



# Multnomah County Charter Review

## Subcommittee 3

February 6, 2022, 1:00 – 2:00 pm

### SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING 1

Purpose: Determine the objectives of the subcommittee and select co-chairs.

#### Attendees

Committee Members Present:

- Samantha Gladu (she/they)
- Annie Kallen (she/her)
- Jude Perez (they/them)
- Maja Harris (she/her)
- Meikelo Cabbage (he/him)
- Timur Ender (he/him)

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 were no observers at this meeting.

#### Welcome

Kali Odell opened the meeting with a brief overview of Zoom logistics and the agenda.

#### Committee co-chairs

Kali shared that the other subcommittees have elected two co-chairs. She outlined the potential duties of the co-chairs: contributing to research plans, agenda setting, meeting facilitation, and drafting materials for the MCCRC's final report. She also shared that Timur, Maja, and Samantha had previously expressed willingness to serve in the role of chair/co-chair, but noted that Maja is serving as a co-chair on other subcommittees. An invitation was issued for others to volunteer, and Annie said she was interested.

Maja withdrew her name since other people were interested. She expressed willingness to support chair/co-chairs and help with any report writing.

Timur clarified that he had put his name forward in case no one else was willing, and was happy to forgo the title and support the chair/co-chairs however was needed.

Samantha expressed her strong interest in being a chair or a co-chair. One of the reasons she wanted to join the Charter Review Committee was because she has a background in elections policy and helped pass paid postage for all ballots in Oregon. She values inclusive democracy and believes that communities thrive when the most people possible are participating and that's reflective of the communities we live in. Her approach to analysis is to ask, how can we shift elections to open up participation? How can we get a ballot in the hands of as many people as possible and make it irresistible for them to join because it's easy and clear and transparent? She loves vote by mail and wants to improve the system.

Annie affirmed what Samantha said about making voting easy, transparent, clear, and accessible. She has been volunteering with Equal Vote Coalition for four years and is currently the Chair of the Board. She is passionate about improving the voting process.

Meikelo was fine with either a chair or co-chairs and did not want to pursue the role.

Jude expressed support for a co-chair model.

Maja asked Samantha and Annie about how they felt about being chair versus co-chairs. Annie liked the idea of co-chairs. Samantha said she was excited about the collaboration and that having two people could generate more creative ideas.

The subcommittee unanimously voted for Samantha and Annie to be co-chairs.

## **Standing meeting time discussion**

When some of the subcommittee members huddled at the MCCRC meeting on January 19<sup>th</sup>, those present identified Sunday and Monday as potential meeting days and Kali asked how that worked for other members.

Kali shared that another subcommittee was planning to have Monday meetings, but that she would stagger them so the two subcommittees meet on alternate Mondays.

Since Timur and Maja weren't present for the MCCRC meeting on January 19<sup>th</sup>, Samantha asked about their availability. Maja said that Mondays worked well and that some Sundays would work and others would not. Timur said it was the time that mattered more to him than the day of the week. He said after 8:00 PM works best for him.

Jude said they were available Mondays after 7:00 PM. Samantha proposed meeting 8:00 – 9:00 PM. Annie said that worked, but that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Mondays of the month often don't work for her. Meikelo and Maja felt that 8:00 – 9:00 was a little late. Timur said he could make 7:00 or 7:30 work.

Kali suggested the group also consider how frequently and how long they want their meetings to be.

Samantha was in favor of meeting twice a month from 7:00 – 8:00 PM on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Mondays. The subcommittee members supported that schedule.

## Subcommittee priorities

Kali shared that there are multiple ways for the subcommittee to gather information from people. They can invite people to testify for the subcommittee, they can have committee members speak to people outside meeting times and report what they learn back to the subcommittee, or they can ask for written testimony. She recommended that they think creatively about how to gather this information and set priorities given their time limitations.

Kali reminded the subcommittee that they are tasked with looking at issues around voting methods, electing officials, campaign finance, commissioner districts, how to resolve tied elections, number of commissioners, requirements for elected officials, and process for creating or filling vacancies for elected office.

Kali suggested going around and having each member share about their interests/priorities within the subcommittee's work.

