



Office of Community Involvement



# Multnomah County Charter Review Committee

March 16, 2022 5:30-7:30pm

## COMMITTEE MEETING 9

Purpose: Hear public comment; share report outs from subcommittees; learn from Portland Charter Review Commission.

### Attendees

#### Committee Members

- Ana del Rocío (she/her)
- Annie Kallen (she/her)
- Danica Leung (she/her)
- Donovan Scribes (he/him)
- Georgina Miltenberger (she/her)
- J'reyesha Brannon (she/her)
- Jude Perez (they/them)
- Marc Gonzales (he/him)
- Meikelo Cabbage
- Nina Khanjan (she/her)
- Samantha Gladu (she/they)
- Salma Sheikh (she/her)
- Maja Harris (she/her)
- Theresa Mai (she/her)
- Timur Ender (he/him)

#### Absent:

- Ana González Muñoz (she/ella)

#### Staff:

- Dani Bernstein (they/them), Director of the Office of Community Involvement
- Kali Odell (she/her), Charter Review Committee Program Coordinator
- Katherine Thomas (she/her), Assistant County Attorney
- Allison Brown (she/her), JLA Public Involvement
- Jen Winslow (she/her), JLA Public Involvement

#### Guest Panelists

- Commissioner Anthony Castaneda, Portland Charter Commission
- Commissioner Debra Porta, Portland Charter Commission

In addition, members of the public were welcome to observe the meeting as non-participatory attendees. There was one public attendee during the course of the meeting.

## Welcome

Allison Brown, JLA Public Involvement, kicked off the meeting with an overview of Zoom logistics and etiquette. The Zoom chat can be found in [Appendix A](#). Theresa Mai gave an overview of the agenda, which included public comment, a report out from subcommittee groups, and a panel discussion with members of the Portland Charter Review Commission.

## Public Comment

Marc Gonzales began the discussion on public comment. There was one written comment for this meeting, no prior sign up for verbal comments, and no person in attendance who wished to speak to the committee.

Kali Odell, Charter Review Committee Program Coordinator, read the written comment:

- Kevin – Prohibit all funding and staffing contracts between the district attorney’s office and outside entities such as Clean and Safe, a conflict of interest. This would be illegal in many parts of the world. It is sad that Multnomah County officials even need the Charter to be revised to prohibit such a ridiculous practice. These dangerous practices have been covered in the media such as [here](#).

There were no others in attendance who wanted to speak to the committee.

## Subcommittees Report Out

Marc Gonzales led a discussion about the subcommittees.

Community Engagement:

- Maja: We are exploring ways to get funding for public outreach and social media. We are also working with the communications department of Multnomah County to identify things the public should know. We had a request to present to the Multnomah Neighborhood Association, which Marc and I presented to. Their Chair, Moses Ross, is a former Multnomah County Charter Committee member. He is willing to come talk to us if we want to hear from former charter committee members.
- J’reyesha: Our social media graphics are now live on Facebook and the Multnomah County website.

Government Accountability:

- Jude: We met March 3 and heard from the Multnomah County auditor about amendments. We also discussed gender neutral language in the Charter. We are also meeting tomorrow and listening to Dani from the Office of Community Involvement about amendments proposed to the Charter review process.
- Maja: We did want to talk with former Charter Committee members. We may hear from Carol Chesarek at our next subcommittee meeting, as well as Moses and others.

Equitable Representation:

- Samantha: We met twice and the first meeting revisited values and racial equity questions and scheduling coordination. At the second meeting, we heard from More Equitable Democracy and Oregon Ranked Choice Voting, and also heard public comment related to Ranked Choice Voting. More Equitable Democracy shared historical and grounding definitions about election and representation

from a racial justice stance. We learned what Ranked Choice Voting is. Our next meeting will focus on STAR Voting and questions about expanding who can vote in Multnomah County.

