

Community Involvement and the Multnomah County Home Rule Charter: What is the historical context?

When voters supported the 1984 charter amendment on citizen involvement, they were not starting from scratch. The charter measure was preceded by years of work by community activists and county staff. A task force, a committee and a congress were funded by the county to address these issues. Their work influenced the development of the charter measure and their perspectives shed light on the system that was envisioned. The minutes of the Charter Review Committee and its Citizen Involvement Subcommittee show the development of the language that endures today. The story begins 46 years ago.

Community involvement in the 1970's

In December of 1972 the Board of County Commissioners passed Ordinance 64 that restructured county government, creating many of the departments that continue to this day. The modern era of community involvement in Multnomah County Government began with the passage of Section 7 of Ordinance 64 that provided: "Citizen advisory committees are hereby established for each department herein created, and the Board, and shall be constituted as provided by the county charter." Review of department budgets became one of the functions of these committees.

Two years later the county expanded community involvement by hiring four quadrant managers to "bring volunteers more effectively into the decision-making processes." Each manager was responsible for working with residents and neighborhood/community organizations in one quadrant of the county. In 1979, Commission Chair Don Clark presented his budget plans individually to the four Quadrant Advisory Boards before he presented an Executive Budget to the County Commissioners.

Community involvement at the county expanded. According to the Oregonian, in 1980, the county had 29 permanent boards, commissions and standing committees with 318 individuals attending meetings at least once a month. Reporter Kathy Durbin wrote: "Take Multnomah County's QUABs and CABs, add an EDAC and stir in a handful of ad hoc task forces. What do you get?" The answer was a "Task Force on Citizen Involvement" (TFCI) proposed by County Executive Don Clark to bring together members of those committees, with others from neighborhood and community groups in order to study and recommend improvements to the system.

The Task Force on Citizen Involvement

The 15-member task force was appointed in March 1980 and met weekly for six months. They circulated 400 questionnaires to members of boards and commissions, interviewed "20 persons with knowledge of and experience in citizen involvement" and sponsored four public hearings. They gathered information on other models of participation from Portland, San Diego and Birmingham. They produced a 21-page report (plus appendices) with a very specific plan for community involvement.

These are the key recommendations from their November 12, 1980 report:

Organizational Structure

The Task Force recommends a system that supports neighborhood associations, creates community area boards, and reaffirms department advisory boards by the passage of a county ordinance

Neighborhood Associations

Neighborhood associations will be the foundation of the program. Each will directly advise County officials on concerns within the neighborhood boundaries. Where no neighborhood association exists, the County will encourage citizens to form one. To be recognized by the County the neighborhood association must meet basic requirements.

Community Area Boards

To advise the County on matters of interest to larger communities, Multnomah County will provide funds to support seven Community Area Boards: five in the Portland area, one in mid-county and one to include Gresham, Troutdale, Wood Village, and East County. Membership on these boards will include 50 percent representation from neighborhoods and 50 percent appointed at-large. These boards will report to the County Executive and Board of County Commissioners semi-annually.

Central Office

One County-wide coordinator with a secretary will negotiate and administer contracts with community based non-profit corporations to maintain the citizen participation system, develop technical and training programs, and provide a link between the neighborhoods and County government.

Contract for Services

Multnomah County will establish a contract for services with a community-based non-profit corporation in each of the seven areas to:

- Establish and maintain an area office,
- Establish and provide staff to a community area Board, and
- Provide assistance regarding County concerns to neighborhood associations and maintain communications between the County and its citizens, supplementing the County's statutory obligations.

Department Advisory Boards

Multnomah County will establish and maintain Department Advisory Boards (DABS) to advise the department directors on issues of budget, policy and operations.....

The report goes on to describe a budget with a special allocation for unincorporated areas and a transition fund. The full cost of the program exceeded \$200,000

Multnomah County was in a budget crisis and the program was not implemented. In late November of 1980, facing budget cuts, the Board cut two of the four quadrant coordinators and planned to reassign the other two.

The Ad Hoc Committee on Citizen Involvement

Late in 1981, Paul Thalhofer (who had served on the Task Force) and Maggie Pendleton (from the staff of County Executive Don Clark) formed the Ad Hoc Committee on Citizen Involvement. Acknowledging the County's deep budget problems they proposed a "modest but potentially effective plan". They asked for \$64,000 on a one-time-only basis for one Program

Development Specialist and a half time Community Information Assistant who would be part of the county's Intergovernmental Relations Department.

They listed four major functions:

1. Organize community groups and assist existing citizen organizations throughout the County, including but not limited to the nine community groups in East County originally formed as Community Planning Groups.
2. Provide technical assistance to develop other financial support for program.
3. Act as liaison with other organizations and with departments, the Executive, and Board of County Commissioners offices.
4. Prepare and conduct workshops and informational meetings on issues of interest to the community and the County.

They called for the creation of a "Program Evaluation Committee" that would:

1. Suggest program direction, conduct periodic evaluations to identify strengths and weaknesses in the program;
2. Identify methods for broad public input in program evaluation.
3. Develop the priorities of the annual citizen involvement work program;
4. Direct the development of the program budget in accordance with work program priorities

They recommended a group of at least 20 to include:

- 10 representatives of unincorporated area community groups
- 5 representatives of city neighborhood associations
- 5 members at large

Their efforts were successful. The Board of County Commissioners appropriated \$60,000 and on September 2nd 1982, they passed Ordinance 338 creating the Citizen Involvement Steering Committee. It was to "develop, monitor and evaluate the County's Citizen Involvement program" and "be functionally attached the first year to the Department of Intergovernmental Affairs."

It was to be 25 people with
12 representatives of community planning groups in the unincorporated area
5 representative of City of Portland neighborhood associations
5 representatives of East County Cities
3 members at large.

It was to select its own chairperson and meet at least once every two months.

120 people applied for the new position of "Coordinator of Neighborhood Organizations." A group of citizens interviewed finalists and Department of Intergovernmental Relations Director Tanya Collier made the final selection; choosing Jean Gordon, former crime prevention coordinator for the City of Portland.

The Citizen Involvement Steering Committee (1982-83)

At their first meeting in October 1982, the Committee failed to organize because of a tie vote for Chair. Paul Thalhofer and Bob Nelson each received 6 votes. Thalhofer was later elected.

The Committee had a hard time agreeing on its purpose. While the Committee had countywide representation, half of the seats were reserved for the mid-County neighborhoods that were facing annexation.

In addition to considering the future of mid-County, the Committee opposed the siting of a landfill on the Wildwood site in Northwest Multnomah County, and supported the Blue Lake residents who were concerned that City of Portland wells would take their water.

