

April 13, 2022

Dear Equitable Representation Subcommittee,

I served on the 2015/16 Multnomah County Charter Review Committee and have been listening in on your recent meetings.

I am concerned that you are spending a great deal of time hearing from an organization, More Equal Democracy, that is based in Massachusetts and doesn't appear to have done any research into our local history or current conditions. I hope you will reach out to hear from a wider range of opinions and explore the effect of proposals on not only representation, but also on effective governance.

I can't make all the points I'd like to in this comment. I could be happy to meet with any or all of you to discuss alternate ideas – I'm good at finding alternate arguments.

To summarize the points I want to make in this comment:

- **We have had an all-female, majority minority board since 2017, and a majority female board since 1985 except for two relatively brief periods. We elected an African American woman as County Chair in 1987. We didn't need a huge number of Commissioners, multi-member districts, partisan elections, or proportional elections to elect them.**
- Because our Board positions are limited, each is influential but still accessible to individuals in their Districts.
- Influential positions attract strong candidates.
- Increasing the number of Commissioners would reduce the influence of each.
- Adding a large number of Commissioners will greatly increase the influence of lobbyists and donors vs. individual citizens.

I was unimpressed by the MED recommendation that we consider moving to partisan elections for County Commissioner because people needed party affiliation to signal them to vote for minority candidates. If that was true here, our current non-partisan positions on the Board wouldn't have had a majority minority board since 2017, and we wouldn't have elected an African American woman as Chair (a county-wide race) in 1987. We don't need more partisanship in our politics.

I'm also disappointed by MED's basic (and little unquestioned) core premise that women and minorities are under-represented on our County Board, and that minority representation would be improved by greatly increasing the number of Commissioners. We have had an all-female, majority minority board since 2017. We didn't need a huge number of Commissioners, multi-member districts, or proportional elections to elect them. We have a board that is all female

and majority minority – clearly voters are not only voting based on their own racial or sexual identity, or we wouldn't have elected an African American woman to be County Chair in 1987.

**So, what is the problem that you want to solve? What other consequences might different proposals have?** Representation is only one aspect that you need to consider – effective governance is also critical. The county currently has good female and minority representation and effective governance.

I wonder how many of you feel that our federal House of Representatives or Senate are effective legislative bodies? How about our State House and Senate? By the MED logic, those bodies should be much, much larger – do you think that would make them more effective?

Individual members of those large bodies don't have much influence unless they are in a small number of leadership roles – Speaker of the House or Senate President (or you are in Joe Manchin's position) and to some extent committee chairs. Because many votes need to be aligned to adopt policy, lobbyists and donors are far more influential in these places than individual voters – you need to have a lot of time to invest and be able to get meetings with many elected representatives, not just your own, to influence enough votes.

I've been to Salem, testified at hearings and met with elected representatives. It is very hard for an individual to have any influence there unless you are aligned with an influential lobby or agency, or there are a huge number of individuals motivated enough to communicate with their representatives. Most elected representatives in Salem ignore input they receive from folks who aren't in their district.

We have an effective County Board, with a strong history of electing women and minorities. With only 5 members, each Commissioner can have a strong influence on the county's direction. It is also a small enough group that they can (generally) work together effectively.

Because our Board positions are limited and influential, these positions attract strong candidates. Our elections (even before campaign contributions were limited) have been relatively inexpensive campaigns, so they've been more open to women and minorities, and attractive because they can make a difference if they're elected.

In my experience (with a recent exception of a Commissioner who is running for Chair), it is pretty easy to be heard by your Commissioner if you have an issue that relates to county business. On behalf of my neighborhood, I've arranged numerous meetings with Commissioners and their staff since 2007, and I know individuals who've been able to arrange their own meetings. Because there are only 5 Commissioners, they often arrange to have department heads and/or staff attend these meetings. You can sit down with your Commissioner and have a coherent conversation about an issue that results in action. Once they know me, I can call or email a Commissioner's staff and get a helpful response.