- Timur: My takeaway on Ranked Choice Voting is it works well with multi-member districts, and a preference for unstagged terms. This looks like skipping the primary and having everyone elected at the same time as the presidential race, which is more equitable because of the typically higher turnout.

#### Safety and Justice:

- Nina: We are reviewing budget items for the sheriff's office. We are also researching how other states are making changes for safety and justice. The auditor will speak at our next meeting so we can get a better idea of oversight and how we can present ideas for change.
- Donovan: We are considering ideas for the county. Black Coalition had different agenda items for cities and Multnomah County, and the state of Oregon. We are looking at how those ideas can be influenced through the charter process. I spoke with the director of Reimagine Oregon. We will continue exploring what has happened in other cities.

Marc asked if the committee had any additional questions or comments after these report outs, and there were none.

#### Tri-chairs:

- Theresa: People are coming to us with ideas, which is exciting. We are discussing stipends. We have forwarded suggestions we have received to the appropriate subcommittees for consideration, and we are still discussing whether we should keep doing this or bring them to the full committee.

The five key values framework we are working on:

- 1: Transparency: Understanding government, being heard and having influence on decision making, and clear communication with the public.
- 2: Inclusive Democracy: Outreach to communities for participation.
- 3: Access and Belonging: How people can access decision makers and feel a part of the decision process while feeling represented.
- 4: Value of Innovation: Adaptation and change within circumstances.
- 5: Justice: Healing and justice are central to our governance and should extend to all people.

Allison asked the group how they felt the subcommittees were going, and if members needed support from staff.

- Maja: The Government Accountability Subcommittee has decided to look at the auditors' amendments that were submitted to us, so if anyone has questions, please let us know. We are also going to look at the Charter review process and want to speak with former committee members on how they felt about it. We could use this time to discuss cross-issues.
- Donovan: People are getting pushed out of the city by gentrification, so strict rules about who can serve on the Charter Review Committee will make this process whiter with less representation and limit how people are able to participate. We should consider this and consider how we can loosen language surrounding participation eligibility. This preference policy used in Portland has issues but could be a model to look at.

- Nina: We are getting a handle on what the Charter is and the process, and are more comfortable having discussion, so I feel good about that. I'm understanding things better as far as what we want to do within the Charter.
- Timur: We need to make sure public comments don't get lost in the abyss. I'm more focused on the Equitable Representation Subcommittee and feel the comment from today falls more to the Safety and Justice Subcommittee. Is there a way of tracking and directing to specific subcommittees for follow up?
- Maja: Katherine, can we put a request to you to clarify if it's within our power to change the language to "work, live, play," etc. to allow for more participation? Is that governed by State law?
  - Katherine: It's helpful for the subcommittees to take up comments and recommendations first to decide if they are something the subcommittee is interested in. Then the language can be discussed.
  - Kali: You will learn more about this (the Charter Review Process) tomorrow.

Allison mentioned that there may need to be a clarifying discussion on processes and the potential overlap of the Auditor.

- Kali: There is potential to see some overlapping intersection between subcommittees because the auditor has requested funding and increasing resources to her office so she can conduct more audits in each area of the county. It would be worth talking about after she speaks to the Safety and Justice subcommittee.

Allison mentioned that the consensus seemed to be that subcommittees were going well. She asked if the group needed support.

- Theresa: I need reminders so I can keep track of things and be accountable.
- Maja: We have requested funding to do public outreach, and that is weighing on volunteers. We want to get it out, but our networks are limited.
  - Dani: Kali and I have been exploring how to secure funding. When the county works with external contractors, it can take a while, but we are hoping to get an exemption and identify a partner which will help us make culturally specific outreach, and then we can go to the board of commissioners to get approved. I'm not concerned about getting funding, but we do need to secure some of the details first. We approached the Coalition of Communities of Color, and they don't have capacity.

The group then took a 10-minute break.

