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Metro: Friend or sneaky foe?

Egge: Charter committee balanced Cusma says Metro is misunderstood

By RED FORD

CLACKAMAS — After a committee was formed to draft a home-rule charter for the Metropolitan Service District, one committee member said there was an attempt by Metro officials to pack the charter committee with people who would champion their cause. However, he doesn't think it will work.

"I don't believe that all of the people who've been appointed are going to react in a prescribed manner," said Jon Egge, a Clackamas businessman and community planning activist. "They have their own thoughts."

Egge said the Metro Charter Committee was formed to take control over Metro away from the state Legislature and give it to the people served by Metro.

Although Metro is operated by elected councilors and an elected executive director, the state Legislature has always maintained control over it. The home-rule charter would wrest control of Metro from the Legislature and put it in local hands. Egge's committee will write that charter, which will define Metro's authority and its goals.

Egge was appointed to the 16-member committee by the Clackamas County Board of County Commissioners. However, he said he views himself as a representative of the people, not any one group.

He said there is a need for regional planning, and he doesn't want to disband Metro, or dilute its role as a regional planner. But he draws the line at Metro as a service provider.

"If you allow Metro to do the planning for growth in the area, and also allow them to deliver the services, you have tainted that process," he said. Egge believes



Staff photo by Red Ford

Jon Egge, who serves on a committee drafting a charter for the Metropolitan Service District, said the charter process offers a chance to significantly improve regional government. He wants to see Metro involved in regional planning, but wants it out as a service provider.

regional planning and service delivery should be in separate hands. Otherwise, he said the planners would slant their planning to best benefit and enhance their service delivery, which might not serve the public good.

"If Metro is allowed to deliver services, those services generate a tremendous amount of money," he said. Egge believes Metro would expand and take over more services to gain more clout.

"Power in government... is generated by the number of

employees (in an agency)," he said. "The number of employees generates the need for money. If Metro is limited in its ability to provide services, it will help allay fears of residents in the area about one big growing form of large government."

In fact, Egge thinks Metro should get out of a lot of service projects, including the Washington Park Zoo, solid waste disposal and the Metro Exposition-Recreation Commission (MERC). He thinks

(See "Balanced" Page 2.)

By RED FORD

PORTLAND — Some critics in Clackamas County have called the Metropolitan Service District an unaccountable form of hidden government. Rena Cusma, Metro executive director, can sum up her response with one word: "Nonsense."

"I think that's just nonsense," she said recently in Metro's downtown Portland office. She pointed out that both herself and the Metro councilors are all elected to their positions, and said that's the way it should be.

"I'm a very strong believer in elected government," said Cusma. "I believe people have to be held accountable for the expenditure of public funds." While Metro isn't hidden, she thinks some confusion may arise over people's impressions of what Metro is, and does.

"The public is still trying to figure out what kind of an animal Metro is," she said. That public, the people who are served by Metro and who pay for Metro, should be involved in defining Metro's role, and should have the final say in how it's run, she said.

Toward that end, a 16-member committee has been formed to write a home-rule charter for Metro. Until now, Metro has been ruled to some degree by the state Legislature. Now, Cusma and other local officials want to change that. The charter committee will create a charter defining Metro's role and power and giving overall control to the people who live within Metro's boundaries.

A big problem with having the state Legislature rein over Metro is the majority of legislators don't live within Metro's boundaries, said Cusma. A Metro vote by a legislator whose constituency lies half-way across the state is a vote that can be traded for something he wants in his district. Cusma said the issues affecting Metro are too important to be made by people with no personal stake in



Rena Cusma

the consequences. She added that the new charter can put control of Metro right where it belongs: In the hands of the taxpayers who support Metro.

"The whole agenda is home-rule — to put together a home-rule charter," said Cusma. There are three major issues the committee must address. They include:

• Clarifying Metro's role. That needs to be a clear definition of what regional government is, and what its role is, according to Cusma. There has been an ongoing fear held by some city and county officials in Clackamas County that Metro may try to take control of local governments. Cusma said clarifying Metro's role should assuage those fears.

"I hope that would put aside some of the fear and paranoia about us being a big amoeba that's going to swallow the whole world," she said.

