



Multnomah County Charter Review

Government Accountability Subcommittee

February 3, 5:30 – 6:30 pm

SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING 1

Purpose: Discuss subcommittee logistics, elect co-chairs, and develop subcommittee research priorities.

Attendees

Committee Members Present

- Marc Gonzales (he/him)
- Ana González Muñoz (she/ella)
- Jude Perez (they/them)
- Maja Harris (she/her)
- Theresa Mai (she/her)

Absent:

Annie Kallen (she/her)

Staff:

- Kali Odell (she/her), Charter Review Committee Program Coordinator

In addition, members of the public were welcome to observe the meeting as non-participatory attendees. There was one observer at this meeting.

Welcome

Kali opened the meeting with a brief overview of Zoom logistics and the agenda. She explained that this meeting was being hosted as a Zoom Meeting rather than a Webinar and instructed members of the public to observe only.

Standing meeting time discussion

Kali proposed Thursday evenings as a meeting time for the group and asked about time restrictions, how frequently, and how long the subcommittee wants to meet. Kali asked subcommittee members whether the 4th Thursday of the month worked as a meeting date.

Jude is available until 7:00 on Thursdays. Maja said Thursdays are not the best for her, but that she can probably make them work; 5:30 or later is preferable for her. Ana confirmed the 4th Thursday works for her.

Kali checked in to see if there were other days that would work besides Thursday, but subcommittee members had conflicts with the other weekdays, so Thursday was determined to be the best possibility.

Committee co-chairs

Kali shared that Maja was the member of the group that had indicated willingness to serve as a chair or co-chair of a subcommittee. She added that Maja had been selected as a co-chair of the Community Engagement Subcommittee, so may or may not still be interested in serving in that role for this subcommittee. She noted that Marc and Theresa are chairs of the full MCCRC. She opened it up for others to express interest in serving as chair or co-chairs.

Maja said that she would still be willing to serve as chair or co-chair and sees this as a collaborative process regardless. She did say that Thursday nights were going to be a little tricky for her, but if the subcommittee was okay with that, she was happy to serve.

Marc asked if there were other people interested in serving as chair or co-chair or if there were strong feelings about a single chair versus co-chairs.

Jude said they would be willing to step up as chair or co-chair, although they had a preference for co-chairs.

Kali went over the expectations for a chair/co-chairs to refresh subcommittee members' memories.

Maja supported the co-chair model because it's more collaborative and allows for more input from the committee in agenda-setting.

Theresa also supported co-chairs and expressed the value of having backup if one of the co-chairs cannot attend a meeting.

Jude officially put their name forward to serve as co-chair. They asked whether the subcommittee needed to wait to vote since Annie was not present.

Kali said that since there a quorum was present the group could vote. She added that Annie had not expressed interest in serving as chair/co-chair in pre-meeting surveys.

Maja volunteered to co-chair with Jude.

All five subcommittee members who were present at the meeting voted in favor of Maja and Jude serving as co-chairs.

Subcommittee Priorities

Kali read out the areas of the Charter the subcommittee has been tasked with exploring: the office of the Auditor, Office of Community (Citizen, in the Charter) Involvement, the Charter review process, the salary commission that sets the salaries of elected County officials except for the Auditor, the position of a County Manager, and Charter language (includes making Charter language gender neutral). She reinforced that the MCCRC is required by the Charter to review the salary commission, but they are not obligated to make any changes to that process if they find it satisfactory.

Kali invited each subcommittee member to share what they were most interested in focusing on or prioritizing.

Marc shared that he is very interested in the office of the County Auditor and the concept of a County Manager.

Jude agreed they were interested in the proposals the Auditor shared with the full MCCRC through written comment at its meeting on December 15th.¹ They recognized that there had been several other comments submitted by other community members in support of the Auditor's proposal.² They also want to look at the Charter review process to make it easier for the next committee that is tasked with this work.

Theresa also shared an interest in looking at the Charter review process and expressed the challenges of working on such a tight timeline. She was also interested in exploring the idea of a County Manager and learning more about Multnomah County's current structure. She thought that making Charter language gender neutral should be a slam dunk. She also said that, related to the Auditor's proposals, she was interested in exploring an ombudsperson for the County.

Ana was in favor of a more clear and streamlined process for Charter review. She would like to know more about the prospect of a County Manager. She indicated support for gender neutral language in the Charter and also brought up labels for culturally specific groups. For example, there has been a recent trend toward using the term "Latinx" which some have put forward as more inclusive language, but she feels that this has not been well-discussed within the community. She would like to take a look at how culturally specific groups are being identified.

Maja said she was interested in all of the topics raised, but that if she had to pick two to elevate, it would be the Auditor and the proposal of adding an ombudsperson, and the Charter review process because of the time constraints within the current process. She shared interest in the question about a County Manager, but was concerned that they would not have enough time to thoroughly explore that topic. Maja was also interested in going through the Charter and removing citizenship requirements for any role or position possible.

