

Tualatin

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## Opinion

# Local leaders correct to join Metro process

Local residents should be glad — not wary — that elected officials from around the metropolitan area have created a Regional Governance Committee to follow the fast-moving formation of a charter for the Metropolitan Service District.

The regional committee, which is headed by Tualatin Mayor Steve Stolze and includes cities, counties and special services districts, has been called an attack on the Metro charter process. The criticism is that the local officials fear they will lose power to an effective regional government.

The complaints are an unfortunate continuation of a centrist viewpoint that often emanates from downtown Portland: specifically, "You folks in the suburbs need not worry, we know better and will provide for orderly process and economic development."

That superior attitude flies in the face of many issues, including local governance and community cooperation. It also neglects to take into account that direction provided the region by Portland- and Multnomah County-elected leadership is largely in disarray. The election of a new Portland mayor next year may help, but even that outcome is not assured to be a positive one for the suburbs. As for Metro, the regional government is generally doing a good job and is well run at this time. But have we all forgotten that the first decade of Metro were years rife with troubles?

Local cities, counties and special districts have a historic and legal responsibility to participate in the Metro charter process beyond appointing a few representatives to the charter committee.

Remember, Metro is a regional planning and service district, first created by the Oregon Legislature in 1976. While citizens in the region ratified its existence, Metro is a mere babe compared with the many incorporated cities and local governments who may be affected by Metro charter provisions and the expansion of regional government.

Legally, local citizens elected their councils and commissions to directly guide their respective communities. That leadership doesn't stop at the border of a city, special service district or county when it comes to regional issues or how governments should relate to each other.

That is why it is important that municipal views or special service district views are addressed in advance and presented to the Metro charter process from the point of the view of the city or service district and not from the perspective of Metro alone.

The push for appropriate regional problem solving should not be in question during the charter review process. Regional programs do work, but that doesn't mean it is an all-or-nothing proposition.

We are planning the future here. The time and money spent by local cities, counties and service districts on the Metro charter process are a worthy investment.