

Submitted March 26, 2022

Dear MCCRC Government Accountability Subcommittee,

I served on the 2015/16 Multnomah County Charter Review Committee, and want to comment on the Office of Community Involvements (OCI) proposals.

My explanations are below, but in summary, I recommend:

- Keeping MCCRC appointments by legislators but consider adding committee members in under-represented areas.
- Ask OCI to track the demographics and geographic distribution of MCCRC committee members over time (not a charter change).
- If you want to extend the MCCRC term, add no more than one or two months. I would leave it alone.
- Instead of adding MCCRC members who live outside the county, work with OCI to do targeted outreach to minority communities in our county. The Portland Charter Review Committee provides a model. No charter change, and may be possible in your term.
- Allow replacement committee members to be named only before the first MCCRC meeting (appointment still by legislators, from the original applicant pool).
- MCCRC members remain eligible as long as they reside within Multnomah County (even if they move).
- Adjust the application process to allow more flexibility and reduce the calendar gap between application submission, selection, and the first MCCRC meeting.

The 2015/16 MCCRC considered moving away from having state legislators select MCCRC members but decided it was important to keep the selection independent of county operations so that it could not be biased by county employees. The Charter is effectively the county's constitution. The MCCRC influences the foundation of the county's operations.

We wouldn't want an OCI employee interested in a charter change to select CRC members based on that interest. There are no checks and balances – it is unlikely that a bias would even be detected. An OCI employee could also be influenced by someone in county government to bias selection of MCCRC members. Keeping selection of CRC members in the hands of elected state legislators provides independence while ensuring that appointments remain in the hands of elected officials who represent a range of local interests (each of whom has limited impact on committee membership).

I'd recommend keeping the current appointment system but consider adding committee members in under-represented geographic areas. Senate districts don't correlate to County districts, so you won't be able to guarantee a particular distribution, and I'm not sure why you need to. With appointments by County district you could still end up with many committee members who lived in one area near a boundary. There are more than 4 Senate districts, so their use should ensure more geographic diversity than using

only 4 County districts. It seems like the goal should be fairly proportional representation across the county, and members that represent diverse voices (including rural voices). Multnomah County has diverse legislators who understand the importance of appointing diverse committee members.

The current MCCRC appears to be extremely diverse and relatively young. It would be interesting to ask OCI how it compares to the county's overall demographics – it doesn't look like minority voices are under-represented.

There are other ways that the OCI can assist and be a positive influence MCCRC appointments. What guidance and information did the OCI provide to legislators considering applications? The OCI affects the MCCRC selection process through recruiting applicants, and they appear to have done an excellent job based on the diversity of the current committee.

The CRC starts to bond as a team from their first meeting, and early meetings include equity training, so I would not replace members after the first CRC meeting. Otherwise, new members could object to bylaws and rules that you developed as a team. I would allow vacancies to be filled only before the first CRC meeting, and keep the appointments by legislators, using the original applicant pool. If the timing of the selection process is tighter, it seems unlikely that there would be many vacancies.

I support allowing committee members to continue as long as they reside in the county.

Extending the MCCRC's work from 12 to 18 months seems excessive unless you believe there are substantial structural problems in the county. You are only part way through your work. By August you are likely be tired and happy to see your term end. An 18-month term also seems likely to discourage people with competing responsibilities (like working more than one job), from applying and could lead to committee burn out. If the OCI makes your bylaws and group agreements available to future MCCRCs, they may be able to build on them and start faster. A shorter term keeps the committee focused on the highest priorities.

There was some discussion about allowing people who live outside of Multnomah County to serve on the MCCRC. The Charter is our constitution – would you want citizens of other countries to be able to alter our country's constitution? I'm skeptical that county voters would endorse that. The city prioritizing people with strong community ties makes sense when making reparations to individuals and communities for past injustices. But that's a very different program than membership on a committee considering county charter updates. I agree with your goal of hearing from marginalized voices and minority communities, but you have a very diverse committee and can hear from more voices through targeted outreach, listening sessions, focus groups, etc. that OCI can facilitate. It would be extremely complicated and controversial to try to write rules about what individuals residing in other counties would qualify as deeply connected to Multnomah County for purposes of serving on the MCCRC. Why dilute the opportunities for individuals representing minority voices who do reside in

Multnomah County by offering those opportunities to people who live outside the county?

Best wishes and thank you for your service,

Carol Chesarek