

Multnomah County Charter Review Committee Final Report

Presented on August 2, 2022



Office of Community Involvement



Charter Review Committee Background

Multnomah County Home Rule Charter Requires:

- Every 6 years a Charter Review Committee (MCCRC) will be convened to make a comprehensive study of the Charter
- If it chooses, the Committee can submit proposed Charter amendments
- At its conclusion, the Charter Review Committee will present a report of its work to the people and to the Board of Commissioners
- The Board of Commissioners will refer recommended amendments to the ballot
- On November 8, 2022, Multnomah County voters will ultimately determine which amendments are adopted in the Charter

Committee Staffing

- Due to 2016 Charter amendment, 2021-22 was the first Charter Review Committee convened by the Office of Community Involvement (OCI)
- OCI staff: Kali Odell (Charter Review Committee Program Coordinator); Dani Bernstein (Director of OCI)
- County Attorney staff: Katherine Thomas (Assistant County Attorney)
- JLA Public Involvement contracted to facilitate general Charter Review Committee meetings
- Espousal Strategies contracted to facilitate community engagement (May – August 2022)

2021-22 Charter Review Committee Members



J'reyesha
Brannon

Ana del
Rocío
(Tri-Chair)

Timur
Ender

Samantha
Gladu

Marc
Gonzales
(Tri-Chair)

Maja
Harris

Annie
Kallen

Nina
Khanjan



Danica
Leung

Theresa
Mai
(Tri-Chair)

Georgina
Miltnerberger

Ana
González
Muñoz

Jude
Perez

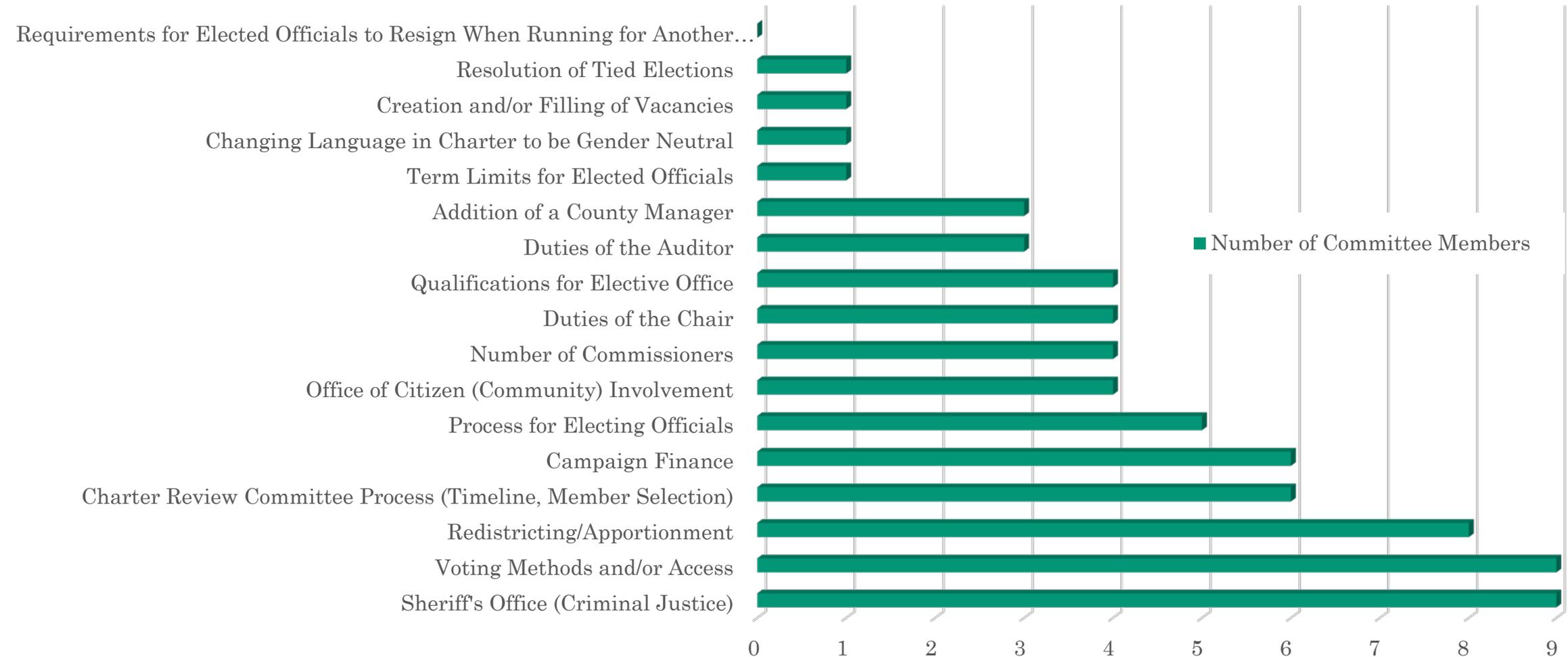
Donovan
Scribes

Salma
Sheik

Meikelo
Cabbage
(Resigned)

