

Lake Oswego

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Review

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Metro home rule option joins ballot

Outcome of November ballot will determine future shape of Metro

By KEITH KLIPPSTEIN
Staff Reporter

Competing measures on the Nov. 3 general election ballot may dictate the future of the Metropolitan Service District and regional government.

The Metro Charter Committee voted 11-5 last week to send its proposal, which would provide a home rule charter for the Metropolitan Service District, to the voters.

The 16-member panel included two Lake Oswego residents. Frank Josselson voted for the proposal while Ray Phelps voted against it.

The committee had been developing a Metro charter proposal for the past 15 months, but in July Metro Executive Rena Cusma and

members of the Metro Council developed a counterproposal that also will appear on the Nov. 3 ballot.

The council-backed "super-county" plan suggests forming one government from those now existing for Metro, Tri-Met and Clackamas, Multnomah and Washington counties. It will appear as an advisory vote measure on the general election ballot.

Metro itself initiated the charter development process by asking the Legislature to amend the state constitution to allow a home rule charter. The goal had been to develop a government that could better deal with growth.

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A revamped Metro, as proposed, would have planning and policy making as its most important services. It would be required to adopt a "future vision" that would serve as a long-term, visionary outlook into the next 50 years.

In addition, a "regional framework plan" would address growth management and land use planning matters for the region. The plan would be the basis for coordinating all local government comprehensive plans and would require compliance within three years of

adoption of the regional framework plan.

Some of the other basic elements in the charter proposal include:

- Metro's current form of government — an executive and a council — would continue. The executive would be elected at large and would administer council policies and propose an annual budget. The council would be reduced to seven members, from the current 13, and would continue to serve specific districts.

Two counties file suit over wording of title

By POLLY CAMPBELL
Staff Reporter

Washington and Clackamas counties went to court Tuesday over the wording of a Metro ballot title that seeks to abolish their county governments.

A hearing is set for Friday in Multnomah County Circuit Court on the challenge, which asks the court to declare that the measure is advisory and not a change in law.

Metro decided two weeks ago to put the measure up for an advisory vote in November. But language used in the ballot title and the explanatory statement in the voter's pamphlet has county commissioners challenging the measure in court.

"The actual language on the ballot is not at all consistent with what we and the public have been told," said Bonnie Hays, chairwoman of the Washington County Board of Commissioners.

It is not clear that the measure is an advisory vote, Hays said.

Instead, the ballot measure would become law and impose requirements on elected officials, said Chief Assistant County Counsel Dan Olsen.

If an advisory vote passes, a comprehensive study would be done to determine if county consolidation is the most practical approach to local government, Hays said.

A second measure then would be sent to voters asking if they want to create one "super-county," she said.

"Metro's current ballot measure is structured in such a way that there is no flexibility for change even if analysis or the actual creation of the government proved that Metro's proposal would not work," Hays said.

The explanatory statement for the measure is also misleading, Hays said. It provides details beyond those stated in the ballot measure and could confuse voters who are only asked to decide on what is written in the measure, she added.

Ballot title from Metro prompts counties to sue

By POLLY CAMPBELL
Of the Times 8-6-92

HILLSBORO — Washington and Clackamas counties went to court Tuesday over the wording of a Metro ballot title that seeks to abolish their county governments.

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Panel seeks super-county data

8-6-92 Reg.

HILLSBORO — The Washington County Board of Commissioners asked its staff Wednesday to gather information about conducting a region-wide survey on a proposed super-county.

The board wants information in two weeks about costs and other details including an indication if other governments would help pay for a survey.

The Metropolitan Service District has proposed combining Washington, Clackamas and Multnomah counties, plus Tri-Met and Metro, into a single entity known as Willamette County.

The Metro proposal will be on the November general election ballot. Residents within the Metro bound-

ary may vote on the measure. In addition, Metro has asked the counties to place measures on the ballot permitting residents outside the Metro boundary to vote on the super-county proposal.

During its Tuesday meeting, the Washington County board questioned whether the two measures would provide useful information or a true reflection of sentiment.

Furthermore, Chairwoman Bonnie Hays said, people in urban areas could vote on the issue twice — once as residents within Metro's boundary and once as county residents.

Commissioner Kathy Christy said a well-balanced survey would provide information worth sharing in the region.

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Public debate on Metro plans needed

Regardless of the outcome of the Nov. 3 general election, residents of Lake Oswego will be affected by the proposed structural changes concerning the Metropolitan Service District or Metro.

Thus far, voters will have the choice of two distinct options.

The first, proposed by the Metro Charter Committee, involves a home rule concept which would basically retain the current shape of Metro with several modifications. The executive would be elected at-large and the number of council members reduced from 13 to seven members. Under this proposal, Metro would expand its functions, be authorized to impose broad-based taxes such as sales, income, property and payroll (with voter approval), and a policy advisory committee would be created.

The second proposal, dubbed the 'supercounty' plan would merge the governments of Metro, Tri-Met, Clackamas, Multnomah and Washington counties. Proponents say the move could save taxpayers 10 percent.

Both options need to be thoroughly explained to voters by county officials and thoroughly examined by voters. In order for both to take place, county and Metro officials should, in our view, invite themselves to communities for town-hall type question and answer sessions. Rather than waiting for cities to invite them, the initiative should come from those officials best acquainted with the proposals.

Let's hope those meetings happen soon and that the final direction of Metro, as dictated by the voters in November, will be the best choice for all.

Come on, Metro, play fair

The Metro Council and Executive Rena Cusma indulged themselves in some bald-faced turf protection in the government-consolidation measure they plan to put before voters in November.

The measure asks if voters want to be given the authority to abolish Metro, Tri-Met and the three metropolitan counties and replace them with a new county.

So far, so good. If voters indicate they're willing to consider having one county instead of three, then work toward an eventual binding election on creation of a new county could begin in earnest.

Metro's measure, however, goes one step further. It tries to stack the deck so the structure of that new government would include a council and separately elected executive. That structure resembles none of the existing counties but is — surprise! — just like Metro's.

This kind of detail doesn't belong in a general question to voters. The structure of the new county is only one of many details that should be worked out through extensive discussion and study.

Metro has time to fix this problem before the deadlines to submit items for the ballot and inclusion in the Voters' Pamphlet. It should do so.

8-5-92