If there were, say, 12 Commissioners, perhaps each would be more available, but you'd need to persuade not 3, but 7 board members to vote on your issue to get results. While it is easy to get a meeting with your own Commissioner, it isn't easy to get a meeting with a Commissioner from another district. With that many Commissioners, it seems likely that there would be too many requests for Department heads to attend constituent meetings.

That many Commissioners are also less likely to work together as a team, and more likely to break into factions. The influence of lobbyists would rise because they're the ones likely to have the time and access to meet with multiple Commissioners.

I sincerely hope that you will do more research and talk to people with other views, including the Chair and current county Commissioners.

I am attaching a paragraph about Gladys McCoy from the county's web site, and also the county's list of past Board members.

Thank you for your thoughtful work. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Carol Chesarek

### **Who was Gladys McCoy?<sup>1</sup>**

Gladys McCoy was Chair of the Multnomah County Board of County Commissioners from 1987 until her death in April 1993, having been elected to two terms. She previously served two four-year terms on the Commission representing North and Northeast Portland. Her first elected position was on the Portland School Board where she was a strong advocate for quality education. She was the first African-American to serve in these positions, and the first person of color elected to public office in Oregon.

### **Milestones on our county Board for women and people of color:**

- **1975: the first woman, Alice Corbett, serves on the County Board**
- **1978: two women Commissioners serve on the Board**
- **1979: the first African American, Gladys McCoy, serves on the Board**
- **1985: first female Chair, Pauline Anderson & majority female Board**
- **1987: first African American Chair, Gladys McCoy**
- **1999: first Latina Commissioner, Serena Cruz**
- **2001: two Latina Commissioners serve on the Board**
- **2011: a second African American, Loretta Smith, serves on the Board**
- **2017-2022: the Board is majority minority and all female**

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<sup>1</sup> From the Multnomah County web page about the county's Gladys McCoy Lifetime Achievement Award  
<https://www.multco.us/oci/gladys-mccoy-lifetime-achievement-award>

By my accounting, our board has been majority female since 1985 except for two brief periods: April to July 1993, after Gladys McCoy died, and 2007-2008.

For reference, the county's 2022 adopted budget<sup>2</sup> says:

The US Census estimates that in 2018 Multnomah County's population was

- 77.8% White,
- 7.3% Asian,
- 5.4% Black or African-American,
- 0.6% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander,
- 0.9% American Indian or Alaskan Native,
- 2.5% Other Races, and 5.5% people with two or more races.

Approximately 11.4% of the County's population is Hispanic.

From <https://www.multco.us/board/past-boards-commissioners> (as of April 4, 2022)

## Past Boards

**GEORGE W. VAUGHN, EMSLEY R. SCOTT, JAMES F. BYBEE**  
1854

**D. POWELL, ELLIS WALKER, S. FARMAN**  
1855

**D. POWELL, ELLIS WALKER, M. M. LUCAS**  
1856

**D. POWELL, J. F. WILMOT, M. M. LUCAS**  
1857

**JOSEPH H. LAMBERT, J. F. WILMOT, M. M. LUCAS**  
1858

**EDWARD HAMILTON, WILLIAM S. LADD, CALEB RITCHEY**  
1859

**EDWARD HAMILTON, JOHN S. WHITE, ELLIS WALKER**  
1860-1861

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<sup>2</sup> Page 4, [https://multco-web7-psh-files-usw2.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/Tab%204%20-%20FY%202022%20Meet%20Multnomah%20County%20-%20ADOPTED\\_0.pdf](https://multco-web7-psh-files-usw2.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/Tab%204%20-%20FY%202022%20Meet%20Multnomah%20County%20-%20ADOPTED_0.pdf)

