

Change of Metro charter on ballot

by BRUCE SOLBERG
of The Outlook Staff

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For Gresham Mayor Gussie McRobert, Ballot Measure 26-3, which proposes changes to the Metropolitan Service District, boils down to local control versus state dictate.

"A 'no' vote on the measure means Metro stays under control of the state Legislature. A 'yes' vote is for local control," said McRobert. "Neither a 'yes' nor 'no' vote will get rid of Metro."

Local control will come from the establishment of a Metro Policy Advisory Committee. The 18-member committee would include at one elected official from Gresham as well as other surrounding communities and the three metro-area counties. Portland would get two representatives on the committee. Additionally, three non-elected officials would be appointed by the executive officer.

Local control is also enhanced through shifting power from the state Legislature to local voters. The charter provides Metro with home rule powers, including taxation. However, McRobert doesn't see this as a broadening of power.

"Metro's main function will be to preserve and enhance the quality of life for the present and future generations," said Betsy Bergstein, senior analyst at Metro.

The charter would provide salaries to a numeri-

cally reduced council and the executive manager. Under the new charter the number of council members would be reduced from 13 members paid on a per diem basis to seven salaried members. Councilors would receive \$23,233 a year and the presiding officer would get \$46,466.

The four-year terms would be limited to three consecutive times for councilors.

The charter also allows for payment of the Metro executive officer, who would make \$69,800 a year and whose four-year term would be limited to two consecutive terms.

The charter would add an independently elected auditor, who would oversee Metro's expenditures and accounting. The auditor's salary would be \$55,680.

"The auditor position will provide a fiscal watchdog over them and be a great benefit to everybody," McRobert said.

Bergstein said some people have expressed concern about Metro's new authority to tax under the charter. Metro would have a \$12.5 million limit on taxes. The charter allows broad-based taxes including sales, property and income tax, that require voter approval. However, smaller "niche" taxes, like hotel taxes or real estate transfer taxes could be approved upon advice of a tax study committee without voter approval.

Current law already allows Metro to impose

property and income taxes.

"Metro has very, very broad taxing powers now," said McRobert. "Most people have no idea what Metro can do. This charter sets the main priority for Metro on growth planning. Ads saying Metro will be given new taxing powers are misleading scare tactics."

Critics of the measure say the bill increases the cost of government and decreases representation through giving salaries to few officials who represent a broader area.

McRobert, however, said she thinks the seven-member panel is an ideal size to get things done. Less will be done in committees, and more in whole sessions of the council. Additionally, she argued, council members will have to make themselves known to a broader segment of their constituency.

"The councilors now have such small districts that they don't campaign," she said. "With larger districts they will be more visible."

McRobert envisions Metro, under the new charter, as an opportunity for cities and counties to work together to get things accomplished they couldn't do individually.

"Some things a city can plan for, but can't get neighboring cities to work with them, yet what the neighboring city does may impact the first city," she said. "When we all get together and talk together it just works out better."

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TVEDC supports Metro charter

TIGARD — The board of directors for the Tualatin Valley Economic Development Corporation has passed a resolution supporting adoption of the proposed home rule charter for the Metropolitan Service District.

Currently, authority and final control of the regional government rests with the state Legislature, not the voters of the region. The charter grants home rule authority to Metro and thus gives control over the scope of the government's services to the people being charged fees or taxes for those services.

"The structure and governance of the region is particularly important today because of the impacts regional planning decisions are having on the costs of doing business," said H. Pat Ritz, TVEDC chairman of the board and president of Oregon Title Insurance Co.

"Metro facilitates the regional dialogue on long-range planning through the Region 2040 project. Many of the decisions that result from that planning process will affect the cost of the land, water and transportation.

"Every time the costs of these services go up, business owners

have to reassess their ability to continue to provide the product or service they contribute to the economy," Ritz continued. "It makes sense to have the final authority for this government rest right here, with the people who pay the taxes and fees to support it."

Both candidates for the Metro Council Position 13 — Wes Myllenberg and Terry Moore — oppose the proposed charter, claiming it sets councilor salaries too high and cuts the number of districts from 13 to seven, making representation of voters difficult.

District 13 is the new Metro district established during reapportionment. It consists mainly of Beaverton, Garden Home, Cedar Hills and Cedar Mill and Raleigh Hills.

Jon Kvistad, the unopposed candidate for the Metro District 2 seat, said this week he had yet to sort out his own thoughts on the charter. Though he recognized that it would accomplish some good, by taking control of Metro away from the Legislature, he also admitted having concerns about the salaries and the power given to the executive officer.

District 2 includes most of western Beaverton and a small por-

tion of Tigard south of Southwest Scholls Ferry Road.

The charter defines the relationship of the regional government to the local governments and special service districts within Metro's boundaries. With the creation of the Metropolitan Policy Advisory Committee, an official channel for raising service provision issues to the regional level will be instituted, said TVEDC President Mary Tobias, adding that the advisory committee "fills a void which has long been the source of confusion and unnecessary power struggles."

"The sooner this relationship is clarified and codified, the better chance taxpayers will have to benefit from efficiencies and cost savings while improving service provision," said Tobias.

Further, the charter clarifies the roles of the Metro Council and the Executive Officer.

"The charter clearly sets the role of the council as the policy-making body for the region and defines the executive officer as the administrator," said Tobias. "One of the major problems we see in the existing structure is that this distinction is often blurred. This blurring