

METRO/NORTHWEST

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Metro Charter Committee votes for changes

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The Metro Charter Committee has voted to substantially change the way the regional government does business.

The provisions, which could go before the voters in November as part of a home rule charter for the regional government, would retain the 13-member council elected from districts, but eliminate the executive officer elected at large and the current separation of powers system.

Instead, a council chair would be elected regionwide, have a vote on the council, and receive a full-time salary. The chair also would propose the budget, set agendas, and hire an administrative officer, with consent of the council, to actually run the government.

The current executive officer, Rena Cusma, would assume the new job of council chairwoman until the end of her current term in January 1995.

"It would be fun, but it wouldn't be good government," Cusma said

Friday.

"I have always believed that the separation of powers best protects the public interest. I think this puts too much power in the hands of one person," she said. "If you get somebody good, that's great, but if you get some real powermonger, it could be really difficult."

Cusma said she did like it better than some of the other versions the committee has tossed around.

The committee voted on the proposal Thursday night. The vote was 12-2, with two members absent.

The vote came after weeks of debate that at times took on the tone of a graduate school seminar in government, and at other times resembled a political science experiment gone mad.

Ken Gervais, a Cusma aide assigned to monitor the committee's work, showed up at the meeting wearing a lime-green sport coat, a wild tie and a Panama hat with purple hat band. He said his wardrobe would get more outlandish every meeting until the committee decided something.