Sustaining participation in the Committee was a problem. Although the Committee was to have 25 members, attendance was well below that. The twelve who attended the November 1983 meeting agreed to cancel their December meeting and hoped that 4 to 6 new members might be appointed.

Preparations for the Citizens Congress

When Caroline Miller ran for County Commission in 1980 she emphasized the need for community involvement and pledged to convene a Citizens Congress that would provide a process for citizens to have a say in county government.

Through Miller's advocacy, the Board of County Commissioners passed Ordinance 389 on August 25, 1983 "establishing a Steering Committee to facilitate and coordinate the development of a Citizen's Congress for Multnomah County." The identified purpose was "to provide for improved communication between Multnomah County and its citizens regarding the development of a mission statement for Multnomah County Government."

The focus on mission was emphasized later in the ordinance: "The Committee shall organize the Congress to focus solely on functional issues regarding the Mission of County Government. Structural considerations shall remain strictly under the Charter Review Committee."

The ordinance specified representation on the steering committee from 32 organizations or constituencies plus 5 at-large seats. The list was diverse in many ways. It included Chambers of Congress and labor organizations, the Democratic Party and the Republican Party, conservative groups like the Oregon Taxpayers Union and progressive groups like Oregon Fair Share. Five groups that primarily represented communities of color were included. The Portland Town Council, a gay rights group, was included and this led Commissioner Gordon Shadburne to cast the lone vote against the Ordinance.

By February 3, the Steering Committee had arrived at a plan for the Congress. Thirteen meetings would be held in March distributed across the County by state legislative districts with a maximum of 30 delegates elected at each meeting. At least 210 delegates would be selected at large chosen by lot from those who applied to the Steering Committee. Organizers expected 600 delegate in total. The opening session would be held April 7 to draft resolutions and the closing session two weeks later to vote on resolutions. They agreed to ask the Board of County Commissioners on February 16 to provide \$8,100 to fund the convention.

The Board tried to push the dates back to May 5 and May 19. Steering Committee chair John Fisher objected, noting that the dates were adopted on a 13-3 vote. A compromise was reached and the dates of April 28 and May 19 were set. Delegate selection meetings were planned for the week of March 12 and the deadline for at-large applications was April 14.

Participation at the delegate selection meetings fell far below expectations. None of the meetings produced 30 delegates. The meeting in inner Southeast Portland produced 22, the largest number. The meeting in Gresham produced 4 delegates, the smallest number.

By the end of March, 155 delegates had been chosen and steering committee members planned to set up tables at shopping centers and Fred Meyer stores to recruit more.

On April 24, they reported that there were 350 delegates registered and Robert Nelson, Congress Chairman pro-tem said additional delegates could register at the door.

Charter Review Background

The timing and process for selection of the 1984 Charter Review Committee was approved by voters as one of six charter review measures presented by the 1978 Charter Review Committee. The six-year interval for Charter Review continues today. Also approved in 1978 was a change in county administrative authority from the Board Chair to an elected County Executive.

In between the two Charter Review Committees, the structure of the county was fundamentally changed by charter amendments brought to the ballot by citizens' initiative. In 1982 voters supported measures that required election of a County Clerk, District Court Clerk and County Assessor. It introduced term limits, prohibited use of a paid county lobbyist and made filing for another office the same as resignation.

Several of the changes from 1982 had not worked out well. For example, when the State of Oregon assumed responsibility for the court system, the county's District Court Clerk had a job with no duties. Thus the scope of work for the 1984 Committee was quite broad.

Charter Review Hearing on Citizen Involvement

Rev. Frank Shields chaired the Committee and was assisted by Vice-Chair Ann Porter, two staff and an attorney. They set an ambitious agenda for public hearings and discussions.

On February 8 1984, the Committee convened in a Multnomah ESD conference room to hear public testimony on their draft provision regarding citizen involvement: "That the County shall provide a Citizen Involvement Coordinator who shall be the county's liaison to neighborhood associations and other citizen organizations."

Jeff Lightfoot testified that a mandate for citizen involvement must be in the charter and that it needs to allow citizens to review county decisions before they are enacted. He said that the \$54,000 spent by the county that year on citizen involvement wasn't enough and that the charter needs to assure that adequate resources are allocated. (Lightfoot is identified in the minutes as: "Chairperson of the Parkrose Community Group, member of the CI Steering Committee and of

the Citizen's Congress and chair of a subcommittee with the Steering Committee on a program for CI.")

Steven McCarrel, President of Southeast Uplift Advisory Board testified that the most crucial element of community involvement is communication and that technical assistance is also important. He suggested that a detailed charter amendment would confuse the voters and the county simply needed to provide a mechanism and that citizen pressure would be sufficient to insure the ongoing funding of citizen involvement. He said that the work of departmental budget advisory boards and of a citizen involvement committee is not overlapping. The budget process is specific and time-limited. Citizen involvement is ongoing. There still should be coordination and communication he noted.

Christine Nightcap from West Hills and Island Neighbors said that citizen involvement is incredibly crucial because the county is the only governmental representation that citizens have.

In written testimony, Douglas Hartmann, Chair of the Powellhurst/Gilbert Neighborhood Association (in unincorporated Multnomah County) praised the work of the county's citizen involvement coordinator and asked that it be continued. The coordinator provided his organization "with the expertise and help to triple our average attendance, maintain a wider perspective on issues, and generally provide a firm base from which we can function." "The Citizen Involvement Program has provided an effective structure from which our organization can get new information and provides a means for communicating with other governmental bodies," he continued. "If we can continue to build on what has been laid out to date, I think that we can complete a design of a system that will enhance the democratic process."

In the work session that followed Committee member Tanya Collier moved "that the county shall provide for an independent formal citizen involvement process that mandates direct communication between the citizens and the government body."

The committee then discussed the problems of specifying funding, the conflict between independence and staffing by county employees and the conflict between the complexity of a structure and the need for brevity in a charter amendment.

Committee Member Paul Thalsofer noted that more thought was needed and that the upcoming Citizens Congress might produce some useful ideas on the topic. He was concerned they might not be timely for the charter process. Ann Porter noted that the Congress was scheduled for April 7 and April 21. (Note that these days were later changed)

Collier made a substitute motion "that the county shall implement a program to provide for an independent, formal citizen involvement structure that mandates direct communication between the citizens and the governing body." Thalsofer urged creation of a sub-committee to do more work. Collier's revised motion was approved unanimously and she was named to the subcommittee along with Thalsofer, Porter and Penny Kennedy.