Annie's primary interest has been in voting methods- how votes are tabulated. She talked about how making changes in some of these areas affects whether other areas work well or not, like how many districts do we have, what's the timing of the elections, proportional representation. She is interested in learning more about these areas and suggested starting with identifying what their values are as a subcommittee and then identifying which tools would achieve those values. She would also like to seek the values of the community to make sure they support the recommendations of the subcommittee.

Jude is very interested in voting methods, too, and campaign finance, although all of the topics are of interest. They value transparency, clarity, and accessibility for participation.

Timur is interested in equitable apportionment and making sure that East County has representation. He worked on a campaign in East County last year and was blown away by the low turnout. He's learning more about the reasons behind that. He is also interested in the number of commissioners and believes that a fewer number of commissioners is a hallmark of white supremacy, with a lot of power concentrated in a small number of people. Timur is interested in knowing more about what they have the power to change as the Charter Review Committee.

Maja affirmed the idea of starting their work with a values exercise. She shared that she is a fan of ranked choice voting, but is open to other ideas and interested in hearing an analysis of County elections from that perspective. She is also interested in looking back at materials from the last Charter Review Committee related to campaign finance to see what was discussed and perhaps hearing from a few former committee members about their decision.

Meikelo is interested in collaborating with Portland Charter Review and seeking an alignment on some of the common ideas.

Samantha is interested in voting methods and examining different options for that. She is also interested in options for expanding the franchise and would like to know whether they can extend the vote to noncitizens. She doesn't think they can lower the voting age, but wanted to check on that, especially as the Executive Director of Next Up. On the topic of ranked choice voting, she thinks consulting with Benton County, Oregon, would be helpful since they have implemented it. She also shared the web link to the Portland City Charter Commission's Form of Government Subcommittee since they are considering some similar things. She

supported the idea of aligning how Multnomah County and Portland vote, but pointed out that the MCCRC will put its recommendations on the ballot first.

Maja pointed out that the first report from the Portland Charter Commission on this topic is supposed to come out on February 18<sup>th</sup>.

Kali said that they could ask Katherine Thomas, Assistant County Attorney, to provide legal analysis on extending the franchise to noncitizens and lowering the voting age. The subcommittee members indicated they would like to move ahead with this. Kali shared that Katherine would be able to provide that analysis based on how likely a move is to survive a legal challenge, rather than saying what the subcommittee can and cannot recommend.

Maja asked whether there is a residency requirement in the Charter for voting. Kali said there was not one in the Charter. Samantha added that she did not think Oregon has a residency requirement for voting, but that there is one for becoming an elected official in the Charter and that elected officials have to reside in a district for a year and half to qualify for election.

Samantha responded to a comment Timur put in the chat (see Appendix A) about enfranchising incarcerated people. Samantha noted that Multnomah County runs jails, which mainly host people who have not yet been adjudicated for a felony, and therefore are still eligible to vote under Oregon law, although they don't always get access to the ballot. She was curious about whether there are prisons in Multnomah County and whether they could extend the franchise to people who are incarcerated in those. She shared that the Oregon Constitution says people who have been convicted of felonies cannot vote unless otherwise stated by law.

Kali said she believed members of the Portland Charter Commission who are looking at elections would be willing to speak with the subcommittee.

Kali also shared that the campaign finance amendment to the Charter from 2016 was brought forward by a community group and that the language they brought to the committee was what the Charter Review Committee recommended, so she wasn't sure how much discussion there would be about the topic in the past records. She also mentioned that they could identify and connect with the group that suggested the amendment.

## **Next steps**

Kali asked subcommittee members about their priorities for their next meeting.

Annie said she would like input from community members or groups since she is interested in learning about their interests early in the process. She is also interested in connecting with the City of Portland Charter Commission members who are looking at elections issues.

Maja supported starting with a conversation about values. She shared that if they do get into a discussion of proportional representation, More Equitable Democracy's presentation to the Portland Charter Review Commission included a values decision-making process about whether "proportional voting is right for you." She shared the information about how to view that in the chat. She reiterated her personal preference for ranked choice voting, which is how More Equitable Democracy leans, as well, and said she would like to hear from them, as well as other groups since ranked choice isn't the only form of proportional voting.

Timur also supported a values exercise. He brought up the use of key performance measures; he recognized they wouldn't be able to track the impact of their decisions long term, but suggested that it might be a valuable exercise to think about what their key performance measures might be if they had them.

