

**METRO
CHARTER
COMMITTEE**

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NEWS RELEASE

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PROPOSED METRO CHARTER HEARINGS SCHEDULED

A proposed home rule charter for Metro is to undergo public hearings set for June 25, 29 and 30. The charter, if approved by area voters in November, will serve as a constitution for the Metropolitan Service District, or Metro, the regional government in this area. A 16-member committee of local citizens deliberated for a year in writing the proposed charter.

Metro currently provides urban growth planning, coordinates solid waste for the region, and operates several public facilities, including the Zoo, Memorial Coliseum, Convention Center and the Center for the Performing Arts. It is the only regional government in the nation that is directly elected by the people it serves. Parts of Multnomah, Washington and Clackamas Counties are included within Metro's boundaries.

The proposed charter is not a rubber stamp of the current form of the regional government, and in fact makes several changes. Metro presently has a separation of powers structure--similar to the state and federal forms--with a legislative council and a separate executive branch having veto power. This charter proposal would combine the two branches by making the executive officer a member of the council.

The executive officer, renamed 'president' by this charter, would continue to be elected at large. The number of councilors --13 with the next election--would be retained and elected from equally apportioned districts, as they are now.

The charter committee has emphasized planning for urban growth as the most important function of this regional government. It would require Metro to write a regional framework plan that coordinates the planning activities of different jurisdictions within the area. If Metro is to take on new service and planning functions, the proposed charter would be require them to consult, and in some cases get the approval of, local governments.

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How the regional government is financed was also a consideration of the charter committee. They proposed that if Metro is going to take advantage of certain broad-based taxes, the government must get approval from the voters. These taxes would include property, income, sales and payroll taxes. The regional government would be able to enact any other taxes by council ordinance, however, the amount raised in this way would be limited to a \$12.6 million cap, adjustable to the cost of living.

Metro, in its current form, has been in existence since 1979. It was formerly a council of local governments in the region until the voters in 1978 approved the creation of a regional government of councilors elected from districts. Major decisions on the activities taken on by Metro, however, continued to be decided by the Legislature.

In 1990 Oregon voters approved a ballot measure to allow a home rule charter be written for Metro. A charter committee was appointed and began meeting in May of the next year. The committee chair is Hardy Myers, former Speaker of the Oregon State Legislature and partner at Stoel, Rives, Boley, Jones.

Hearings on the proposed charter will take place in each of the three counties of the region. They are scheduled as follows:

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| June 25, Thursday | Northwest Natural Gas Company, 4th floor, 220 NW 2nd Avenue, Portland, 6-9 p.m. |
| June 29, Monday | Washington County Public Services Building, 155 N. First Avenue, Hillsboro, 6-9 p.m. |
| June 30, Tuesday | Lake Oswego City Hall, 380 A Avenue, 6-9 p.m. |

Anyone who would like to testify at one of the hearings, or would like a copy of the charter draft, should call 273-5570. Copies of the charter draft will be available after June 17 from the Charter Committee office.

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