**PHILIP A. MARQUAM, WILLIAM KERNS, M. S. BURRELL**  
1862-1863

**PHILIP A. MARQUAM, HENRY W. CORBETT, ALVA COMPTON R. SHAW**  
1864

**PHILIP A. MARQUAM, J. P. O. LOWNSDALE, ALVA COMPTON R. SHAW**  
1865

**PHILIP A. MARQUAM, J. P. O. LOWNSDALE, HANS HANSON**  
1866-1867

**PHILIP A. MARQUAM, HAMILTON BOYD, E. L. QUIMBY**  
1868-1869

**EDWARD HAMILTON, JOHN KENULTY, E. M. BURTON**  
1870-1871

**EDWARD HAMILTON, CLIEVE S. SILVER, S. J. MCCORMICK**  
1872-1873

**J. H. WOODWARD, HANS HANSON, CHARLES HOLMAN**  
1874-1875

**J. H. WOODWARD, TYLER WOODWARD, PENUMBRA KELLY**  
1876-1877

**S. W. RICE, W. M. WIBERG, PHILO HOLBROOK**  
1878-1879

**S. W. RICE, J. A. SLAVIN, GEORGE M. LONG**  
1880-1881

**LOYAL B. STEARNS, CHARLES P. BACON, E. G. GIESE**  
1882-1883

**LOYAL B. STEARNS, HENRY W. CORBETT, JOHN S. NEWELL**  
1884-1885

**JOHN CATLIN, HENRY W. CORBETT, JOHN S. NEWELL**  
1886-1887

**JOHN CATLIN, DAVID M. DUNNE, B. F. SMITH**  
1888-1889

**JOHN CATLIN, DAVID M. DUNNE, H. S. STONE**  
1890

**JULIUS C. MORELAND, DAVID M. DUNNE, H. S. STONE**  
1891

**JULIUS C. MORELAND, PHILO HOLBROOK, H. S. STONE**  
1892-1893

**HENRY H. NORTHUP, PHILO HOLBROOK, H. S. STONE**  
1894-1897

**W. M. CAKE, PHILO HOLBROOK, W. B. STEELE**  
1898-1899

**W. M. CAKE, J. G. MACK, W. B. STEELE**  
1900

**W. M. CAKE, J. G. MACK, WILLIAM SHOWERS**  
1901

**L. R. WEBSTER, J. G. MACK, WILLIAM SHOWERS**  
1902

**L. R. WEBSTER, F. C. BARNES, WILLIAM SHOWERS**  
1903-1904

**L. R. WEBSTER, F. C. BARNES, WILLIAM LIGHTNER**  
1905-1909

**T. J. CLEETON, D. V. HART, WILLIAM LIGHTNER**  
1910-1913

**T. J. CLEETON, D. V. HART, WILLIAM LIGHTNER, RUFUS HOLMAN**  
1914

**T. J. CLEETON, P. HOLBROOK, WILLIAM LIGHTNER, RUFUS HOLMAN**  
1915-1916

**GEORGE TAZWELL, P. HOLBROOK, A. A. MUCK, RUFUS HOLMAN**  
1917-1918

**RALPH W. HOYT, A. A. MUCK, RUFUS HOLMAN**  
1919-1920

**RALPH W. HOYT, CHARLES RUDEEN, RUFUS HOLMAN**  
1921-1922

**J. H. RANKIN, CHARLES RUDEEN, DOW V. WALKER**  
1923-1924

**AMADEE SMITH, GRANT PHEGLEY, ERWIN A. TAFT**  
1924-1926

**AMADEE SMITH, GRANT PHEGLEY, CLAY S. MORSE**  
1927-1928

**FRED GERMAN, GRANT PHEGLEY, CLAY S. MORSE**  
1929-1930

**FRED GERMAN, GRANT PHEGLEY, FRANK SHULL**  
1931-1932

**C. A. BIGELOW, GRANT PHEGLEY, FRANK SHULL**  
1933-1934

**C. A. BIGELOW, ERWIN TAFT, FRANK SHULL**  
1935-1939

