



Deborah Kafoury Multnomah County Chair

Multnomah County Charter Review Committee
via Kali Odell
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May 25, 2022

Dear Charter Review Committee Members:

Thank you for welcoming me to share my thoughts at the May 18, 2022 meeting of the Charter Review Committee. You are providing a critical public service to our community, and I appreciate the thoughtful and deliberative approach you are taking to the complex topics before you. I am writing to respond to several questions I was not able to address at the meeting.

Q: If the Auditor's budget is not enshrined in the charter, is there another mechanism that could ensure budget independence for the auditor?

It is my belief that the office of the Auditor has sufficient budgetary independence — they have the opportunity to grow with the County and do not face a self-interest threat from this or future administrations because the budget is adopted by the entire Board of Commissioners. The Auditor's budget, as with all County functions, is approved by the entire County Board after review and recommendations are given by an independent Community Budget Advisory Committee (CBAC). Moving into FY 2023, the County's economic outlook has improved significantly from recent years, and the proposed budget reflects that. The proposed budget includes a 34% increase of \$661,000 dollars to the Auditor's Office. This increase supports 4.00 new FTE, a 44% growth in the Auditor's total staff and a 57% increase in her auditing staff.

Q: Do the speakers think that the charter, as it stands, guarantees the auditor's independence and ability to conduct a sufficient number of audits per year?

Yes. The Auditor operates independently. The Auditor has independence to hire, fire, and direct the work of her staff. She decides what audits to do and the scope of each audit. As I mentioned, the Auditor has sufficient budgetary independence because the Auditor prepares her own budget, which is then reviewed by an independent CBAC. The Auditor presents her budget to the Board, the public has an opportunity to engage, and then the entire Board of Commissioners votes on adoption. That robust process guarantees that neither the Chair (or any other elected official) can interfere with the Auditor's independence to operate the Auditor's

Office. In the past, Auditors have completed a sufficient number of audits, and now, with the expansion of County programs and services, I supported her request to grow her team to accommodate additional audits.

Q: Why not have the COO be accountable to the entire County board as opposed to just the chair? Would you support transitioning to a county manager model?

I support the proposal to enshrine the COO position in the Charter. Multnomah County is a large and complex organization, and I have benefited from the assistance of a Chief Operating Officer who serves as the supervisor of all department heads and oversees the details of many of the day-to-day County operations. I believe the COO plays a valuable role in our organization and therefore would support the role being established in the Charter.

In my time with the County, through three chairs and two interim chairs, I have found its current structure — where the Chair has chief executive and chief personnel officer powers — to serve the organization and community well. Prior Charter Review Committees have looked at the possibility of a County Manager form of government and decided not to pursue it.

Q: Do the speakers oppose all of the auditor's amendments or are there some that they support?

I support the Good Government Hotline and Ombuds Office enshrined in the Charter if properly scoped. I look forward to reviewing the agreed upon language that the Auditor will develop with the County Attorney.

Again, I thank you very much for your service to our community and welcome any future questions you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Deborah Kafoury". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Deborah Kafoury
Multnomah County Chair