

Opinion

Metro charter, road plan require input

Changes in how government affects us are occurring as we speak. It is a process that requires community and business involvement. Now.

Two immediate issues are the ongoing process to write a charter for the Metropolitan Service District and a state-wide effort to shape a new transportation plan for Oregon.

Why should local area residents be concerned about and involved in these issues? It is quite simple. We live and do business smack in the middle of what's happening. Local growth is prompting many of these changes. And we will be affected greatly by any new policies.

Metro, which was created by the state Legislature, is writing a home rule charter to define Portland regional government for the next four decades. The process must be concluded by July so that a charter proposal can be placed on the November 1992 general election ballot.

Most local residents are likely unaware and don't even care that a Metro charter is being written. For good reason. To date, regional government has had little influence on most of our lives. But that is quickly changing. We should be concerned. What is different now is that in defining its own regional future, it is clear that Metro also will be defining the future of local governments in the cities of Tigard, Tualatin, Sherwood and Beaverton. It will also affect special service districts like Tualatin Hills Park and Recreation or Tigard Water and Washington County.

This process is not occurring in vacuum, at least not completely. For the past several months, the Metro Charter Committee has been working hard on this project. Citizen input has been heard. And groups like the Portland Chamber and a coalition of local governments from Washington, Multnomah and Clackamas counties has formed to monitor the charter writing process.

What is missing is the fact that most of us don't realize the significance of what is going on and how Metro's future shape will affect us. As a result, the average citizen or business person hasn't been heard from.

The most immediate impact of a new charter will be Metro's potential ability to assume responsibility for services presently planned for and delivered locally. Such changes may greatly change the face of the city council or the county commission — governments that local citizens have a greater chance to influence than a regional government.

This is not a challenge to regional government. It is a challenge to local residents and businesses to participate in establishing what are the goals, roles and procedures best provided by regional government in the next century.

And by doing so, we will also define the role and benefit of our local governments.

How do you get informed? Get involved. Call Metro, local chambers of commerce, the Tualatin Valley Economic Development Commission or city hall. Attend Metro charter committee meetings. Share your views with your local leaders.

As for transportation, the state is concluding the first round of public hearings on a new transportation plan that is expected to serve Oregon for the next 40 years. Fourteen hearings were held around the state, including the latest, Wednesday night, in Tigard.

Beaverton, Tigard and Tualatin are certainly in the center of this growth and frequently at gridlock.

Like the Metro charter, the transportation plan will be decided by the end of next summer. And while it is a complex issue, like the Metro charter, there is compelling reason for local citizen and business attention and involvement in the formation of a new transportation plan.