Charter Review Subcommittee on Citizen Involvement

The Subcommittee on Citizen Involvement held its first meeting on February 22 at the Ford Building with Penny Kennedy chairing. They started with Collier's motion as approved by the

whole committee two weeks earlier. Kennedy noted that specific monetary amounts and staffing levels should not be included in the Charter. Jean Gordon, the county staff person assigned to citizen involvement, said that specificity was essential.

The subcommittee reviewed City of Portland Ordinance 140905, Multnomah County Ordinance No. 338 and discussed the concept of independence. Gordon noted the City of Portland's Office of Neighborhood Associations contracts with five private, non-profit (umbrella) organizations to provide technical assistance and support services to Portland neighborhoods. Thalsofer argued that contracting was the only way to have independence and that there should be contracts with private, nonprofit organizations to develop, monitor, and evaluate a citizen involvement program. Gordon said the county could capitalize on existing resources available throughout the cities. The county provides county-wide services and the cities are involved in neighborhood issues, she observed.

The subcommittee agreed to meet again on February 25.

Ann Porter was absent from the February 25 meeting at Blue Lake Park but Charter Committee member John Vogl joined the discussion.

Collier proposed a framework for Citizen Involvement similar to the auditor's office:

The office of Citizen Participation is hereby established and this office shall

1. Have a budget.
2. Maintain two-way communications between the Board of County Commissioners and the citizens, and
3. Report to the board all policy decisions made and request that the board respond in writing stating the actions taken in a timely manner.

Vogl called for a clear structure and minimal funding. The less money coming from the county the less domination, he suggested. He said there should be one county citizen involvement coordinator who would assist the neighborhood associations in finding out about important county issues before the board made a decision.

Thalsofer stressed that citizens involvement must not be vulnerable to budgetary constraints imposed by a politician who is angry at a group for an action that group has taken.

Collier suggested that a step toward independence would be to set up citizen involvement so that the structure allows for the citizens to hire and fire the staff person. They briefly discussed the fact that the citizen involvement staff person hired by the steering committee, now works for the county executive.

Vogl suggested the charter should provide an outline of how citizen involvement is to work and then let the board choose. Kennedy said there has been a lot of citizen involvement but without a central locus that might give it some clout. Thalsofer noted that the upcoming Citizen Congress would be broad based with an opportunity to hear from 600 people who represented the entire county. The impact of the Citizens Congress was briefly discussed.

Robert Castagna, the Program Manager staffing the Charter Committee observed that writing citizen involvement into the charter could create an atmosphere of good will, cooperation and communication between citizens and elected officials.

The Subcommittee reached consensus that the citizen involvement structure should not be written into the Charter.

Collier moved and Thalhoffer seconded:

1. The Office of Citizen Involvement is hereby established. The Office of Citizen Involvement shall develop and maintain citizen involvement programs and procedures designed for the purpose of facilitating direct communication between the citizens and the board of county commissioners.
2. The Citizen Involvement Office shall have an annual budget.
3. A citizens committee shall be established by ordinance
4. The structure of the citizen involvement process shall be established by ordinance.
5. The citizens committee shall have the authority to hire and fire its own staff.

The motion passed unanimously and the subcommittee agreed to submit its report to the full Committee on March 7.

Charter Committee met March 7 at the Portland Building. Tanya Collier and Penny Kennedy were absent. Report from the Subcommittee on Citizen Involvement was first on the agenda.

John Vogl said that the Subcommittee's main concern was that citizen involvement should not be county-controlled (i.e., county-funded and the county's making appointments.) He said the subcommittee had decided to wait until after the Citizens' Congress before it would submit all its recommendations. Castagna was concerned that the Citizens' Congresses' timeline was late May and the Committee would have already held hearings on draft language.

They decided that Porter and Castagna would meet with the Citizens' Congress Steering Committee to see if there was anything the Charter Committee should consider.

Citizens Congress Meets

Although accounts of turnout differed, the Oregonian reported that 230 delegates showed up at Cleveland High School on April 28 for the first day of the Citizens Congress. The first two hours were spent in disputes over procedure. Acting Chair Robert Nelson angered the delegates, and Joseph Vorboril was elected permanent chairman.

115 people showed up for the second session on May 19. Attendance dropped in the afternoon.

The Congress passed two resolutions related to community involvement. One advocated that the Citizens Congress be an annual event because "Citizens involvement is essential to the process of developing satisfactory responsive action at all levels of government"

A second resolution laid out a comprehensive plan:

1. Multnomah County should recognize and support existing citizen organizations formed on geographic basis to fully and openly educate, communicate, organize and express community opinion; and

2. Multnomah County should support citizen desires to such additional community organizations; and
3. Multnomah County should appropriate a portion of its existing budget now spent for public communication for the purpose of contracting with recognized non-profit community organizations for City of Portland services (but not duplicating such services provided by municipalities); and
4. The citizenry of each community should be guaranteed by the Charter of each community organization their absolute rights to control their community organization in the performance of its citizen participation services; and
5. The community organizations citizen participation services should include but not be limited to the following:
 - a. Notifications of developing public policies, of public hearings, and of all other major governmental activities affecting their communities;
 - b. Organization of community meetings and other functions to spread information and exchange views;
 - c. Provision of research support for exploration of problems or solutions identified by citizens;
 - d. The expression of the community's viewpoints (both majority and dissenting views) on all public issues; and
6. In its activities to develop, determine and implement public policy in all areas of concerns, including but not limited to land use, transportation, public utilities, public safety and budget, Multnomah County should foster effective citizen participation by:
 - a. Notifying affected community organizations well in advance;
 - b. Providing affected community organizations the resources needed to fully inform their communities;
 - c. GIVING THE RESULTING RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS THE MOST SERIOUS AND OPEN CONSIDERATION.

Charter Review Committee completes its work

In late May, the Committee again considered the report of the subcommittee from their February 25 meeting. It was accepted by a unanimous vote.

Thalhofer expressed concerns about independence of citizen involvement. Collier noted that items 1 – 5 are meant to describe independence. She said the word “independent” was not included because the sub-committee could not define it. Thalhofer suggested another Saturday work session to determine the meaning of “independent”.

Collier said the power to hire and fire staff made citizen involvement independent. Thalhofer said it did not. Jeff Lightfoot suggested “The Office of Citizen Involvement shall be sovereign,” meaning having no legal superior.

Porter said the Committee could not guarantee that commissioners would recognize citizen involvement, they could only hope for good will. Vogl said the Committee should recommend that commissioners hold frequent evening hearings in the neighborhoods.

In June the Committee adopted final language:

Findings

The Committee finds:

1. The Charter is silent regarding a citizen involvement program in Multnomah County

2. The citizen involvement program in Multnomah County has taken a variety of forms in recent years including quadrant advisory boards and a citizen involvement task force.
3. The county's citizen involvement program has lapsed in the past when funds were not appropriated to continue the program.