Kali highlighted that part of the work with communications is to create content to share out. They are interested in making some short videos for social media about what the Charter is, what subcommittees are focused on, why people are involved. She asked for volunteers for the videos and added that staff could help support members who want to participate.

## **Panel Discussion: Portland Charter Commission**

Allison welcomed two members from the Portland Charter Commission and asked them to introduce themselves.

- Allison: How has the process been going for you?

- Debra Porta, Portland Charter Commission: It's been a great process. I've never seen such a diverse group of people come together in this city, and it's been a long time coming. It's inspiring for me being part of this process and sticking with it. The best part has been meeting so many kinds of people who are equally committed to making the city better. You learn what kind of institutional memory has kept in our processes. We had to create our own structure in how we would function. It took a long time to figure out how we were going to work together. We have been focused on what we would like to leave behind for the next iteration.
- Commissioner Anthony Castaneda, Portland Charter Commission: We have a unique opportunity and have been resourced by the council. Council wants to change the government and city elections, so there has been momentum there. The public has been receptive to ideas. 10 years ago this would have been very different, and we have had many interactions with stakeholders. We've also had a lot of experts come out and that has helped us legitimize concepts.

Allison asked if Debra and Anthony could share some of the things their committee is considering, understanding that there will be overlap with the Multnomah County Charter Review Committee as well.

- Anthony: We have three areas of agreement:
  - Removing counselors from the day-to-day business of bureaus.
  - Adopting a voting method that allows for a result in one election.
  - Geographic representation in the form of multi or single member districts.
- Timur: Have you discussed partisan elections? I heard a recording with a speaker recommending doing away with nonpartisan elections, and having municipal elections be partisan elections.
  - Debra: We aren't considering that currently.
- Samantha: When considering geography-based districts for increasing minority representation, geography doesn't achieve that because of gentrification. Does the committee believe that geography-based districts can provide more racial equity outcomes?
  - Debra: We aren't the ones drawing the districts, but our goals are equitable representation. The name is a misnomer. Districts are based on population, and we need to get solid data on where people actually live to reach our equity goals. Geography is about distribution of population.
  - Anthony: Groups came out on both sides when thinking about geographic representation. We need proportional representation so each district should have the same number of votes. We discussed the idea of multi-member districts through research presented to us from experts and More Equitable Democracy. Portland has its own political culture and norms and we aren't trying to control that, but ensure that the process is equitable.
- Maja: Do we have enough time in our Charter Review process? We have approximately a year to do everything, and the first part is spent on how we will work together, so we don't get to issues until later. What is your view of the amount of time that we have? Do you see benefits to our process overlapping with yours?
  - Anthony: We had to pare down our issues and that made people upset. We broke this up into two cycles, as well. Anyone was able to come to us with public comment, but we had to only focus on the two areas we are working on. I would recommend identifying one or two areas to focus on and consider political feasibility as well, as there will be less voter turnout in 2023.

