR doesn't ensure racial diversity because people of color don't vote as a block, and because many people support candidates of color who may not be POC.

PR methods under consideration ensure ideological diversity, like BLM v AllLivesMatter, etc. 4 people elected in 3 multi-member districts would make it so that POC would be unable to vote out a racist elected official even if 75% of voters in their district agreed they were harmful.

On the other hand single-winner districts in Multnomah County elections have historically elected mostly women of color with full accountability for voters to be able to get rid of someone who is problematic.

Were any studies done to compare ideological diversity on the issues across PDX neighborhoods?

Robin Ye 07:19 PM

There are few guarantees in politics, nor permanent coalitions I don't think.

To clarify your first point I don't want to confuse having POC council members with the idea that communities of color electing candidates of their choice (who may or may not identify as POC themselves). People of color are not a monolith, correct, but there is racially polarized voting that exists and can be shown in trends, and historically the options on the ballot have been few and far between for candidates of choice for communities of color. Ideological diversity could definitely map to racial attitudes, it could map to many attitudes, it's hard to say.

To your example though, even if 75% of voters in their district agreed they were harmful, it also means that that unpopular ideology could never make a governing majority. Systems don't guarantee that you'll have your way but they can better reflect the will of the people not just in winners & losers, but in a representative body.

Thank for the thoughtful question.

Sean Sweat 06:41 PM

Thanks for comparing cities by the size of councils. Was a comparison of cities done by residents per councilor also? Would be interested to know how many major cities have more or fewer than 130k people per district/ward.

Robin Ye 06:49 PM

Yes, I believe that data was collected as well. You'll find that in the largest US cities you'll find numbers across all the spectrum! I think it demonstrated there wasn't some sort of magic ratio that was guiding the thinking. But one thing that is true is that Portland has increased its population greatly in the last 100 years and not any council members added in that 100 years

Terry Harris 06:53 PM

How do you answer the criticism that this just a gerrymandering of the rules, rather than districts?

Robin Ye 07:07 PM

I can't quite tell which topic section this question is addressed at (based on the timestamp)? "Gerrymander" is a specific term about district lines favoring partisans, so I'm not sure what you're asking

Sean Sweat 06:54 PM

Robin, to your excellent point that Portland's grown in the past 100 years but council hasn't grown at all during that time, is it possible for the charter to set the size of council to change with the city's growth rather than fixing it to a set # of seats? (to avoid finding ourselves in this same position in another 100 years)

Yasmin Ibarra 06:58 PM

Hi Sean! We have seen that other charter commissions across the country have embedded that language into the charter and I think that's something we can look into as we continue this research

STAR Voting team@equal.vote 07:24 PM

Correction: STAR has been used in the Democratic Party and Independent Party, not Eugene and Lane yet. Those are current campaigns.

Salome Chimuku 07:25 PM

thanks!

PATA PDX 07:27 PM

Would you consider multi-member districts WITHOUT proportional representation?

Sean Sweat 07:12 PM

Something I like about STAR is that it allows people to score two candidates the same, which allows people to vote AND express "no preference". In our current system, I know people who will truly have no preference on a ballot question, but still check a box b/c they feel that they "have to" out of duty -- which can lead to undemocratically random results.

Terry Harris 07:15 PM

Why WOULDN'T a campaign say "rate me a 5" and everyone else a zero?

Jan Carpenter 07:16 PM

Is proportional representation also a system of voting? How does it compare?

Annie Kallen (she/her) 07:19 PM

Why do you believe that anonymous literature would be more effective in STAR than RCV? (PS-- RCV fails the Condorcet criterion (head-to-head comparison) more often than STAR does).

STAR Voting team@equal.vote 07:21 PM

There are dozens of electoral criteria, and many (like consensus winner v majority winners, or later no harm v favorite betrayal) are mutually exclusive. This is why election science looks at the likelihood of good outcomes and issues, not just edge cases.

Can someone explain how voting for your favorite in RCV can backfire, or how a majority of RCV elections don't get a majority of voters, just majority of remaining ballots?

Edit. Thank you for going into this!

STAR Voting team@equal.vote 07:23 PM

Sorry this is an A not a Q: http://starvoting.us/case_studies

Terry Harris 07:23 PM

In a multi-member district with proportional voting, the upside is that you are more likely to get a "candidate of choice" to represent you in your district. But isn't it also true that EVERYONE will get a representative that is NOT your candidate of choice?

Sean Sweat 07:32 PM

Regarding districts and the potential for gerrymandering: Is it being considered to require redistricting to be executed by an objective algorithm rather than a political process? (e.g. "shortest line" or "compactness")

Also, when redistricting, is the intent to use total population (i.e. including children who can't vote) or to use VAP?