Conclusions

The Committee concludes

1. An ongoing citizen involvement program is important to enhance direct communication between the citizens and their board of county commissioners.
2. An Office of Citizen Involvement should be established by the Charter
3. The board of county commissioners should establish by ordinance a citizen's committee and the structure of citizen involvement
4. The citizen involvement program should be funded sufficiently on an annual basis for the operation of the office and the committee.

Recommendations

The Committee recommends the following Ballot Measure for a Charter Amendment to the people and to the Board of County Commissioners;

The Charter should be amended to add the following new section, effective January 1, 1985.

CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT

- a. The Office of Citizen Involvement is hereby established. The Office of Citizen Involvement shall develop and maintain citizen involvement programs and procedures designed for the purpose of facilitating direct communication between the citizens and the board of county commissioners.
- b. A citizen's committee and the structure of the citizen involvement process shall be established by ordinance.
- c. The board of county commissioners shall appropriate sufficient funds for the operation of the office and the committee.
- d. The citizens' committee shall have the authority to hire and fire its staff.

On the ballot, the language was as follows:

TITLE:

Multnomah County Charter Review Committee's recommendations about citizen involvement.

QUESTION:

Shall the county charter require establishment of an office of citizen involvement

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

If this measure is approved the county charter will be amended to establish an office of citizen involvement, which will be charged with facilitating direct communication between the citizens and the board of county commissioners. The board of county commissioners will establish a citizens' committee and a citizen involvement process. The board will be required to appropriate funds for operation of the office of citizen involvement and the citizens' committee. The citizens' committee will have the authority to hire and fire its staff.

In the end, the 1984 Charter Review Committee proposed 18 individual measures to county voters. In their proposals, administrative authority shifted back to the County Board Chair and the position of County Executive was eliminated. They also proposed removing requirements to elect a County Clerk, a District Court Clerk and a County Assessor.

The City Club's Concern

A Portland City Club Committee reviewed the 18 measures. Their report (accepted by the membership) recommended a yes vote on 17 measures. They recommended a no vote on the citizen involvement measure.

Their reasoning was that elected officials and their staff have a responsibility to communicate with their constituents. Adding another layer would increase costs without increasing communication. They were concerned that establishing an “official” citizen involvement component could be “inconsistent with maximization of actual citizen involvement. They suggested the county use existing resources to better coordinate existing citizen’s advisory boards and task forces.

Citizen Involvement Steering Committee 1984

On August 22, 1984, the Citizen Involvement Steering Committee held a “very important meeting” to advance the second draft of their proposed ordinance for a county-wide Citizen Involvement Program. They proposed:

A Citizen Involvement Program is hereby established. It shall consist of three parts: 1. Fiscal support to the community organizations. 2. The establishment of standing Department Advisory Boards. 3. The continuance of the Citizen Involvement Steering Committee to assist community organizations and Department Advisory Boards in communicating with citizens; to serve as a two-way communication link between the citizens and Multnomah County government; and to develop, monitor and evaluate the county Citizen Involvement Program.

The County Executive's proposal on budget advisory committees

In February, County Executive Dennis Buchannan testified before the Charter Review Committee that he believed that Portland’s neighborhood association model should be the basis for citizen involvement across the county and that the number of department advisory boards should be expanded. In August he produced a draft ordinance regarding the latter.

The ordinance sought to replace Section 7 of Ordinance 64 mandating “department and Board citizen advisory committees and establishing budget advisory committee; defining their scope of work and relationship to county department, the County Executive and the Board of County Commissioners.

The text called for involvement of budget advisory committees to begin at “early stages of department budget planning” and to continue through budget adoption. The County Executive was to convene a joint meeting of all budget advisory committees prior to completion of the executive budget “to hear and consider their collective input” and to meet with them again after the presentation of the Executive’s budget for an explanation of “how competing objectives were

balanced.” The Board of County Commissioners was charged with providing “each budget advisory committee with specific opportunity to present viewpoints prior to budget adoption.

The Board was moving toward joint consideration of the two proposed ordinances in September of 1984 but decided to postpone that discussion pending the outcome of the charter vote.

The voters speak

Measure 25 on citizen involvement passed on November 6, 1984 receiving 57% of the vote. More than 20% of ballots left Measure 25 blank.

SEPT. 7, 1982

New city advocates modifying strategy

By PAUL PINTARICH

The Oregonian staff

Almost a year ago, Bonny McKnight was sitting in her same cool living room defending herself against East Multnomah County's oppressively muggy heat.

Last year the "heat" was on for McKnight's group, the Mid-County Future Alternatives Committee, to push petitions aimed at forming a new city in the county's unincorporated area, and then she was using the phrase, "fall offensive."

This year, with only half of the some 7,000 signatures in the bag, McKnight remains, nevertheless, optimistic. She still is firmly convinced that the 132,000 area residents will accept a new city formed from consolidation with the city of Fairview and hopes the required number of signatures will be obtained to place the measure before voters next winter or spring.

"We were real optimistic last year," she said, "but we didn't know how difficult it would be. It's difficult to explain how much is involved in making a new city."

McKnight is chairman of the committee, which, for the past 3½ years, has been working on a new city concept based on consolidation with Fairview. The Fairview City Council formally approved the idea over a year ago.

As envisioned, the city, with a temporary name of "Columbia Ridge,"

would lie within proposed boundaries of the Columbia River, Southeast Powell Boulevard, the Portland city limits and 201st Avenue.

Considered is an "umbrella" type of organization that would involve a larger government providing essential services, such as water, sewers and police, while each lesser entity would retain some autonomy and representation on the city council.

Last year the committee sponsored six months of "community congresses" to familiarize residents with the plan, and these were considered a success, she said then.

Now, however, while interest has been sustained through the group's regular Saturday meetings, the effort has been diluted somewhat by petition drives for other causes, including an unsuccessful attempt to "dump" the Metropolitan Service District by the Up The Creek Committee and tax modification efforts.

"All of these causes have been diverting people," she said, "and it's unfortunate because people get the idea that citizens of east county are always trying to stop something. Well, we're trying to get things going."

Several committee members have been involved in door-to-door signature searches and have staked out supermarkets and shopping centers with their

petitions, but McKnight said many of these volunteers are participants in other issues — "And there is less time for each one."

"Yet I'm optimistic," she said, "because we have the luxury of pushing our deadline back until we do get the required signatures. That way we'll have a good rush at the ballot."

The alternative to "dumping" campaigns, she added, "is to start our own government and take control of things out here. The new city would have some tax advantage, but since the concept is new, and these are tough economic times, it's a rough time to sell anything but the status quo."