- Debra: There was so much to do and even as we narrowed down into the phases, the two primary issues were chosen because we had to work through these issues before we could begin addressing the others in a significant way. Be realistic about what the impact will be when finished, and really focus on what you want to accomplish. These are structural issues that probably can't be fixed in one go around. A one-year cycle is scary, and the County should consider that. Think about how much change can voters handle at one time in one election.
- Marc: How continuous should the change in charters be? There are big differences in the time frames and things can go unresolved.
  - Anthony: One of the reasons there is a desire to grow the city council is that it has not changed since 1913. Is the charter a barrier to achieving outcomes? As we continue to innovate, there are going to be new challenges for the city to work through.
  - Debra: This process won't begin again for 10 years, and any changes require an implementation period. It feels slow, especially when we factor in that time period. We also must understand that government is designed to move slowly to prevent rash decisions. Somewhere between 7 and 9 years is where I would consider a good range.
- Donovan: What topics on the criminal justice front are you considering, and how long did they take?
  - Anthony: Our last public involvement report indicated that 5% of responses were related to public safety. They had a range of views, and we didn't get further than that. We recognized our own capacity, so we had to focus on the two issues.
  - Debra: When we were identifying issues, public safety was a part of that. None of the issues have been taken off the table. We realized these two issues needed to be addressed. It's been surprising how little community public commentary there has been on prioritizing public safety. Issues related to the police have been low on the spectrum, and public safety hasn't been much higher. The public has been in alignment on their issues, which are also in line with what we have been focusing on.
- Donovan: Thank you, that is helpful. We are still identifying what we are going to focus on, but have noticed the Sheriff's role is pretty bare bones, so we are exploring if that impacts what their role should look like.
- Timur: Where are you at regarding the number of commissioners? Cities in Europe with a similar population size have more commissioners and that may make the process more equitable.
  - Anthony: I wanted to grow the council beyond the range that we are settling around, and public comment had a different idea. We are trying to be responsive and consider different ideas, but it can be hard to communicate that to the public. We are also considering salary implications and want to be able to provide higher salaries so we can attract a wide range of people. In the U.S. there is no correlation between city population and number of councilors. We are considering 12-16.
  - Debra: The number of councilors can't really be thought of without also considering district representation, such as single or multi-member districts. They all impact one another and don't stand on their own as issues. We have to be mindful of the budgetary impact because we have to explain it to the public. Also, changing our government isn't an incremental change. Things often get shut down and there is a lot of work getting the public ready for change. This may take more than one go around.
- Donovan: Can you tell us what your approach to research has been?

- Anthony: Several organizations came to us as there has been a desire for change, and they report on topics. We can also do literature review and follow those citations and review them individually.
- Debra: As soon as the process started, all the subject experts decided they needed to talk to us. Part of the process was listening and then balancing that with doing our own research. There is a lot of agenda behind data, so we needed to dig into that and balance with different sources. Nothing has been informed by a single source.
- Annie: One of the challenges of research is that we have an hour and half to meet and figuring out how to spend that time. We can learn from experts who come, but it doesn't leave much time for discussion. How do you utilize your time together and apart?
  - Debra: We realized quickly that this was going to be more time intensive than was told to us. We often attend other non-commission and stakeholder meetings and report out to subcommittees, and then the entire commission. Public testimony and submitted reports are also a part of that time.
- Donovan: What are your approaches to sorting public comment?
  - Debra: We have staff that help monitor public comments and group them into a breakdown of topic areas so we can more easily digest the material. It helps organize the information for us, and she sends a report twice a month.
  - Anthony: Figure out points in your own discussions and issues so you know where to pivot and make decisions. Figure out when to change the questions you are asking the public.

Allison asked the Portland Charter members how public engagement was going and if there has been anything that has worked well through the process.

- Debra: Don't underestimate the amount of work it takes to get people engaged and invested in the process. Take ownership of the dialogue. Stakeholder listening sessions have been the most impactful and productive because we can have several people have a dialogue for an hour. Public comment is also useful, but short.
- Anthony: Engage stakeholders within the major issues you are focusing on. Continue to drive conversation forward.
- Debra: Expand the definition of diversity.

Donovan asked how much money had been earmarked for community engagement. Debra and Anthony were unsure, but the group was approved for an increase in that budget. There has been increased outreach to public stakeholders.

## Next Steps and Closing

Allison and the tri-chairs thanked the committee members for their time and for answering questions.

- The next meeting is on April 20.
- The group should think about how to address public comment.

Allison wrapped up the meeting and thanked everyone for attending.

## Zoom chat: Appendix A

Kali Odell (she/her): We do have a quorum now.