Charter Review Committee Values

Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Healing and justice are central to Multnomah County's government• Justice extends to all people, and especially people who have been historically marginalized.• Leading with race is important because of the inequities embedded in governance, with the understanding that it will help create an intersectional approach to this work.
Inclusive Democracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Multnomah County's government depends on active participation and representation of the communities people live in.• People can access and participate in government using their preferred language.• Outreach is a key value of democracy:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Decisions are informed by culturally-specific research and outreach.◦ Relationships should be an authentic, long lasting partnership; they should not be transactional in nature.
Access & Belonging	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• People know how to access their leaders and decision-makers.• People feel that they (and their communities) are a part of decision-making.• Government reflects the communities it represents.
Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• People understand how their county government works.• People are able to be heard by their government, and influence decision-making.• Communication with the public by the government is clear, and communities are sought out for their input.
Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Government is able to change and adapt to address historic and persistent problems.• Change is embraced as a way to better serve communities.



MCCRC Members' Initial Interests in Potential Charter Review Topics (December 15, 2021)

Based on responses from 14 committee members. Members could choose to prioritize up to 5 topic areas.

Overview of Work Process & Timeline

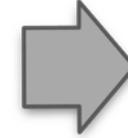
Sept. 28 2021-
Jan. 19, 2022

- MCCRC meets 7 times
- Receive education and training
- Develop and approve bylaws and group agreements
- Establish four subcommittees:
 - Community Engagement
 - Government Accountability
 - Equitable Representation
 - Safety & Justice



Jan. 20, 2022 –
Jun. 3, 2022

- MCCRC meets 4 times
- Continues education and discussion
- April 20, 2022: take first vote to advance a Charter amendment concept (gender neutral language)
- Subcommittees each meet 8-9 times
- Identify and explore subcommittees' research priorities
- Agree on recommendations for MCCRC to consider
- Agree on recommendations for next Charter Review Committee



Jun. 4, 2022 –
Aug. 2, 2022

- MCCRC meets 4 times
- Discuss and vote on which recommendations to advance to voters as proposed Charter amendments
- August 2, 2022: presentation of findings and recommendations to the public and to the Board of Commissioners

Committee Work, Findings, and Recommendations

Overview of MCCRC Recommendations

- Make language in the County Charter gender neutral
- Change the Charter Review Committee's membership requirements and selection process. Extend the Charter review timeline, address committee's leadership structure, and add a public education and engagement process
- Establish ombudsperson function in the office of the Auditor
- Add language providing for the Auditor's timely, unrestricted access to information, records, and employees required to perform duties of Auditor. Add a requirement that the county include "right-to-audit" clauses in contracts and subcontracts
- Require members of the Board of Commissioners to inspect county jail facilities at least once a year with the participation of constituents
- Adopt ranked choice voting in county elections for county offices by 2026
- Requires the county to extend voting rights in county elections, including to noncitizens, to the furthest extend allowed by law

Government Accountability

Recommendations:

- Gender neutral Charter language
- Changes to Charter review
- Add ombudsperson function
- Auditor's access to information

Gender Neutral Charter Language

Recommendation Summary:

Adopt gender neutral language in the Charter

- MCCRC Values: Inclusive Democracy, Access & Belonging
- Preceded by Board of Commissioner's decision to make language in the County Code gender neutral

Changes to Charter Review Process

Recommendation Summary:

Change membership and selection requirements for Charter Review Committee members so that OCI administers the application and evaluation process, with four residents selected from each commissioner district. The Chair appoints committee members with the approval of the Board of Commissioners. OCI shall endeavor to produce a diverse pool of applicants and the Board shall endeavor to appoint a committee representative of the county's diverse communities. Committee members remain eligible to serve if they move between districts after appointment. OCI may fill vacancies.

- MCCRC Values: Inclusive Democracy, Access & Belonging, Transparency
- Initiated by public comment from OCI
- Committee intends for diversity to include geographic diversity, with representation for the smaller cities and rural areas in the County

Changes to Charter Review Process Continued

Recommendation Summary Continued:

Extend the Charter Review process timeline from up to 11 to up to 18 months and clarify that the committee chooses its own leadership structure.

OCI will work with the Charter Review Committee to include public education, outreach, and engagement in alignment with equity and inclusion values as part of the committee process.

