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Nor does this mean Metro will automatically use these taxing methods if the charter passes. The committee members say they are simply allowing for a broad base of taxing options that the regional government can choose from.

Before these taxes could be imposed they would have to be approved by ordinance of the Metro Council or by the voters, depending on the particular tax.

If these tax recommendations are adopted, will they cost residents and business owners more money?

Those that support Metro taking a more active role in governing the region say no. They say that money will simply be diverted from what is already being spent by local jurisdictions.

Some suggest that taxpayers will actually save money in the long run because there will be less duplication of services and more efficiency through centralization.

Multnomah County Board of Commissioners Chair Gladys McCoy is one who makes this claim.

"There are a variety of things we (local governments) all do, and I think we ought to look at this duplication and ask, 'does that make sense?'" she says. "I believe that's what the public is asking."

But not everyone agrees. Some in the community wonder if granting Metro expanded powers and taxing authority will really save money or merely result in more layers of bureaucracy and more taxes piled on existing ones.

This perception has committee members worried. In order for Metro to take on the added responsibilities the proposed charter would grant it, some members said they would need to rely on general tax methods.

Such funding methods as property taxes, sales taxes, personal or business income taxes and payroll taxes would be powerful revenue raising tools. But they would require voter approval by a public that may be in no mood for such things.

"If you look at the major taxes, the outcome is going to be the same--They're not going to happen," said committee member and Oregon State Senator Ron Cease.

If this proves to be the case, then Metro may once again find itself relying on "niche taxes" that target specific groups rather than the entire populace.

Such taxes don't generate the amount of revenue that general tax methods do, and result in their own set of political problems.

"Niche taxes are always politically very convenient, but I don't know how effective they are," said committee member Charlie Hales.

"And they do tend to breed resentment in various constituencies against whatever government is imposing. There's a feeling of interference. And those things fester."

Because of these concerns, the committee considered whether some tax methods should specifically be prohibited in the charter. Some members wanted to forbid such taxes as personal income, business income, payroll, property and sales taxes and an excise tax on construction.

Committee member John Meek said these taxes should require a charter amendment. He said that enacting these kinds of taxes should require the high level of scrutiny and public involvement that would result from the amendment process.

The majority, however, said amending the charter would be lengthy and cumbersome. They chose instead to include the tax methods in the charter and allow Metro to determine for itself if it wants and has the political clout to use them.

As the region comes to terms with the existence of Measure 5 and the message behind it, the question of whether or not to consolidate services and planning in one large governmental body is an important one.

But so far, according to charter committee staff, it is an issue that the general public has shown little interest in.

Neighborhood leaders say that this is because few residents have a firm grasp of the purpose of Metro, its processes and the issues surrounding it.

Perhaps the upcoming public hearings can change that.

# Metro Charter Committee Public Hearings Schedule

March 30, Monday, 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Tigard Water District

8841 SW Commercial, Tigard

6:00 Portland Metropolitan Chamber  
of Commerce

6:45 Open for other public testimony

March 31, Tuesday, 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

PSU, Smith Memorial Center, Room 338

(Vanport Room), Portland

6:00 Metro Council

6:40 Regional Governance Committee

7:45 Open for other public testimony

A report on the finance options is available; and copies of the two charter drafts will be made available to neighborhood or business associations, other groups, or individuals. Arrangements can be made to have these mailed by calling 273-5570, or writing the Metro Charter Committee, P.O. Box 9236, Portland, OR 97207.

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