Donovan Scribes (he/him): Pronounced like “matches”

J'reyesha Brannon (she/her): <https://www.facebook.com/100069121933502/posts/268453618802034/?d=n>

Dani Bernstein (they/them): Here's a link to the County's FB post with Jude's graphics if you'd like to share:  
[https://www.facebook.com/MultCo/posts/268453618802034?\\_\\_cft\\_\\_\[0\]=AZWGZIF3OY6OrpJVAoh5FykNMOJcbkCELPaoLseNtf7c3H71byxDoVzBsn2NZKtjsnteB0q7xAt7SfadjMZpP5ofpnFULXeD\\_Nn4C1kMFCZHP-p42RPcKscWFgsLBy5yAYpWmLtF7KRgEWWiliJUzHQv&\\_\\_tn\\_\\_=%2CO%2CP-R](https://www.facebook.com/MultCo/posts/268453618802034?__cft__[0]=AZWGZIF3OY6OrpJVAoh5FykNMOJcbkCELPaoLseNtf7c3H71byxDoVzBsn2NZKtjsnteB0q7xAt7SfadjMZpP5ofpnFULXeD_Nn4C1kMFCZHP-p42RPcKscWFgsLBy5yAYpWmLtF7KRgEWWiliJUzHQv&__tn__=%2CO%2CP-R)

Dani Bernstein (they/them): And on twitter: <https://twitter.com/multco/status/1501964816675590146>

Maja Harris (she/her): Awesome!

Jude (they/them): Thank you!

Theresa Mai (she/her): Hi Ana! We're doing a temperature check on how folks are doing in subcommittees and what support they need.

Ana del Rocio: Thanks, Theresa!

Danica Leung: Seconded! Assigning research would be helpful

Maja Harris (she/her): If anyone has suggestions for specific outreach or surveys you are interested in, please let the community engagement committee know!

Debra Porta (She/Her): Hello!

Theresa Mai (she/her): Welcome, Debra!

Theresa Mai (she/her): I'm back, but eating with my camera off!

Ana del Rocio: Back, too!

Danica Leung: Back!

Georgina Miltenberger (she/her): I'm painfully camera shy!

Donovan Scribes (he/him): No jazz

Maja Harris (she/her): Thanks, Danica!!!

Samantha Gladu: Thank you Danica, and Theresa! Lol at the lack of jazz

Timur Ender (he/him): I have another question but happy to standby if someone else wants to go first

Maja Harris (she/her): Great point!

Annie Kallen she/her: Good point. Seems like the pace of change in life generally is accelerating.

Jude (they/them): Sorry everyone, I have to head out now. Anthony and Debra - thank you so much for being here! (:

Allison Brown (she/her): Thanks, Jude!

Theresa Mai (she/her): Thank you for being here with us, Jude!

Anthony Castaneda, he/him, PDX Comm.: State legislators only make \$33K and we did not feel like that would be a win for representation. With that salary, we would potentially dissuade working families/parents

Debra Porta (She/Her): Yes Anthony

Maja Harris (she/her): City Club report: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1K3j7349K8wp24eGmb5odNzDMrSM-x9cs/view>

Donovan Scribes (he/him): Sightline article just referenced: <https://www.sightline.org/2021/09/01/everything-you-wanted-to-know-about-portland-charter-review-but-were-afraid-to-ask/>

Maja Harris (she/her): Sightline: <https://www.sightline.org/2021/09/01/everything-you-wanted-to-know-about-portland-charter-review-but-were-afraid-to-ask/>

Donovan Scribes (he/him): ^ ha

Anthony Castaneda, he/him, PDX Comm.: Thank you, Maja, for linking those.

Maja Harris (she/her): You're fast, Donovan!

Donovan Scribes (he/him): How much money has been earmarked for community engagement?

Debra Porta (She/Her): I would add that it is important to expand the definition of diversity

Anthony Castaneda, he/him, PDX Comm.: Thank you for having us!

Maja Harris (she/her): Thanks so much!

Samantha Gladu (she/they): Thank you!!!!

Annie Kallen she/her: Thank you!!

Georgina Miltenberger (she/her): Thank you!!!!

Debra Porta (She/Her): Thank ya'll for doing this work!

Donovan Scribes (he/him): Thank you both, especially