Anonymous Attendee 07:37 PM

For the commissioners, you should poll yourselves: how many members should Portland's City Council have? <https://star.vote/r2nx353a/>

Terry Harris 07:39 PM

Which is most important: councilmembers per citizen, or citizens per councilmember? These are different numbers in a multi-member district...

Meeting Chat

18:00:41 From Salome Chimuku to Hosts and panelists:



18:01:48 From Bryan William Lewis to Hosts and panelists:

Hello everybody :)

18:02:00 From Becca Uherbelau to Hosts and panelists:

Hello!

18:02:11 From Debbie Kitchin to Everyone:

Good evening!

18:02:19 From Bryan William Lewis to sofia Alvarez-Castro(Direct Message):

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1aVkeEGbXAAULX7pzCjkbBLtIplug5yzQ/edit?usp=sharing&oid=100612739265282614293&rtpof=true&sd=true>

18:02:35 From Bryan William Lewis to sofia Alvarez-Castro(Direct Message):

this is the slides for the form of voting group

18:05:13 From Debra Porta to Hosts and panelists:



18:05:35 From Bryan William Lewis to Hosts and panelists:

thumbs up

18:05:42 From Salome Chimuku to Hosts and panelists:



18:07:09 From Debra Porta to Hosts and panelists:

The public's comments and expertise has been super helpful

18:08:24 From Bryan William Lewis to Everyone:

^1+

18:15:17 From Candace Avalos to Everyone:



18:15:25 From Debra Porta to Hosts and panelists:

I loved those classes...lol

18:25:35 From Robin Ye to Everyone:

Becca, Anthony, Bryan, Robin, Debra, Debbie, Yasmin, us 7 were in this group!

18:40:40 From Becca Uherbelau to sofia Alvarez-Castro(Direct Message):

Will all the questions be saved and can they be shared back to this group and the commission as part of public testimony?

18:41:52 From Salome Chimuku to Hosts and panelists:



18:43:32 From sofia Alvarez-Castro to Becca Uherbelau(Direct Message):

Yes to both!

18:43:54 From Becca Uherbelau to sofia Alvarez-Castro(Direct Message):

Awesome. Thanks!

18:44:11 From sofia Alvarez-Castro to Becca Uherbelau(Direct Message):

yes we got really good question on Tuesday too

18:46:18 From Candace Avalos to Everyone:

you can all zoom in

18:46:21 From Candace Avalos to Everyone:

click view options, zoom

18:46:41 From Robin Ye to Everyone:

omg thank u

18:47:10 From Robin Ye to Everyone:

hopefully I'm thte only one who didn't realize zoom has our back

18:48:01 From Salome Chimuku to Hosts and panelists:



18:49:28 From Debra Porta to Hosts and panelists:

To me this isn't so much about differing among the commission-all of this so far is a collection of what we have found so far.

18:54:06 From Candace Avalos to Everyone:



18:54:56 From Candace Avalos to Everyone:

I love the sound of your voiiiiiccee

19:02:23 From Candace Avalos to Everyone:

mayor and positions 1 and 4 are on pres years

19:04:01 From Candace Avalos to Everyone:

GO TEAM! ☆

19:20:49 From Candace Avalos to Everyone:

At the end of the day, it's politics. People will try to manipulate the system no matter what voting system we have 🙄

19:21:13 From Debra Porta to Hosts and panelists:

True that

19:22:03 From Candace Avalos to Everyone:

Thanks Comm Chimuku for presenting for our team!

19:25:23 From Becca Uherbelau to Everyone:

Thank you, Comm Avalos for the resources!

19:26:41 From Candace Avalos to Everyone:



19:27:36 From Salome Chimuku to Hosts and panelists:



19:30:05 From Candace Avalos to Everyone:

Yeah I agree that it's less a concerning thing at the local level - def get what you mean on the fed level tho.

19:30:46 From Debra Porta to Hosts and panelists:

If we don't have citywide elections, the labor needed to campaign would be different-it isn't a full time job

19:31:27 From Salome Chimuku to Hosts and panelists:

I would also say the vast difference of amount of voters between off years and presidential is a bigger concern of mine.

19:31:43 From Debra Porta to Hosts and panelists:

Candidates not already in office also have to campaign while still working their "day" jobs

19:31:51 From Candace Avalos to Everyone:

I like that point Robin. Also - if everyone gets voted out because they're all terrible....that's probably a good thing! But it's highly unlikely to happen bc incumbency

19:31:55 From Debra Porta to Hosts and panelists:

Exactly Comm Chimuku

19:32:20 From Debra Porta to Hosts and panelists:

Recalls are the safety valve

19:32:55 From Salome Chimuku to Hosts and panelists:

I mean you gotta be messing up pretty bad to get recalled....