Samantha said she would commit to meeting with Annie between meetings to create a strategy screen using their values. She also suggested that they could gather these thoughts on speakers and map out a strategy about who they want to invite, who is missing, and who they want to add, with an eye toward inviting organizations they know champion voting rights.

Annie liked the idea of mapping out who they want to talk to.

Samantha asked if folks felt like they could commit to watching the presentation from More Equitable Democracy that Maja linked in the chat ahead of the next subcommittee meeting. Members agreed and the meeting ended.

## APPENDIX A

13:10:14 From Annie Kallen she/ her to Everyone: Apologies if my voice sounds weird today. I'm not feeling well. :(

13:10:30 From Samantha Gladu to Everyone: Sorry to hear that, Annie. I hope you get to rest and recover!

13:10:38 From Annie Kallen she/ her to Everyone: thanks!

13:20:39 From Samantha Gladu (she/they) to Everyone: Sundays or Mondays are still great; I'd prefer evening if possible!

13:21:24 From Maja (pronounced Maya) Harris (she/her) to Everyone: Monday works for me

13:21:27 From Timur Ender to Everyone: I can do anyday of the week after 8p. Before 8 is less ideal.

13:25:38 From Annie Kallen she/ her to Everyone: Going to have my camera off so I can lay down.

13:25:58 From Jude Perez to Hosts and panelists: Hope you feel better soon, Annie.

13:30:58 From Maja (pronounced Maya) Harris (she/her) to Everyone: Kali, can you please put the issues in the chat?

13:31:21 From Kali Odell (she/her) to Everyone: voting methods, electing officials, campaign finance, districts, resolution of a tied election, requirements for elected officials, number of commissioners, creation and/or filling of vacancies

13:37:13 From Maja (pronounced Maya) Harris (she/her) to Everyone: Agreed, Meikelo!

13:37:19 From Annie Kallen she/ her to Everyone: Yes!

13:38:54 From Samantha Gladu (she/they) to Everyone: <https://www.portland.gov/omf/charter-review-commission/subcommittees-form-government-city-council-elections>

13:41:08 From Samantha Gladu (she/they) to Everyone: Awesome!

13:41:54 From Samantha Gladu (she/they) to Everyone: Are there any other questions we'd like to ask Katherine at this point?

13:42:12 From Maja (pronounced Maya) Harris (she/her) to Everyone: I may have one

13:43:01 From Timur Ender to Everyone: yes...Ability for the County to decide whether to allow incarcerated ppl the opportunity to vote. Its one of the next frontiers in national front

13:45:11 From Annie Kallen she/ her to Everyone: I like that Timur

13:51:44 From Timur Ender to Everyone: I think 2/21 is President's day and may be a holiday for some ppl. Not a problem for me but wanted to flag it.

13:52:51 From Annie Kallen she/ her to Everyone: 2/21 works for me

13:53:42 From Maja (pronounced Maya) Harris (she/her) to Everyone: <https://www.portland.gov/omf/charter-review-commission/events/2021/9/23/charter-commission-meeting-w-public-comment>

13:53:49 From Maja (pronounced Maya) Harris (she/her) to Everyone: Minute 29:15

13:54:04 From Samantha Gladu (she/they) to Everyone: 2/21 works for me - is it a holiday for Kali?

13:54:19 From Kali Odell (she/her) to Everyone: I'm fine meeting on 2/21

13:54:36 From Maja (pronounced Maya) Harris (she/her) to Everyone: Should work for me too

13:54:42 From Jude Perez to Hosts and panelists: Me too

13:54:44 From Timur Ender to Everyone: <https://www.portland.gov/transportation/rose-lanes/about-rose-lanes> "Putting People First"

13:55:26 From Maja (pronounced Maya) Harris (she/her) to Everyone: That would be super helpful!

13:56:28 From Timur Ender to Everyone: <https://www.fvap.gov/citizen-voter>

13:57:54 From Maja (pronounced Maya) Harris (she/her) to Everyone: A big thank you to the co-chairs for taking this on!

13:59:07 From Samantha Gladu (she/they) to Everyone: Thanks for needing out together!!!

13:59:09 From Samantha Gladu (she/they) to Everyone: nerding\*