She admitted the committee realized it would have hard time convincing people consolidation would be a good move right now.

"We've certainly awakened the 'sleeping dogs' — Portland and Gresham — and got them to participate in public discussions. That's something."

She accused the larger cities of "turf guarding" the past 15 years, seeking domains for future annexation, but she emphasized that, with rapid growth in Clark County, Wash., particularly with expected completion of the Interstate 205 bridge in December, everyone should work to provide services. Sewers are essential, she said, and so is industrial development.

A recently created Citizens Involve-

ment Steering Committee for Multnomah County was formed to supervise the county's new citizen involvement program in correlation with the Department of Intergovernmental Relations and Community Affairs. The committee has 12 representatives from community planning groups in the unincorporated area, five representatives of the east county cities, five representatives of city of Portland neighborhood associations and three members at large — all of whom will serve for two years.

"In this way," McKnight said, "we hope to get people to see things through a nonpolitical viewpoint."

In September, the committee will begin a series of forums designed to familiarize residents with problems in the unincorporated area. The first will be on the Banfield light rail line.

"Nobody's ever explained the full impact of the light rail," she said. "All we've heard are bits and pieces regarding design, placement of sewers, business and community impacts and so forth. For example, what we really need out here is a light rail system north and south, to the Clackamas County line."

She feels the forums will assure the committee's role of leadership in east county.

"There's just nothing out here now," McKnight said. "Rumors get around fast, but unfortunately, about only 35 percent of them are true."

Citizens committee debates its purpose, criticizes dump site

Nov. 7, 1982

By JIM RUNNING
of The Oregonian staff

Members of the new Citizen Involvement Steering Committee, created with a \$60,000 appropriation by the Multnomah County Board of Commissioners, had difficulty agreeing Wednesday on the purpose of the committee.

What they did agree on — quickly and unanimously — was opposition to Wildwood in Northwest Multnomah County as the site for a new regional dump.

The site was selected by the Metropolitan Service District.

"What I don't think is commonly understood," said J. Peter Staples, West Hills representative on the committee, "is that the site is outside the boundaries of the Metropolitan Service District."

On Staples' motion, the committee voted to protest the selection to the commissioners. The protest will not be based on the suitability of the site, he explained, but on the process that allows "Metro or any other agency" to locate "a dump or any other community use" in a location outside the boundaries over which it has jurisdiction.

The service district's application for a permit was denied by a hearing officer who held the site was unsuitable.

In the district's appeal to the county board, the hearing was first set for Oct. 26. It has now been postponed to Nov. 18.

In scheduling it "after the election," Staples noted, "there's no opportunity to put the commission on the hot seat."

Two county commissioners, Dennis Buchanan and Gordon Shadburne, are locked in a bitter fight to decide which will be elected Nov. 2 as the new county executive.

With the Wildwood district not represented on the service district board, the involvement committee was lauded by Staples as an opportunity for the "the small unincorporated area" he represents "to get its point across" with his motion.

The protest to the commission "is our only chance to become involved," Staples said.

Such exchange of information and helping and supporting one another is a purpose of the committee, observed Peggy Eckton of the Department of Intergovernmental Relations, assigned to the panel as staff.

Before the enthusiastic and united action on the dump, committee member Don Gibbons, Corbett, declared that "I haven't found out what the committee

is really designed for."

The temporary chairman, Paul Thalhofer, Troutdale, responded that the purpose is "to help any neighborhood association that needs help."

"That means in crime prevention, in dealing with the state, or whatever," he said.

The Board of Commissioners last spring allocated \$60,000 to finance the committee, a budget item requested by County Executive Don Clark.

Bob Nelson, representing the Northeast Portland Neighborhood Association, complained that the committee's interest was only in "midcounty." "I do not object to a 'midcounty program,'" the real estate broker told his fellow committee members. He added that "I do, however, object to being asked to — basically — legitimize the funds request. This has seemed to be the prime reason for us 'non midcounty' folks to be included."

Thalhofer denied it.

The program is for all, said the insurance man, "whether in Corbett or Portland or wherever."

He implied that neighborhoods outside of Portland need more assistance.

"Let's face it," the Troutdale Planning Commission member said. "The Portland neighborhood associations are more advanced. They've been at it longer than us."

To encourage equality, the committee adopted Staples' motion to delete all references to midcounty in the committee's literature.

When Nelson and Thalhofer each got six votes for election as permanent chairman, Nelson urged another ballot despite suggestions that the election be postponed until more members were present.

The committee has 21 members, including representatives of the cities of Fairview, Gresham, Maywood Park, Troutdale and Wood Village. Other members are representatives of the neighborhood associations in Portland and the unincorporated area.

"The people who come to the meetings are the people who do the business," Nelson said in urging an immediate second vote.

When it again came up a tie, he relented.

"I suggest that at the next meeting, if there is still a tie, we flip a coin," Nelson said.

Three of the committee members were appointed by Clark. Boards of the neighborhood associations appointed their representatives.

Nov. 16, 1982

Portland too eager to annex, panel says

By JIM RUNNING
of The Oregonian staff

Portland is rushing too fast in its eagerness to annex East Multnomah County, in the opinion of the Citizen Involvement Steering Committee.

The City Council will hold a hearing at 2 p.m. Dec. 17 on a proposal to offer municipal services to the unincorporated area to the east of the city roughly to 172nd Avenue.

Annexation would be the most logical way to extend the services, according to the draft policy.

The date set for the hearing gives insufficient time for neighborhood groups "to study the issues," according to Paul Thalhofer, chairman of the committee.

Gary Gregory, representing unincorporated Parkrose on the committee, said, "Their comprehensive plan says flat out that they want the money."

The comments were offered at a meeting of the 21-member committee Monday night at its new headquarters at 4110 N.E. 122nd Ave. The committee is financed with a \$60,000 appropriation

from the county Board of Commissioners.

Unincorporated Powellhurst also is opposed to annexation and would prefer "to stay as we are, as long as we can,"

'Their comprehensive plan says flat out that they want the money'

reported Ed Benedict, the steering committee representative from the Powellhurst Community Planning Group.

One of the reasons is to avoid the cost of installing sewers, Benedict reported frankly.

Paul Johnson, a member of the Maywood Park City Council, advised the unincorporated area to resist annexation as long as possible.

"One reason we incorporated," he said of his 1,000-population city, "was that we don't want to be a part of Portland."

As the representative of Maywood

Park on the committee, he advised annexation "only as a last resort."

An explanation of Portland's proposed policy will be given by Terry Sandblast, the city's planning director

and one of the authors of the draft, at a meeting Tuesday.

