

# County ponders who will vote

## Meanwhile, circuit court judge questions legality of Metro proposal

By KEITH KLIPPSTEIN  
Staff Reporter

Clackamas County is taking an aggressive stance regarding the five-government consolidation plan proposed by the Metropolitan Service District.

The county, as represented by Darlene Hooley, a member of the Clackamas County Board of Commissioners, took part in a suit, filed Aug. 4, to change the wording in the ballot title of the consolidation plan. The proposal will appear as an advisory measure to voters within Metro boundaries on the Nov. 3 general election ballot.

Hooley said the suit was filed because the county wants the measure to be clearly defined so voters will understand it.

Friday a Multnomah County Circuit judge expressed concern about the legality of the measure.

Judge Lee Johnson said he agreed the measure title is misleading but also said the proposal may suffer from legal flaws that would disqualify it from the November ballot. The judge scheduled a second hearing on the matter for Friday.

The county has scheduled five community meetings that will invite input regarding the "supercounty" proposal. The purpose is for the county commissioners to hear its constituents and decide whether to post a companion ballot on the measure for the 91,000 county residents who live outside Metro boundaries.

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The consolidation proposal suggests forming one government from those now existing for Metro, Tri-Met and Clackamas, Multnomah and Washington counties. Metro approved July 23 sending the advisory measure to the voters, three weeks after the plan was announced.

However, even if the measure were to earn approval, Metro would need to forward the concept of a supercounty to the state Legislature, which would have to draw up a plan for uniting the five governments.

Ever since Metro developed its supercounty proposal, Hooley said the county has been deluged with calls and letters.

"The interest is very high on this," she said.

Because of that, the commissioners are considering placing the supercounty proposal on the Nov. 3 ballot for the 91,000 county residents who don't live within Metro boundaries and wouldn't otherwise get the chance to vote on the measure.

"We will hold five hearings throughout the county to see if we

should (offer the measure) countywide," Hooley said. "The other 91,000 people wouldn't get a chance to vote on it. The measures would say similar things, but they wouldn't be exactly the same."

Metro Executive Rena Cusma has been invited to attend the meetings, and county Assessor Ray Erland also will be at some of them. Erland has analyzed the proposal and said Clackamas County property owners would see a tax shift of \$12.3 million to them and away from Multnomah County property tax payers.

The meetings are as follows:

- Monday, Aug. 17, 7 p.m., second floor courtroom, Clackamas County Courthouse, 807 Main St., Oregon City.
- Tuesday, Aug. 18, 7 p.m., Sandy Community/Senior Center, 38348 Pioneer Blvd.
- Wednesday, Aug. 26, 7 p.m., Lake Oswego City Hall, 380 A Ave.

- Tuesday, Sept. 1, 7 p.m., council chambers, Canby City Hall, 182 N. Holly.

- Wednesday, Sept. 2, 7 p.m., Milwaukie Senior Community Center, 5440 S.E. Kellogg Creek Drive.

As for the suit, Hooley said the purpose to clear up what Clackamas and Washington county officials consider to be unclear in the current ballot title.

"We're asking Metro what it means in the ballot title, whether this is an advisory measure or not, and what it's trying to do," Hooley explained. "We're trying to make sure the people understand what they'll be voting on."

"We're not challenging this to stop it from appearing on the ballot. We want to clarify what it means."

The suit, filed in Multnomah County Circuit Court, will be on an expedited schedule because the measure is slated for the general

election ballot, she said.

It was simple for the Clackamas County officials, Hooley said, to find an alliance with Washington County officials.

"After looking at the ballot title and talking with our legal counsel, we decided it didn't make sense," Hooley said. "We might have talked to them (in Washington County) first, but they had come to the same conclusions as we did and it was easy for us to get together on this."