¹ [Public Comment from Auditor McGuirk](#)

² [Public Comment from D. Odeh](#); [Public Comment from R. Sowray](#); [Public Comment from B. Goldner](#)

Kali told the subcommittee members that while their ability to speak with each other outside of meetings has limitations due to public meetings law, they are able to speak with other people outside of their meetings, and it might be helpful to think about who they would like to invite to speak to the full subcommittee, but also how subcommittee members could gather information from people outside of meetings. She also brought up the idea of inviting people to submit written testimony to the subcommittee as a way of using time efficiently and connecting with people who are not able to attend the subcommittee's meeting times. She suggested a variety of other ways to gather information, including looking at what similar jurisdictions are doing, reading articles about the topics the subcommittee is focusing on, and hearing from people who work in County positions that intersect with the changes the subcommittee plans to explore.

Next steps

Kali asked the subcommittee members what they wanted to prioritize for their next couple of meetings.

Marc said he thought the Charter review process should be a top priority since the timeline and process have been confusing and that is top of mind for a lot of folks in the MCCRC. Marc added that he had counted three of the subcommittee members being in favor of exploring the question of a County Manager and would like to delve into that. He knows someone who has been a County Manager and would be willing to speak with the subcommittee about that role.

Kali brought up a public comment that had been submitted to the full MCCRC by Carol Chesarek³, who served on the 2016 Charter Review Committee. That review committee explored the idea of a County Manager but decided not to recommend that change to voters. Kali told the subcommittee that they could invite past Charter Review Committee members to speak to them about their work on this topic. She also shared that while she is not an expert on the differences between a County Manager and Multnomah County's system, which has a Chief Operating Officer (CCO) who reports to the Chair, she did want to note that there are similar duties for those roles. She suggested that if the subcommittee decides to focus on this topic, they might want to speak with the COO and/or the County Chair to learn more about the current system.

Maja advocated for inviting former Charter Review Committee members to speak to the subcommittee about their experience with the committee process and timeline, while also being able to ask the last group about their decision on the County Manager question. She also wanted the subcommittee to invite the Auditor to speak with them. She wondered if there is a way to codify the principles of leading with equity and race into the Charter review process, and thought maybe they could consult with a DEI expert on how to do that.

³ [Comment from C. Chesarek](#)

Kali brought up that changes to the Charter review process were made in 2016, so this is the first group to experience this iteration of the process, and that they might be interested in speaking to former Charter Review Committee members about that, as well.

Theresa endorsed hearing from the Auditor and former Charter Review Committee members. She also asked who they could talk to about the salary commission.

Jude supported other subcommittee members' suggestions.

Maja asked if they felt prepared to invite someone to speak at their next meeting.

Jude suggested that the Auditor's engagement with the process so far suggested she might be able to speak with the subcommittee more quickly.

Since the full MCCRC had also expressed interest in hearing from former Charter Review Committee members, the subcommittee discussed whether it would be better to have the former members speak to the subcommittee or the full group.

Kali asked if there was homework the subcommittee wanted to work on between meetings.

Maja expressed interest in a presentation on the salary commission. She said she was confused about what exactly the subcommittee is expected to do and thought it would be helpful to learn what the commission is, what the subcommittee is being asked to do, and how to do that in a responsible way, in the hopes that would give them a better idea on how to move forward with that topic.

Kali clarified that the Charter explicitly says that the Charter Review Committee needs to review the salary commission, but that it does not proscribe how they are expected to do that. She said that she believed the intent behind this requirement was to make sure that compensation for elected officials is being set fairly and that the process seems to be working.

Maja said that since she is not an expert on salaries, she would want to see what salaries similar jurisdictions are setting so she has a data point to work with.

Kali wrapped up the meeting.

APPENDIX A: ZOOM CHAT

17:32:36 From Theresa Mai (she/her) to Everyone:

Hello!

17:32:44 From Theresa Mai (she/her) to Everyone:

Trying to fix my tech issues.

17:33:10 From Theresa Mai (she/her) to Everyone:

I think I fixed it. Let's see.

17:39:40 From Jude Perez (They/Them) to Everyone:

Sorry for the lateness!

17:48:24 From Jude Perez (They/Them) to Everyone:

Kali, can you remind me what responsibilities the chair/co-chair have?

17:50:49 From Maja Harris (pronounced Maya) she/her to Everyone:

Jude, I'm happy to co-chair with you as well!

17:51:16 From Jude Perez (They/Them) to Everyone:

That would be great, Maja

17:55:57 From Maja Harris (pronounced Maya) she/her to Everyone:

Love good minutes, Theresa! Thank you!

17:56:28 From Theresa Mai (she/her) to Everyone:

I'll start taking minutes now!

17:56:33 From Jude Perez (They/Them) to Everyone:

TY!!!

17:58:40 From Jude Perez (They/Them) to Everyone:

Wed, Fri, and weekends work for me

17:59:50 From Maja Harris (pronounced Maya) she/her to Everyone:

Monday is best for me. Wednesday works for me as well. Tuesday, Thursday and Friday are more unpredictable

18:00:36 From Theresa Mai (she/her) to Everyone:

My Wednesdays open up after March.

18:02:05 From Kali Odell (she/her) to Everyone:

Auditor, Office of Community Involvement, Charter Review, Salaries, County Manager, Charter language

18:20:58 From Theresa Mai (she/her) to Everyone:

Ana, what do you think?