

The Oregonian

Editorials

Founded Dec. 4, 1850. Established as a daily Feb. 4, 1861. The Sunday Oregonian established Dec. 4, 1861. Published daily except on Sundays and holidays. Printed and published by the Oregonian Publishing Co., Oregonian Bldg., 1320 S.W. Broadway, Portland, Ore. 97201.

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WEDNESDAY, MAY 25, 1983

County charter ideas abound

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Such a structure would be a fundamental change from the present five-member full-time commission, complete with staff, that serves as the county's legislative body while the executive runs the administration.

After looking at the change, the committee indeed might reject it. Or it might want to replace five full-timers with nine part-timers. The great value of a citizens' charter review process is open-minded exploration of all sorts of different ways of conducting the county's business.

Clearly the committee will want to examine the radical charter changes made by initiative in 1982 and later reaffirmed in a mail election whose purpose was to repeal them.

The charter amendments added four elected officials: a district court clerk with nothing to do because of state assumption of court responsibilities, a sheriff, an assessor and a county clerk. Should all of them be retained? Should any of them be retained? While it can be argued that these positions should be filled by professionals rather than politicians, the committee might conclude that the people nonetheless feel more comfortable electing their sheriff, for instance, while

filling the others by appointment.

The initiative also imposed a two-term limit on elective service, banned lobbying by the county and mandated that officials' salaries must be set by vote, all of which should come under committee scrutiny.

Deserving re-examination are charter provisions that came from the last review. Parties were removed from county politics when the offices were made non-partisan. A runoff was required when more than two candidates filed for a position, even if one received a substantial majority in the primary election.

The committee also ought to examine filling vacancies by special election. It should ponder whether the county should have authority to issue revenue bonds without going to a vote. Establishing standards for providing services to cities or service districts through contract is worthy of attention.

Additionally, the review committee cannot ignore the issue of urban subsidy for unincorporated areas. It should look into limiting county services to those that have countywide application.

All county residents should have the opportunity to submit their ideas to a fair hearing. That is the purpose of charter review.

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PECK Charter Review Press

Review unit meets

The Multnomah County Charter Review Committee met for the first time Wednesday night, and elected a Southeast Portland clergyman as chairman.

It also conferred voting rights on the single member representing the west side, subject to legal approval.

The Rev. Frank Stearns, pastor of Sunnyside Methodist Church, was elected chairman and Carol Kirchner, an administrative consultant, vice chairwoman.

The committee will spend the next year studying recommendations to improve the county charter. It will then draft its own revisions, which will appear on the November 1984, general ballot as an initiative measure.

The study was written into the charter in 1977.

A vote for the west side representative was unanimously approved on grounds of fairness, on a motion Florence Bancroft, representing Northeast Portland.

Because of an accident of legislative redistricting, most county territory west of the Willamette River doesn't qualify for a place on the committee under the charter.

But the committee agreed to raise observer Leanne MacColl to the a full member.

Her district contains the most concentrated population and the highest-valued industrial and commercial property in the county.

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5-20-83

Panel plans 2 meetings on charter

The Multnomah County Charter Review Committee will begin its study of ways to improve the county charter with a social gathering Sunday and a formal organizational meeting Thursday.

Sunday's meeting will be at 12:30 p.m. at the home of committee member Carol Kirchner, 4598A S.W. Caldew St. It was described in a legal announcement in Thursday editions of The Oregonian as a social gathering for the 13 members and their families, to which the public was invited.

A spokesman for County Executive Dennis Buchanan said his office tried to discourage a meeting in a private home. Press aide Dennis O'Meara said Buchanan felt a meeting in a public place would have been more appropriate to the spirit of the project.

Thursday's meeting will be at 7 p.m. in Room A on the second floor of The Portland Building, 1120 S.W. Fifth Ave. The committee plans to elect officers and begin a work plan at that session.

Review by an independent citizens committee was a feature of home-rule charter amendments approved voters in 1977.

The 13 committee members were nominated by Multnomah County state legislators, two to a Senate district.

By a fluke of 1981 legislative redistricting, the county's most densely populated segment — downtown, the West Hills and Northwest Portland — will not have a vote on the committee.

Only state Senate districts with a majority of population in Multnomah County will be represented. The west-side neighborhoods are in Senate District 10, whose new boundaries gave it a slight majority in Washington County.

Under a compromise designed by state legislators and county officials, longtime civic activist Leeanne MacColl will serve as an unofficial member from the west side.

The committee will study county operations and conduct public hearings to hear suggestions for improvement.

Its proposals will be reported to the Board of Commissioners in August 1984, then go to the public as ballot measures in the November 1984 general election.

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County charter panel meeting changed

The Multnomah County Charter Review Committee's first formal meeting will be held Wednesday instead of Thursday, according to Dana Peck, an aide to County Executive Dennis Buchanan.

The group will meet in the Portland

Building at 7 p.m.

The 13-member committee will spend a year looking for ways to improve the county charter, and its recommendations will appear on the November 1984 general ballot as initiative proposals.

Oregonian 5-25-82

Oregonian

Charter Review Committee
2-2-2/June 17, 1983

Peck said the committee anticipates holding another meeting in the near future to hear from Multnomah County elected officials and then will follow with public hearings, possibly as frequent as every other week, at a variety of locations throughout the county.

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