Sandblast will speak at a session of the Northeast Portland Neighborhood Association at 7 p.m. at 4815 N.E. Seventh Ave.

"Everybody is welcome," reported Bob Nelson, representative of the association on the committee.

His proposal to ask the city to hold a second hearing about Feb. 1 on the annexation policy was adopted by the committee.

A letter was read from Dan Durig, solid waste manager of the Metropoli-

tan Service District, in which he defended the agency's choice of Wildwood near Sauvie Island for a garbage dump.

The committee had criticized the agency for choosing the site outside the service district boundaries for the dump.

Wildwood was chosen over 48 other sites because "it's the best site," not because it's outside the district, Durig asserted.

In any event, the county has to approve the site, he noted.

The issue will be faced by county commissioners at 9:30 a.m. Tuesday in Room 602 of the courthouse.

It will be a hearing on the appeal of a county hearings officer's decision turning down the district's application for a permit on the grounds that the site was unsuitable.

Durig asserted that the district's siting of the dump outside its boundary is no different than Portland drawing its water from Bull Run, which is not only outside the city but also in Clackamas County.

DEC. 9, 1982

Government proposals get airing

By JIM RUNNING
of The Oregonian staff

A willingness to at least listen to proposals to change the government of the 150,000 persons who live in the unincorporated area between Portland and Gresham was indicated Wednesday by the Citizen Involvement Steering Committee.

The support was expressed after Multnomah County Commissioner Gladys McCoy described several proposals for change.

The meeting of the committee, created by the Multnomah County Board of Commissioners to assist neighborhoods with problems such as crime, was in the Argay Office Building in unincorporated Parkrose.

Gary Gregory, chairman of the Parkrose Community Group and a member of the committee, lauded McCoy for being "the first official who has come out here and actually brought information to us."

He said efforts to get details about the city of Portland's proposal to annex Parkrose and other East Multnomah County communities were unsuccessful.

"We want to develop our own future instead of having a committee downtown decide," he said. "We resent being told that Portland is the only logical provider of services."

Rather than being told "what's to be

done," he said, the residents want to be informed of what services can be provided "and then let us decide. We want a choice."

As for annexation, Gregory asked McCoy, "Why is Portland's population declining?"

"Many of us," he said, "moved out here for the good schools and neighborhoods, not just because of taxes."

McCoy said economic development was one of the problems that would be eased with annexation.

"The city has the resources and the county has the land," she explained. "We need a way to get them together."

The land in the unincorporated area along the Columbia River would provide prime industrial sites if the region had the expensive sewers that the city could provide.

Unless the residents in the unincorporated area are informed about their options for change, "all we'll get is a bunch of opposition," said Paul Thalhoffer, chairman of the involvement committee.

Any changes, he said, will come "only as fast as people can assimilate and relate to them."

McCoy agreed that the residents must be informed with "ultimately, a vote of the people" deciding any change.

"We also must be sure that all local elect-

ed officials see the need for change," she added.

McCoy believes a county-city merger proposal voted on in 1974 went down to defeat because of opposition by two Portland City Council members.

In addition to city-county merger and annexation to Gresham or Portland, options for change suggested by the commissioner included incorporation of a new city, consolidation of services and contracting.

She said she believed "all are viable," with a need for distribution of information so that residents "will know enough about which to choose."

In the contracting option, urban services would be delivered to the unincorporated area by agreement with Gresham or Portland or both.

The consolidated services option would have jurisdictions such as Portland, Gresham and the county merging their services such as police, roads and permits.

A hearing on the proposals will be conducted by the new Futures of Local Governments Group organized by McCoy at 7 p.m. Tuesday at 501 N. Dixon St. A second hearing will be at 7 p.m. Dec. 16 at Reynolds High School.

Nov. 19, 1983

Citizens seek role in drafting landfill rules

By PETE McCONNELL
of The Oregonian staff

A citizens panel has urged Multnomah County officials to "involve the public" in drafting rules that would allow the siting of a regional garbage dump at the Wildwood Landfill site.

Paul Thalhofer, chairman of the Multnomah County Citizen Involvement Steering Committee, said the county should follow "proper citizen involvement procedures" when drafting amendments to its comprehensive plan and zoning ordinance to clear all legal challenges to a regional landfill.

Earlier this month county officials began revising their rules for the siting of a dump after the state Land Use Board of Appeals overruled the county's approval of the Metropolitan Service District's Wildwood project.

In a June decision, the appeals board said the Wildwood plan violated county land-use standards concerning noise, consistency with surrounding lands and its effect on forest and farm lands. It said that although county commissioners had imposed conditions to minimize neighborhood disturbances, they erred in approving the dump on the rural hillside

overlooking the Multnomah Channel, 15 miles northwest of Portland.

Thalhofer, a marketing director for Colonial Life & Accident Insurance Co., wrote in a letter to County Executive Dennis Buchanan that the county "has an increased responsibility to provide opportunity for input and involvement" from citizens interested in the landfill-siting issue.

"It is not for us to decide whether Wildwood is a good site or a bad site," Thalhofer said Tuesday. "Our only concern is that the governmental agency follow proper citizen involvement procedures."

Lorna J. Stickel, county planning director, said that the county counsel's office has prepared a preliminary draft for new guidelines "and that's been the extent of it so far."

"The next stage would involve going to the (county) planning commission for a public hearing, probably in December," she said. "So far, we've only been in a staff-evaluation mode. It's not appropriate to seek public input at this point until we can come up with something we can live with. There will be plenty of opportunity for public input."

The proposed guidelines, prepared by Laurence Kressel, chief assistant county counsel, would allow a regional landfill if Metro has determined a public need for one, the site is suitable in size, topography and geology, the proposal provides for the eventual reclamation of the site and the proposal "minimizes" conflicts with adjacent uses.

Peter Staples, a member of the West Hills and Island Neighbors, a citizens group that opposes the Wildwood dump, said the proposed language "has no constraints at all."

"It has been decided by Metro and the county to change the plan without any input from us," said Staples, who also serves on the steering committee. "Under those four criteria, you could put a dump anywhere you want if you can get people to say it's suitable."

Buchanan had little comment on the matter Tuesday, calling Thalhofer's letter "political."

Metro has appealed the LUBA decision to the Oregon Court of Appeals and has requested that the county revise its standards to allow the landfill at Wildwood.

FEB. 3, 1984

Committee studies ways to keep up with county government

How do residents find out what their county government is going to do before it's done?

Some members of the Multnomah County Citizen Involvement Steering Committee would like the public to be better informed of upcoming actions.

