



Multnomah County Charter Review Committee

Approaches to Decision Making

Approach	Level of Agreement for Decision Making	Considerations
Consensus	Every member of the group (present) can agree to live with a proposed decision	<p>Consensus requires that all members have a chance to adequately share their thoughts and concerns about a potential decision so that everyone is (and feels) heard. Every group member must agree to support a decision in order to put it into effect, which means that any concerns raised by any individual about a potential decision need to be addressed before it can be adopted by the group. This fosters discussion and compromise to reach a decision that everyone can live with, even if it is not their first choice. Consensus gives protection to minority voices, which in many groups can align with voices from communities often marginalized in decision-making processes. Reaching consensus is often a time consuming process. If consensus cannot be reached, it can be frustrating for group members to not be able to advance a decision that has support from a large portion of the group.</p> <p>*Members of this MCCRC will need to give a “yes” or a “no” vote for the record on all decisions. That can be registered by everyone either saying “yes” or “no”, or the committee can use a “range of consensus”: accompanying a “yes” or “no” vote with a number 1 through 5 to indicate how strongly they support or oppose the proposed solution. The committee would pre-establish a definition for each number from “strongly oppose” to “strongly support.”</p>
Modified Consensus	Every member of the group (present) can agree to live with the proposed decision, but the group puts a time limit on discussion around a decision	Modified consensus is foundationally the same as “Consensus”, except that at the start of discussion on a topic, the group agrees to set a reasonable time limit on discussion. If consensus is not reached after this first round of discussion, the group can allocate time for an additional round. If consensus is not reached in the time limit, the group moves on to other topics. Time limits encourage more succinct communication. They also help the group continue to move forward on other decisions rather than getting stalled on a single decision if consensus cannot be reached- or at least cannot be reached in a reasonable amount of time.



Office of Community Involvement



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<p>Aiming for Consensus with a voting threshold</p>	<p>Establishes a threshold to constitute a recommendation if consensus cannot be reached.</p>	<p>This approach recognizes that consensus is the goal (where every member can live with the outcome), but that might not always be possible. The group can set a threshold for voting if consensus is not reached. This might include 2/3 or ¾ majority of voting members present, or full consensus minus 1 or 2 votes. This increases the ability to approve a decision if there is a large majority of members in support of it. Using this approach, all concerns will be heard in the consensus building process and there will still be incentives to compromise on most concerns to get many people on board, but not all of them may end up addressed by the solution. This may make it easier for the group to adopt decisions. It offers some, but not complete, protection for concerns held by people in the voting minority, which in many groups can align with voices from communities often marginalized in decision-making processes.</p> <p>Modified consensus can be used with this threshold.</p>
<p>Unanimous Consent</p>	<p>Every member of the group (present) enthusiastically approves a solution</p>	<p>Unanimous consent requires that every decision made has enthusiastic support from every group member. It is very challenging to reach, especially when decisions are complex and there are multiple good solutions available. Reaching unanimous consent in these situations is often very time consuming and can leave group members frustrated at the lack of decisions made, especially when there is broad support for a decision, but unanimous consent cannot be reached.</p>
<p>Majority Rule</p>	<p>50% +1 (either of the whole committee or of the number of members present) determines what decision is made</p>	<p>The committee can choose whether to engage in a consensus building process or not when a simple majority is the voting threshold. Majority rule can undermine working toward compromise and/or consensus if members of the group aren't committed (or held accountable to) seeking a solution that is acceptable to all (or almost all) members. It can make discussion more adversarial when members view themselves as two competing sides rather than being required to collaborate on resolving concerns. Having a lower decision-making threshold can allow a group to approve a solution more quickly since fewer people are required to find it acceptable. It can also lead to ignoring or overriding voices in the minority, which can disproportionately impact voices from communities that are often marginalized in decision-making processes.</p>