• Defining Metro's functions. This is the real challenge before the committee, said Cusma. "We need to be somewhat visionary about this," she said. "The public wants efficiency and cost-effectiveness." (See "Metro" Page 2.)

EPA cites asbestos contractor

OREGON CITY — A contractor used by every school district in Clackamas County to develop asbestos management plans has been cited for faulty

cording to the EPA statement. Of the approximately 1,300 districts nation-wide that have used Hall-Kimbrell, 70 are in Oregon.

School board chairs regions

Balanced

(continued from page 1.)
Metro should focus on regional planning, and adds that Metro councilors are overburdened as it is.

"Metro councilors do hard work," said Egge. "Almost too much work for part-time councilors. What's the answer? Add more councilors? Then you have subcommittees, that can operate in real darkness. If we put this process under the cover of darkness, the people are the real losers."

Egge said his goal with Metro is to ensure good government to meet regional planning needs. "I'm intensely interested in good government — all government," he said. "We've got enough problems with government by the nature of government. We ought to have the best government we can get."

The charter process has tremendous potential to improve regional government, according to Egge. But he adds that it remains to be seen if that potential is realized. "We have the potential to come up with a good, representative form of government," he said. "There's no question that we can improve on the responsiveness of regional government."

Metro

(continued from page 1.)
tiveness. That's a reasonable request. There are some things that just can't be done except by regional government.

"We need to give some thought and care to vest not only the responsibility, but the authority to perform on these kinds of things — and that includes financing options," she said.

77. Oregon for 26 years.

Survivors include husband William Hurst, sons Tom of Tualatin and Tim of Beaverton, and 7 grandchildren.

Cryptside services will be held 10 a.m., Wednesday, Aug. 28, at Mt. View Cemetery. Donations in her memory may be made to Hospice of St. Vincent, 9205 S.W. Barnes Road, Portland, Ore. 97225. Arrangements are being handled by Hillside Chapel, Oregon City.

Max Lampkins

Max Buell Lampkins of Oregon City, died Aug. 25. He was 71.

Mr. Lampkins was born April 27, 1920 in Flora, Ore. He retired from Crown Zellerbach in 1980 as a Machinist. He was a member of the Local 68 AWPWW, AA for over 30 years.

Survivors include daughter Carol Rice of Redland, son Lynn Lampkins of Birkenfeld, brother Wilbur Lampkins of Millwaukie, sister Betty McDaniels of West Linn, sister Dot Allen of Melbourne, Fla. and 3 grandchildren.

plan.
"It's served us well," he said. "I feel more confident because we've had an independent company check the work."

Robert Stewart, facilities manager at the Gladstone School District, said he had not seen the report. He said that EPA officials had inspected the district as recently as last spring and he knew of no deficiencies in the district's asbestos management plan.

According to the EPA statement, the agency is continuing to

Although he advocates a role for regional government in planning, Egge said that in many cases bigger is not always better. "Many small governments are in serious financial trouble, including Portland," he said. "There are many who see one big government as a solution. The illusion that larger size offers some kind of economy of service is just that — an illusion."

"For example, large businesses are flattening out. Businesses have recognized that smaller entrepreneurial enterprises do a better job of delivering services. Small governments (cities) role is not to protect their turf, it's to deliver services," said Egge. Services like water and fire and police protection are better delivered by a local government, he said.

"Local government is directly accountable and directly accessible to the voters who want those services," said Egge.

Some city and county officials have expressed concern about the home-rule charter being used to extend Metro's reach into local affairs, and say it could be a step toward a "super county," incorporating Multnomah County and the urban portions of Washington

and Clackamas counties. While he said there are some on the charter committee who are "super county" advocates, Egge said he strongly opposes the concept.

"The super county is a blueprint for disaster," he said. "The bigger they are, the less efficient they are, and most certainly the less responsive they are. Big federal government is not responsive. Do we want to recreate that in the metro area? The answer is no."

However, Egge said the other side of the coin is that some planning functions are better performed on a regional basis. "An important function of regional government is to make sure that regional planning is done with a regional perspective," said Egge. "Can you have regional planning without regional government? No."

"You may have one big government that delivers regional services, but it won't do the planning — Metro will. And I don't think Metro should have any service function."

