

Thursday, August 27, 1992

Metro charter ready for November ballot

By DOUG BROWNING
Of the Argus

Voters will be asked Nov. 3 to approve a charter for the Metropolitan Service District and give themselves more of a voice in determining what the regional agency does.

Metro was created by the Legislature, which means that senators and representatives from as far away as Ontario and Gold Beach have as much say as one from Hillsboro in defining its duties.

The proposed charter on the November ballot would cut the Legislature out of the equation and make Metro a "home rule" government controlled by representatives elected by people who live within Metro's boundaries in Washington, Multnomah and Clackamas counties.

If adopted, the charter could be changed only by voters, not by Metro itself or by the Legislature.

The charter defines Metro's primary function as planning and adopting policies that will "preserve and protect the region's quality of life and its environment."

Specifically, it would be responsible for managing the urban growth boundary, planning for transportation and solid waste, siting regional facilities, coordinating a "greenspaces" program, developing a "future vision" planning document and planning for water sources and storage.

It could get involved in other planning activities if authorized by a Metropolitan Policy Advisory Committee (MPAC) consisting of elected officials and appointed citizens.

Metro would continue to run regional solid waste facilities—transfer stations and landfills—and to manage Portland facilities used by residents from throughout the region, such as the Washington Park Zoo, the convention center, Civic Auditorium, the Center for the Performing Arts and so forth.

It could take on new responsibilities only with voter approval or MPAC approval. And it could levy new taxes only with voter approval.

Metro's structure also would change. Its current 13-member Council would become a seven-member body in 1995. Council mem-

bers would continue to be elected to represent specific areas within the region.

The Metro Executive Officer, however, would be elected by voters regionwide but would be primarily an administrator, not a policymaker.

Even its name would change. The cumbersome Metropolitan Service District would be dropped in favor of the simpler Metro.

By approving a ballot measure changing the state constitution in November 1990, voters statewide authorized Metro to become a home rule agency.

The 1991 Legislature then created a 16-member committee to draft a charter proposal for voter consideration. It appointed three members and allowed cities and counties and Metro to name the other members.

Washington County was represented by Mary Tobias, executive director of the private Tualatin Valley Economic Development Commission; Rep. John Meek, R-Hillsboro; Wes Myllenbeck of Cedar Hills, a past chairman of the Washington County Board of Commissioners; and Lawrence Derr, a land use attorney who once served as Washington County Counsel.

Tobias said Wednesday that writing a charter was "the most difficult public involvement process I've ever been involved in, and I've been in some doozies, believe me."

But, she said, she came out of the process "feeling very upbeat."

She added: "I think what we came up with is better than what we have now. It has a clear definition of (Metro's) powers. It clarifies the relationships between Metro and its constituents and between Metro and other local governments. It has some weaknesses, but it's better than what we have now."

Meanwhile, most local govern-

ments joined forces to form a Regional Governance Committee (RGC) to monitor the charter committee's work and suggest ideas for its consideration.

The RGC has endorsed the proposed charter and urges voters to adopt it in November. The City of Hillsboro didn't participate in the RGC, and the city council is to vote soon on whether to endorse the charter.

Local governments have always mistrusted Metro because they felt it was scheming to diminish their authority and take over many of the functions they provide. However, the RGC says the proposed charter eases such worries.

In a written statement, its steering committee said: "... (T)he RGC is pleased with many of the (charter) provisions, such as the institutionalized role for local governments in Metro's decision-making processes... and a good balance of protecting local governments' role in the delivery of services... This is a substantial improvement over the status quo."

Measure removal welcome decision

8/27/92
The court decision to pull the Metropolitan Service District's proposed "supercounty" measure from the Nov. 3 ballot was the right decision.

Metro officials should save themselves and the public a fight by not attempting any future, poorly thought-out attempts at electioneering and governance.

The concept of consolidating Metro, Tri-Met, and Clackamas, Washington and Multnomah counties may have merit, but throwing a confusing ballot title at voters without much discussion of the potential impact on the local level isn't the way to go.

Time
The plan has been shoved along too fast for a measure of its magnitude. Though it was to be simply an advisory vote by constituents of the Metro district, voters still need to know what their punch of the ballot will mean. The consolidation measure — huge issue that it is — was rushed onto the November ballot just three weeks after Metro announced the concept. What happened to an education process? The poll booth is not a good place to be educated, it needs to happen before that.

The measure has also been clouded by a lawsuit and possible legal flaws. The suit came over the wording of the ballot title. Then to muddy the water even further, Multnomah County Circuit Judge Lee Johnson claimed a possible legal problem in Metro's intent to take the matter to the state Legislature upon voter approval of the advisory measure.

