

# Regional cooperation seen as best solution

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Of the Argus

You don't necessarily need a regional government to deliver governmental services throughout the region, says Washington County Board Chairman Bonnie Hays.

In a recent interview, she said the county considers it "desirable" that local governments look at ways they might get together to deliver certain services more efficiently.

She said the county and other local governments throughout the region have been discussing this issue through an informal network known as FOCUS (Forum On Cooperative Urban Services).

"We're getting a lot of pressure to consolidate services, get rid of special service districts and so forth," she said. "Instead of having that imposed on us, we have an opportunity to resolve it ourselves."

"There is a desire to create processes we can use to all come together to make decisions. Nobody is being parochial. Everyone is saying, 'Yes, let's move on this thing.'"

But, Hays acknowledged, she is leery of some service-delivery proposals, such as giving new powers to the Metropolitan Service District or merging all local governments into a new regional entity.

"It's always been assumed that you'd have to have one big government to do this, but there are other opportunities to share, through in-



BONNIE HAYS

tergovernmental agreements, contracts, mergers or whatever.

"If we focus on services, let's look at how best to provide them. If a change in government is how you get that product, fine."

"It may or may not be true that we have to have fewer governments. You can get too big. Bigger is not always better. Decentralization (of governments) may be better."

"Let's find out what works for us. You've got to take a lot of differences into account—different political philosophies, different ways

of generating revenues and so on.

"You can't just ignore these things when you're looking at the best ways to deliver services."

Hays said it needs to be recognized that some services lend themselves to a cooperative effort and some don't.

"I can see where a regional water authority would be very, very good," she said. "There'd be an opportunity to share resources. Water shouldn't cost any more in one part of the region than another."

"On the other hand, I guess I wouldn't want someone 15 miles away making decisions that affect my neighborhood, so regional land use planning probably wouldn't work."

"Yes, we have statewide land use planning, but (it's based on) local plans created by local governments."

"And yes, we agreed there are limits to what we're allowed to do with our land, but it's not too many steps beyond that to the point where we have no rights to make land use decisions."

"It's imperative that we keep as many decisions as possible locally based to balance public policy and private ownership."

Hays said some of these issues likely will come up as a citizens committee works on drafting a charter for Metro.

That committee holds a public hearing at 7 tonight in the Portland General Electric building at Old Scholls Ferry Road and Murray Boulevard in Beaverton.