- MCCRC Values: Inclusive Democracy, Access & Belonging, Transparency
- Initiated by public comment from OCI

Ombudsperson

Recommendation Summary:

Establish an ombudsperson within the Office of the Auditor that is guided by generally accepted standards for governmental ombudsmen serving the public. The ombudsperson will be readily available to the public as an impartial resource authorized to receive and investigate complaints and make related reports about administrative actions of the county with the goals of safeguarding the rights of the public.

- MCCRC Values: Justice, Transparency, Innovation
- Initiated by public comment from the Auditor
- Amendment includes restrictions on what the ombudsperson has authority to investigate

Auditor's Access to Information

Recommendation Summary:

The Auditor shall be provided with unrestricted, timely access to county employees, information, and records required to perform the duties of the office. All contracts with contractors and subcontractors will include a “right-to-audit” clause.

- MCCRC Values: Justice, Transparency, Innovation
- Initiated by public comment from the Auditor

Other Topics Researched & Suggestions for Future Charter Review

- Good Government Hotline
- Process for adjusting compensation for commissioners
- Addition of a County manager
- Enshrine existing position of Chief Operating Officer
- Structural changes to increase the Auditor's budgetary independence from the Chair

Safety & Justice

Recommendation:

- Require members of the Board of Commissioners to inspect county jail facilities at least once a year with the participation of constituents

Jail Inspections

Recommendation Summary:

To ensure transparency and oversight, each member of the Board of Commissioners shall conduct at least one inspection of county jails per calendar year in addition to inspections required by state law. Each member of the Board will be accompanied by at least one volunteer member of the public selected through an application process. Subject to reasonable measures to ensure safety and security, Board members conducting inspections with volunteers will have access to any part of the county jail being inspected, be able to conduct confidential interviews with the consent of those being interviewed, and be able to review records, and the volunteers will issue publicly available reports with findings and recommendations.

- MCCRC Values: Justice, Inclusive Democracy, Access & Belonging, Transparency
- Initiated by public comment and internal subcommittee interest in improving health conditions in jails

Other Topics Considered by the Safety & Justice Subcommittee

- Health in county jails
- Oversight board for the Sheriff's Office
- Budget allocation toward community investment programs (similar to Measure J in Los Angeles County)
- Removing the Sheriff's Office from its involvement in evictions processes
- Addressing the District Attorney's funding and staffing contract practices
- Addition of an elected county public defender

Suggestions for Future Charter Review

Addition of an elected county public defender

Research indicated this may result in:

- Stronger advocacy for public defense resources
- Higher salaries for public defenders
- Adding more public defenders to the pipeline for judgeships

Equitable Representation

Recommendations:

- Extend voting rights to the fullest extent allowed by law
- Adopt ranked choice voting

Extending Voting Rights

Recommendation Summary:

The county shall extend the right to vote, including but not limited to extending the right to vote to noncitizens, in county elections, to the fullest extent of the law.

- MCCRC Values: Democracy, Access & Belonging, Justice
- Initiated by internal subcommittee interest
- If passed by voters, the committee expects the county to explore legal options for extending the vote, including to noncitizens
- If there are not current legal pathways for extending the vote, the committee recommends that the county actively advocate for changing state and federal laws to allow for the extension of the vote, including to noncitizens

Instant Runoff Ranked Choice Voting

Recommendation Summary:

Multnomah County will use instant runoff ranked choice voting to elect county officers by 2026. Officers will be elected in the general election, except that vacancies will be filled at the next May or November election.

- MCCRC Values: Inclusive Democracy, Innovation
- Initiated by MCCRC and internal subcommittee interest
- The committee encourages the adoption of ranked choice voting earlier than 2026 if logistically possible

Other Topics Researched & Suggestions for Future Charter Review

- Increasing the size of the Board of County Commissioners
- Adopting proportional representation (and exploring district apportionment)
- Addressing the inequity of Commissioner District 2 being elected in the same cycle as the County Chair
- Campaign finance

Community Engagement

2021-22 Community Engagement Efforts

- Committee articulated a strong value of community engagement and public participation in its process
- 55 written public comments
- 26 verbal public comments
- County & OCI social media
- Committee listserv
- Contracted with Espousal Strategies in May
 - Community survey with 268 respondents
 - 4 affinity focus groups with a total of 52 participants

Suggestions for Future Charter Review

- Recommended amendment establishes OCI responsibility for leading public education and engagement process
 - Process should start early, with education before Charter review begins
 - May need additional staffing, either county staff or contract with a community partner
 - Should engage communities that have been historically underrepresented or excluded
- If the Charter Review Process amendment is not passed by voters, the committee strongly recommends the Board of Commissioners provide sufficient funding for public education and engagement and that OCI implement that process

Questions?