Furthermore, voter confusion on an issue like this may prompt a blanket "no" vote, and that could backfire on Metro, which also has a charter measure and a Greenspaces measure on the ballot.

There should be many hearings and forums on the local levels before any such consolidation measure hits the ballot, even at the advisory stage. Then, if the measure truly has merit, a more educated voting public will approve it.

There's nothing wrong with getting public opinion, but Metro can collect comment in many other and far better ways than calling for a vote.

Metro Charter Committee worked long and hard to develop charter

To the Editor: Kudos to 16 hard-working citizens, members of the Metro Charter Committee, who have spent the last 15 months researching, studying and listening to civic and business organizations, "ordinary" citizens and local governments tell what they want in "their" regional government. Each of the committee members and staff spent hundreds of hours in spirited and often emotional discussion and negotiation hammering out the Metro Charter.

I was so impressed with the commitment of the Charter Committee members, and I feel their time and effort on behalf of the citizens of the region warrants some public comment and recognition.

Unpaid and unsung, they took endless hours out of their personal and family leisure time to develop a Metro Home Rule Charter. Though I started attending the meetings as an impartial, unpolitical observer, the continuing experience led me to my first political involvement in Oregon, and I am no longer impartial. Regardless, I hope this public "thank you" can be made. The Charter Committee members have certainly earned it.

8-24-92
ROSE COOK
Northeast Portland

Rock/Sieben creeks
Sentinel Tree

Heron Lakes
Island reserves

addition
Tualatin River access
Westside restoration
opportunities

recreation development of the
2,000-acre complex of lakes,
wetlands and uplands, includ-
ing the closed landfill.

provide wildlife habitat and
minimize long-term mainte-
nance costs. Experimental
plots will be tested as closure
occurs in phases over the entire
270-acre landfill.

A flow control structure
will regulate water levels in
all the lakes. A study team,
with participation by middle
and high school students, is
surveying the vegetation, birds,

For more information
about the management plans,
call Jim Morgan.

TRIP INTO NATURE FEATURES FALL FOLIAGE

Guided hikes, bike rides and car tours high-
light the fall season of Trip Into Nature events,
sponsored by the Metropolitan Greenspaces
program. The activities begin in September and
culminate Nov. 15 at Powell Butte. Activities are
offered throughout the region, including several
in Clark County. For a Trip Into Nature
brochure, call 22-GREEN (224-7336).



Photos: C. Bruce Forster

METRO CHARTER ON BALLOT

In addition to the Green-
spaces bond measure, Metro
will have one other measure on
the Nov. 3 ballot - the chance
to vote on Metro's home rule
charter. A 1990 amendment to
the state constitution allows
Metro to take a home rule
charter proposal to the voters.

After 15 months of work,
the charter committee has
proposed a charter that would:

- form a council with
seven members elected from
districts.
- retain the current
separation of powers structure

with a full-time executive
officer elected regionwide. It
would create a new position,
an elected auditor.

- allow Metro to seek
voter approval for property,
income or sales taxes. Other
types of taxes could also be
imposed by ordinance. The
proposed charter sets a limit of
\$12.5 million in spending taxes
not approved by voters during
the first year.

- require Metro to adopt a
50-year "future vision" for the
region by July 1, 1995. The
vision would address how to

best use and preserve regional
land and natural resources
for future generations. The
charter also calls for adoption
of a "regional framework" plan
by Dec. 31, 1997. The plan
would address growth manage-
ment and land-use planning.
Local jurisdictions would be
required to comply with the
plan.

- create a Metropolitan
Policy Advisory Committee
that would have to approve
Metro taking on any service
already performed by a local
government.

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN UPDATE AVAILABLE

The 1992 revision of the Regional Transportation Plan,
with updated maps and revised language, is now available from
Metro. A major plan update, now under way, will contain state
regulations and Region 2040 references. For a copy of the
updated RTP, call John Cullerton or Berthe Carroll.

CORRIDOR STUDIES UNDER WAY FOR HIGH CAPACITY TRANSIT

Studies began last May
to determine which high-
way corridors will be next
to receive "high capacity
transit" systems such as
light rail.

In the southeast side,
areas under consideration
are the corridor that links
Portland to Clackamas
County through Milwaukie
and the I-205 freeway
corridor linking Oregon
City to the airport.

In the north, the areas
under consideration are
the I-205 and I-5 freeway
corridors.

Financing is also being
studied. Alternative financ-
ing strategies will combine
local, state and federal funds.

The transit study will
be completed by September
1993.

For more information,
call Ann Zeltmann.