**C. A. BIGELOW, FRANK SHULL, O. V. BRADLEY**  
1939-1940

**C. A. BIGELOW, FRANK SHULL, T. J. KREUDER**  
1941-1942

**FRANK SHULL, CHARLES C. BRADLEY, TOM H. WEST**  
1942-1943

**FRANK SHULL, TOM H. WEST, ALAN BROWN**  
1944-1948

**MIKE J. GLEASON, FRANK SHULL, GENE W. ROSSMAN**  
1949-1950

**MIKE J. GLEASON, FRANK SHULL, AL L. BROWN**  
1951-1954

**MIKE J. GLEASON, AL L. BROWN, JACK BAIN**  
1955-1962

**MIKE J. GLEASON, JACK BAIN, L. W. AYLSWORTH**  
1962

**MIKE J. GLEASON, DAVID ECCLES, MEL GORDON**  
1963-1966

**MIKE J. GLEASON, DAVID ECCLES, MEL GORDON, L. W. AYLSWORTH, DAN E. MOSEE**  
1967-1968

**MIKE J. GLEASON, DAVID ECCLES, MEL GORDON, L. W. AYLSWORTH, DONALD E. CLARK**  
1969-1970

**MIKE J. GLEASON, BEN PADROW, MEL GORDON, L. W. AYLSWORTH, DONALD E. CLARK**  
1971-1972

**MIKE J. GLEASON, BEN PADROW, MEL GORDON, DAN MOSEE, DONALD E. CLARK**  
1973-1974

**DONALD E. CLARK, MEL GORDON, DAN MOSEE, ALICE CORBETT, DENNIS V. BUCHANAN**  
1975-1978

**DONALD E. CLARK, DAN MOSEE, ALICE CORBETT, DENNIS V. BUCHANAN, BARBARA ROBERTS**  
1978

**DONALD E. CLARK, DAN MOSEE, EARL BLUMENAUER, DENNIS V. BUCHANAN, GLADYS MCCOY**  
1979

**DAN MOSEE, EARL BLUMENAUER, DENNIS V. BUCHANAN, GLADYS MCCOY, GORDON SHADBURNE**  
1979

**DAN MOSEE, EARL BLUMENAUER, DENNIS V. BUCHANAN, GLADYS MCCOY, GORDON SHADBURNE**  
1980

**EARL BLUMENAUER, DENNIS V. BUCHANAN, CAROLINE MILLER, GLADYS MCCOY, GORDON SHADBURNE**  
1981-1982

**EARL BLUMENAUER, ARNOLD BISKAR, CAROLINE MILLER, GLADYS  
MCCOY, GORDON SHADBURNE**  
1983-1984

**RICHARD C. LEVY, ARNOLD BISKAR, CAROLINE MILLER, EARL  
BLUMENAUER, GORDON SHADBURNE**  
10-11/1984

**PAULINE ANDERSON, GRETCHEN KAFOURY, CAROLINE MILLER, EARL  
BLUMENAUER, GORDON SHADBURNE**  
1985-4/1986

**PAULINE ANDERSON, GRETCHEN KAFOURY, CAROLINE MILLER, BONNIE  
MORRIS, GORDON SHADBURNE**  
4-8/1986

**PAULINE ANDERSON, GRETCHEN KAFOURY, CAROLINE MILLER, BONNIE  
MORRIS**  
8-11/1986

**PAULINE ANDERSON, GRETCHEN KAFOURY, CAROLINE MILLER, BONNIE  
MORRIS, POLLY CASTERLINE**  
11-12/1986

**GLADYS MCCOY, PAULINE ANDERSON, GRETCHEN KAFOURY, CAROLINE  
MILLER, POLLY CASTERLINE**  
1987-1988

**GLADYS MCCOY, PAULINE ANDERSON, GRETCHEN KAFOURY, RICK BAUMAN,  
POLLY CASTERLINE**  
1/1989

**GLADYS MCCOY, PAULINE ANDERSON, GRETCHEN KAFOURY, RICK BAUMAN**  
2/1989-6/1989