"The county does something, the citizens react," said Jeffrey A. Lightfoot, chairman of a subcommittee to the steering committee. The subcommittee is drafting an ordinance dealing with the issue.

Some members of his committee, he said, "would like to get some method set up to get citizens involved at the decision-making level before the decision comes down."

Lightfoot said a draft ordinance dealing with this and other phases of residents' involvement will be presented to the full committee for discussion when it meets at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 15, tentatively in the Hansen Building at 12240 N.E. Glisan St.

Just what will be contained in the draft is scheduled to be decided by the subcommittee at a meeting at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 8, in the Hansen Building. What is approved by the full 25-member involvement committee is slated to go to the county Board of Commissioners with a recommendation for adoption.

Lightfoot said one plan being considered by his subcommittee would use members of department advisory boards.

Appointment by the county executive of citizens' committees to advise the heads of county departments is provided by ordinance. The justice services, human services, environmental services and general services departments each are entitled to a separate, 11-member citizens' advisory committee.

A plan under consideration by Lightfoot's panel would have two members of each of the committees serve as a

citizen-involvement committee.

That might forestall one of the main complaints about the county government, Lightfoot said.

"Everybody is concerned about intergovernmental agreements," he said. "We only read about the agreements after they're in the newspaper and then we can only react. We'd like to see some mechanism that would provide the information before the implementation."

A classic example of the problem, he said, was in the recent events involving Blue Lake Park water wells.

The county, in a contract, gave Portland permission to dig wells at the park to augment the municipal water supply.

After the city dug three of the wells, officials realized they needed a zone change and the Planning Commission's hearing was the first publicized opportunity for citizens to comment.

As a result of the citizen participa-

tion, Portland promised to connect the wells with private wells that supply residents along the lake. The residents expressed fear at the hearing that their shallow wells might be dried up by the deeper Portland wells.

Portland's promise to connect came only after the Planning Commission, reacting to the fears expressed by the Blue Lake residents, refused to change the zoning, thus forcing the city to appeal to the county board, which granted the change.

Kathleen A. Busse, director of intergovernmental relations for the county, said publication of a newsletter "to increase the visibility of what citizens are doing around the county" is under consideration.

She said the county government has several advisory boards, "but there is nothing that really requires citizen involvement in a methodical way."

The ordinance creating the current

citizen-involvement steering committee requires only that the panel "develop, monitor and evaluate a citizen involvement work program."

Under consideration by the committee, Busse said, is a program that would permit citizen participation in budget preparation and other county business.

She suggests a program that would be "reasonably financed, but not too expensive."

Lightfoot said one of the complaints has been that a program of citizen involvement "should be funded constantly."

Financing of the current program was with a \$60,000 appropriation by the county commissioners last year and \$54,000 this year.

Testimony regarding citizen involvement will be taken by the Multnomah County Home Rule Charter Review Committee at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 8, at 220 S.E. 102nd Ave.

FEB. 10, 1984

County citizen involvement plan suggested

A provision in the county charter mandating a mechanism for citizen involvement in the county government was proposed Wednesday night to the Multnomah County Home Rule Charter Review Committee.

Every person testifying who was asked by Paul A. Thalhofer, a member of the committee, whether he or she supported such a provision, replied yes.

One of them, Jeffrey A. Lightfoot, chairman of the Parkrose Community Association, said citizen participation is lacking in the decision-making process of county government.

There's not enough opportunity for citizen evaluation of major policy decisions by the county commissioners before action is taken, he said.

Lightfoot said the \$54,000 allocated by the county commissioners this fiscal year for financing of the involvement committee "is not sufficient to make citizen involvement an integral part of the government."

He said the money is used for such things as printing, mailing and salaries.

Thalhofer, who also is a member of the involvement committee and its chairman, asked several persons who testified how the salary of the committee coordinator could be funded to ensure independence from the county executive and county commissioners.

No one was able to suggest a method.

Thomas J. Magee, 2406 N.E. 40th Ave, complained that the press did not report the "nitty-gritty" of meetings of the county commissioners.

He said money used to report county affairs, possibly in the daily Journal of Commerce, a business-oriented newspaper, would be "a good expenditure on behalf of the citizens."

The charter review committee's hearing at the Multnomah County Education Service District Building was preceded by a meeting of a subcommittee of the Multnomah County Citizen

Involvement Steering Committee that is framing an ordinance that would ensure citizen involvement.

Whatever the subcommittee agrees on is slated to go to the full committee for consideration with a recommendation. Then the proposal would go to the county commissioners for adoption.

A story in The Oregonian last week detailing some of the proposals under consideration by the subcommittee drew the wrath of some of the members.

By a 4-2 vote at the Wednesday meeting in the Hansen Building, the subcommittee voted that no member should disclose to the press any plans under consideration until reported to the full committee.

Voting in favor of that idea were Thalhofer, Paul E. Johnson, George A. Muir and Jean Ridings.

Opposed were Beverly D. Moffatt and Lightfoot.

Citizen panel spells its demise with plan

By JIM RUNNING
of The Oregonian staff

The Multnomah County Citizen Involvement Steering Committee approved a plan Wednesday night that would put it out of business if the plan also is adopted by the county.

The steering committee decided to recommend that each county department be monitored by an advisory board.

Kathleen A. Busse, director of inter-governmental relations for the county, said she would ask County Executive Dennis V. Buchanan to include the program in the 1984-85 budget he is preparing.

"It's not automatic at this point," Busse told the committee regarding the proposal's chances of adoption. "But with a little lobbying, I think it has a chance. It's up to you citizens to speak up for it."

Buchanan's budget is subject to modification by the county Board of Commissioners, which has the final say.

Busse said she will ask for an allocation of \$64,000 for the citizen involvement program, which would include \$1,500 for three workshops in areas such as leadership and citizen lobbying.

The 17-member citizen advisory boards that would be appointed for each of the five county departments under the new program would review department budgets and recommend programs.

The boards would "report back to citizen organizations and receive feedback on all major issues," according to the plan.

In addition, two members of each advisory board would constitute an "evaluation committee" that would meet at least twice a year "to evaluate the citizen involvement structure."

The plan would become effective at the start of the new budget year, July 1. The existing 25-member committee, whose activities this year have been financed with \$54,000 appropriated by the county commissioners, would go out of business at the same time.

"All of a sudden we're not going to be here anymore," lamented committee member Mildred A. Richards, 10906 S.E. Cherry Blossom Drive, at the meeting held in the Hansen Building. "After two years, we're through."

Paul A. Thalhofer, the Rockwood businessman and a Troutdale City Council member who has been chairman of the committee since its inception two years ago, voted against the new program.

Thalhofer, who successfully lobbied the commissioners into creating the steering committee, wanted the panel to continue.