Egge said it's too early in the process to know what Metro will look like after the charter is written. But he added that he has some strong ideas about how it should not look. "Planning should happen in a way the people decide, not

have decisions made by a distant government entity. Consolidation of governments should happen from the bottom up.

"People who advocate (the super county) are doing it from the top down, with a dictatorial perspective."

Even though he advocates a strong role for local governments in service provision, Egge bristles when he hears some local officials talk about the new charter threatening "local control."

"The issue is not local control," he said. "The issue is local participation. Local governments should have strong participation in regional planning."

Egge doesn't want to be labeled a "Metro-basher." "It's easy to label someone as Metro-bashing when all they are really after is some improvement," he said. "There is room for improvement with Metro, said Egge. Metro's administration fees are high, he said, and he claims Metro is the only current form of local government that has prospered under Measure 5.

"The reason is they are able to siphon off those administrative fees with little accountability to the voter," he said.

• Determining Metro's form. "Form follows function," said Cusma. "It can't get there until the agency decides what it's going to do. One thing that's been a problem — Metro is not a panacea. It can't be all things to all people. It has a role to play. We have to define it well, and do it well, to best serve the public."

Metro may be revamped by the committee, but Cusma doesn't desire to see functions removed from Metro, a goal of some committee members. "I think the role has already been defined by the Legislature," she said. "It needs some clarification to be better understood by the public and local governments."

What is that role? "To deal with regional programs that are of metropolitan significance," said Cusma. "The things that can't be done by local government, or the things that are more cost-effectively done by regional government." Not all services need to be delivered on a regional basis, she said. "I think there are a great many services that need to be delivered as close to the public as possible. There has to be a reason to consolidate," said Cusma.

Cost effectiveness, efficiency and regional planning are examples where consolidation may be justified, she said.

"There's no way on Earth to manage an urban growth boundary when it's run by 24 cities and three counties," said Cusma. Other examples where regional planning is needed include a possible phosphate ban and disposal of solid waste, she said. "It doesn't make sense to me that 24 cities and three counties would each have their own authority to site their own landfill," said Cusma.

Clackamas County officials have called Metro a first step toward a super county, combining Multnomah and urban Washington and Clackamas counties into one big county, sometimes referred to as "Willamette County." Some charter committee members have been accused of advocating formation of a super county. However, Cusma maintains that those fears are misplaced. Far from Metro benefitting by propagating a super county, the formation of such an entity would

spell the end of Metro, she said.

"That's a separate issue (from the home-rule charter)," she said. "It's fed and fueled by the Willamette County agenda, driven by the City Club (of Portland). A super county could address a number of issues a regional government could handle. However, I don't think the public is willing to give up their counties. If their local governments decide to consolidate, then there would be no need for Metro."

"That gets back to defining our role," said Cusma. "What properly should we do, and what not should we be doing?"

Cusma responded to a number of criticisms and suggestions about possible paths for Metro. She opposes releasing control of the Washington Park Zoo, saying the zoo receives public funds and is a regional facility with regional impact.

She said Metro should not relinquish its role as a service provider, and be solely a planning agency. "Some services should be provided regionally," she said. "I think any service provider would be in trouble if they didn't have a strong planning unit. I don't know any city or county that doesn't have a planning department."

Are Metro administration fees too high? Not according to Cusma. "This is a fee-based organization, so people pay for the cost of their service," she said. "(On solid-waste disposal fees) Compared to other areas on this coast and on the East Coast, our costs are very reasonable, and people are paying the real costs."

Cusma scoffs at allegations that the Metro Charter Committee is

packed with people who would support the Metro officers' goals. Metro appointed eight of 16 committee members.

"If anything, the reverse is true," she said. "I can't believe anybody in their right mind would believe that's true. I don't know how they would believe it's packed." Committee members were selected based on their ability to design a plan that would serve the region over an extended period of time, she said. The goal was not to enmesh or empower Metro.

"I would hope that this exercise will be undertaken with an eye to the long-term agenda — and the long-term public need," she said. "This is not a time for a personal agenda. We have to look at this as a long-term charter. The way to do this is to go to the public with the best product we can give them, with the most protection we can give them."

"We're only hired help," said Cusma. "I'm only going to be here for awhile, any Metro councilor is only going to be here for awhile, any elected official is only going to be here for awhile. We really do have to step past turf, and think of it as the public's constitution."

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