**GLADYS MCCOY, PAULINE ANDERSON, GRETCHEN KAFOURY, RICK BAUMAN,  
SHARRON KELLEY**  
7/1989-12/31/90

**GLADYS MCCOY, PAULINE ANDERSON, GARY HANSEN, RICK BAUMAN,  
SHARRON KELLEY**  
1/1991-12/31/1992

**GLADYS MCCOY, DAN SALTZMAN, GARY HANSEN, TANYA COLLIER,  
SHARRON KELLEY**  
1/1993-4/1993

**HANK MIGGINS-INTERIM, DAN SALTZMAN, GARY HANSEN, TANYA COLLIER,  
SHARRON KELLEY**  
4/1993-7/1993

**BEVERLY STEIN, DAN SALTZMAN, GARY HANSEN, TANYA COLLIER, SHARRON  
KELLEY**  
8/1993-12/1997

**BEVERLY STEIN, DAN SALTZMAN, GARY HANSEN, SHARRON KELLEY**  
12/1997-1/1998

**BEVERLY STEIN, GARY HANSEN, SHARRON KELLEY**  
1/1998-6/10/1998

**BEVERLY STEIN, DIANE LINN, GARY HANSEN, SHARRON KELLEY**  
6/11/1998-6/22/1998

**BEVERLY STEIN, DIANE LINN, GARY HANSEN, LISA NAITO, SHARRON KELLEY**  
6/23/1998-12/31/1998

**BEVERLY STEIN, DIANE LINN, SERENA CRUZ, LISA NAITO, SHARRON KELLEY**  
1/1999-12/2000

**BEVERLY STEIN, DIANE LINN, SERENA CRUZ, LISA NAITO, LONNIE ROBERTS**  
1/2001-3/14/2001

**BILL FARVER-INTERIM, PAULINE ANDERSON-INTERIM, SERENA CRUZ, LISA  
NAITO, LONNIE ROBERTS**  
3/15/2001-6/4/2001

**DIANE M. LINN, MARIA ROJO DE STEFFEY, SERENA CRUZ, LISA NAITO,  
LONNIE ROBERTS**  
6/5/2001-12/2006

**TED WHEELER, MARIA ROJO DE STEFFEY, JEFF COGEN, LISA NAITO, LONNIE  
ROBERTS**  
1/1/2007-12/31/2008

**TED WHEELER, DEBORAH KAFOURY, JEFF COGEN, JUDY SHIPRACK, DIANE  
McKEEL**  
1/1/2009-3/11/2010

**JANA MCCLELLAN-INTERIM, DEBORAH KAFOURY, BARBARA WILLER-  
INTERIM, JUDY SHIPRACK, DIANE McKEEL**  
3/11/2009-4/1/2010

**JEFF COGEN, DEBORAH KAFOURY, BARBARA WILLER-INTERIM, JUDY SHIPRACK, DIANE McKEEL**  
4/1/2010-12/31/2010

**JEFF COGEN, DEBORAH KAFOURY, LORETTA SMITH, JUDY SHIPRACK, DIANE McKEEL**  
1/1/2011-9/16/2013

**MARISSA MADRIGAL-INTERIM, DEBORAH KAFOURY, LORETTA SMITH, JUDY SHIPRACK, DIANE McKEEL**  
9/16/2013-10/18/2013

**MARISSA MADRIGAL-INTERIM, LIESL WENDT-INTERIM, LORETTA SMITH, JUDY SHIPRACK, DIANE McKEEL**  
10/22/2013-6/5/2014

**DEBORAH KAFOURY, JULES BAILEY, LORETTA SMITH, JUDY SHIPRACK, DIANE McKEEL**  
6/5/2014-12/31/2016

**DEBORAH KAFOURY, SHARON MEIERAN, LORETTA SMITH, JESSICA VEGA PEDERSON, LORI STEGMANN**  
1/1/2017 - 12/31/2018

**DEBORAH KAFOURY, SHARON MEIERAN, SUSHEELA JAYAPAL, JESSICA VEGA PEDERSON, LORI STEGMANN**  
1/1/2018 - CURRENT