- Most of the members live outside Portland, although Portland property taxpayers supply most of the general fund from which the appropriation for the steering committee was made.

In contrast with the steering committee, most of the 75 persons who would make up the advisory boards under the new program would be Portland residents.

One reason for the change is because annexation is rapidly reducing the unincorporated area, said Jeffrey A. Lightfoot, chairman of the subcommittee that formulated the new program.

At the same time the subcommittee approved the new program last week, it repealed an earlier decision to bar any subcommittee member from disclosing to the press the details of the program before its presentation to the full committee.

MARCH 1, 1984

County board to mull citizen involvement plan

A draft ordinance creating an elaborate system of citizen involvement in the operation of Multnomah County government will go to the county Board of Commissioners for consideration, an official said Wednesday night.

Kathleen A. Busse, county director of intergovernmental relations, said the program, in which 85 persons would serve on committees, would be supported by an appropriation of about \$55,000. County Executive Dennis V. Buchanan has included that amount in his 1984-85 budget, she said.

Busse told of Buchanan's approval of the plan at a meeting of the Multnomah County Citizen Involvement Steering Committee in the Hansen Building.

The committee formulated the proposal, which would have 17-member committees monitoring each of the county's five departments.

The plan would replace the one now carried on by the 25-member involvement committee, putting the committee out of business July 1, when the 1984-85 fiscal year begins.

The committee delayed until its next meeting, April 25, a discussion of a proposal by Janie E. Baker, president of the East County Coordinating Committee,

that neighborhood associations be recognized by county commissioners.

"They're not recognized officially," she explained to the committee in asking its approval of a proposed ordinance granting the recognition.

The committee decided to consider Baker's request after the neighborhood associations, whose representatives make up the coordinating committee, have had an opportunity to study her proposed ordinance.

The proposal states that the county commissioners "by this ordinance intend to document and recognize channels of communication and community involvement which have been developed and instituted under the comprehensive land planning process."

"A recognized community group," the draft ordinance continues, "would have the opportunity to make recommendations during the planning process in any action, policy or comprehensive plan amendment"

"Recommendations may be made on any matter of community impact, including zoning, housing, human resources, social and recreation programs, traffic, transit, environmental quality, open space and parks."

July 2, 1984

Citizens' panel wants to disband

The Multnomah County Citizen Involvement Steering Committee proposes to stay in business only two more years.

The members have recommended to the county Board of Commissioners that the committee cease to exist after 1986. The board created the committee in 1982 to assist neighborhood groups in the unincorporated area. Annexations to Portland and Gresham, however, rapidly have diminished that territory.

"So we're sort of 'sunsetting' ourselves," said Paul Thalhofer, committee chairman, in explaining the request for the cutoff.

By 1986, he believes, there will be little unincorporated area left, with most of it either annexed to an exist-

ing city or part of a new one.

Portland neighborhood associations would take over the area that Portland annexes, said Thalhofer, who believes Portland's program is superior to the county's and "one of the best in the country."

About \$1 million is budgeted for the Portland office of Neighborhood Associations for the fiscal year beginning July 1, compared with \$50,000 budgeted by the county for its citizen involvement program.

In addition to assisting neighborhood groups, the county citizen involvement steering committee is directed by the ordinance "to organize, monitor and evaluate a citizen involvement program."

The steering committee has drafted an elaborate plan that would have citizen advisory boards monitor county operations. The boards, which would have a total of 85 members, would review department budgets and recommend changes to the county executive and county commissioners.

Thalhofer, a Troutdale City Council member who has an insurance business in Rockwood, is nearing the end of his second year as chairman of the 25-member citizen involvement panel.

Fairview, Gresham, Maywood Park, Troutdale and Wood Village each have a representative on the panel, and Portland has eight members. The remaining 12 members represent the unincorporated area.

County nears decision on citizen involvement

Dec 5, 1984

By TOM STIMMEL
of The Oregonian staff

How to get citizens involved in county government and what citizens should do once they get involved is the latest problem before the Multnomah County Board of Commissioners and County Executive Dennis Buchanan.

The issue will come to a head this week and next for two reasons.

One was approval by voters a month ago of a county charter amendment that required the county to establish an Office of Citizen Involvement. The other was the interest of county Commissioner Richard Levy in getting the office started before his three-month term on the commission expires in January.

Assorted proposals for citizen involvement are to be the subject of two scheduled public meetings. Friday, Levy and perhaps other commissioners will hold an explanatory session at 10 a.m., to which 30 or so "persons known to be interested about citizen involvement" specifically have been invited.

Next Tuesday afternoon, the current county commissioners, the two commissioners-elect, Buchanan and members of the public will pursue the subject again.

Getting citizens involved in their government may appear to be a worthy cause to which nobody could object. But as with any Multnomah County business, complications are inherent.

The charter amendment that calls for an Office of Citizen Involvement also says the county commission "will establish a citizen committee and a citizen involvement process." The questions begin there.

How many people should be on the committee? How will they be selected? Should their duties be prescribed or left for them to decide? There is disagreement about all of these.

Levy was the first out with a proposal. He is a citizen activist himself, president of the Irvington Community Association (in the city) and chairman of the Northeast Coalition of Neighborhood Associations until he was appointed to the county commission in

October upon the resignation of former Commissioner Gladys McCoy.

He proposed a 17-member citizen involvement committee. Members would be chosen from Portland's six umbrella agencies of neighborhood associations (his Northeast Coalition is one) and from three geographical areas in unincorporated Multnomah County.

At about the same time, Buchanan made his proposal. He would have a nine-member committee; one member each from the seven state Senate districts in the county and two members at large.

Neither Levy nor Buchanan ventured beyond organization to suggest what responsibilities the committees might have.

That was undertaken by a third proposal, introduced in draft form Monday by Commissioner Caroline Miller's staff. It would use Levy's 17-member committee but expand it substantially by proscribing "functions and responsibilities."

These would require study and discussion of the county's "priorities, policies, programs and procedures," including the budget.

The committee would make recommendations on any countywide subject, "including but not limited to health, mental health, parks, corrections, jails, animal control, assessment, taxation, elections, cable TV, crime prevention" and even citizen participation.

"This spells out procedures and processes for the committee to follow," said Gerry Newhall, a Miller staff assistant. "It extends citizen involvement in a significant way (as) mandated by passage of the charter amendment."

Miller's proposal also details the function of the Office of Citizen Involvement, defining it as a conduit to relay county plans to citizens and citizen concerns to the county. As drafted, it requires the county to notify the Office of Citizen Involvement at least 30 days before taking any actions that "directly impact citizens," such as moving a clinic or a service center from one location to another.