19:33:00 From Salome Chimuku to Hosts and panelists:

so I mean 🤔

19:33:43 From Debra Porta to Hosts and panelists:

I also wonder if the two year cycle has trained us to not understand how long actual work and change can take-we get impatient without ever actually getting involved

19:35:09 From Debra Porta to Hosts and panelists:

I don't know if I have a ceiling-I am more interested in what's most effective

19:37:44 From Robin Ye to Everyone:

I wouldn't get too stuck on 12

19:38:42 From Candace Avalos to Everyone:

This is down the line, but I'm want to get budget analysis on the increase in commissioners and to have a discussion about our values around how much those commissioners get paid.

19:39:15 From Debra Porta to Hosts and panelists:

Absolutely-that is a topic that came up for Yasmin and I

19:40:31 From Melanie Billings-Yun to Everyone:

Can It would also have to consider the size of each councilor's staff

19:40:52 From Robin Ye to Everyone:

all these things are dynamic

19:41:11 From Salome Chimuku to Everyone:

yes cause budgeting is dynamic

19:41:17 From Robin Ye to Everyone:

bingo

19:42:07 From Salome Chimuku to Everyone:

it's like we are changing big fundamental things that haven't been done yet....

19:42:16 From Debra Porta to Hosts and panelists:

I am not looking to base the # of councilors (or proposing an answer right now) on the current budgeting structure

19:42:26 From Robin Ye to Everyone:

we should invest in our government

19:42:35 From Robin Ye to Everyone:

we can't reform something and then not give the resources to enact change

19:42:38 From Debra Porta to Hosts and panelists:

Totally Comm. Chimuku

19:43:33 From Salome Chimuku to Everyone:

I'm with you comm Porta

19:43:49 From Melanie Billings-Yun to Everyone:

Can I be on a team?

19:44:06 From Salome Chimuku to Everyone:

nah I'm good

19:44:36 From Salome Chimuku to Everyone:



19:45:29 From Robin Ye to Everyone:

Proposal of 2 buckets: Form of Voting & COuncils Size and Constituency

19:45:54 From Debra Porta to Hosts and panelists:

That works for me Comm. Ye

19:47:09 From Anthony Castaneda to Hosts and panelists:

ouch

19:47:20 From Salome Chimuku to Everyone:

hahahaha

19:47:36 From Candace Avalos to Everyone:

who's putting together the presentation for dec 13th? are the chairs just gonna do that?

19:48:39 From Salome Chimuku to Everyone:

hmmm I think those containers are good. Gives folks a chance to select an area they weren't involved in.

19:48:59 From Salome Chimuku to Everyone:

council size and constituency

19:49:03 From Debra Porta to Hosts and panelists:

Voting/Council

19:49:06 From Candace Avalos to Everyone:

I'll stay with form of voting

19:49:10 From Debbie Kitchin (she/her) to Everyone:

Council size and constituency

19:49:43 From Candace Avalos to Everyone:

what's the quorum size again?

19:49:49 From Melanie Billings-Yun to Everyone:

I want to stay with districting

19:49:57 From Vadim Mozyrsky to Hosts and panelists:

council size

19:50:10 From Anthony Castaneda to Hosts and panelists:

Council size/const.

19:50:48 From Salome Chimuku to Everyone:

quorum is 6 each

19:51:03 From Debra Porta to Hosts and panelists:

Yayyy---I am not alone! 😊

19:53:45 From Candace Avalos to Everyone:

Raahi wants to join council size btw

19:53:48 From Candace Avalos to Everyone:

(she texted me)

19:54:16 From Robin Ye to Everyone:

if that's the case, Bryan I'm going to unfortunately ask you to not be in Council Size

19:54:35 From Debra Porta to Hosts and panelists:

That's helpful, thank you

19:55:21 From Candace Avalos to Everyone:

Imao I'm just messin with y'all xoxo

19:55:27 From Salome Chimuku to Everyone:

so more research and try to gain more insight

19:55:33 From sofia Alvarez-Castro to Hosts and panelists:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81620491272?pwd=MXJrNjAyWXZ3b2k1cGxoRkNFSlhtQT09>

Meeting ID: 816 2049 1272

Passcode: 900185

19:55:33 From Salome Chimuku to Everyone:

got it

19:55:36 From Candace Avalos to Everyone:

dope, cool, thanks

19:55:46 From sofia Alvarez-Castro to Hosts and panelists:

When done please click on that zoom link above