

## **MEASURE 26-212 – Troutdale Charter Amendment**

**Official Title:** Amends charter: city councilor candidates run against all councilor candidates?

**Question:** Shall Troutdale Charter require election of councilors from one group of all candidates running against all others?

**Financial Impact:** There is no financial impact.

**Probable Results of a Yes Vote:** The election process for candidates for Troutdale City Council would change. All candidates, including incumbents, would run against all other candidates for open Council positions. Voters would cast the number of votes up to the number of positions to be filled. The candidates receiving the greatest number of votes would be elected to fill the open positions.

**Probable Results of a No Vote:** The election process for candidates for Troutdale City Council positions would not change. Candidates would continue to run for a particular position, and voters would continue to have the opportunity to cast one vote per open position.

**Background:** The Troutdale City Council consists of six councilors who serve four-year terms. Under the current election process for city councilor, at least three council positions are filled each general election. Occasionally, two-year terms are also filled if a vacancy occurs mid-term. These positions, which do not represent geographic districts, require the candidates to run for a particular numbered position. Sometimes, under the current system, an incumbent (a councilor currently holding office) or a new candidate runs unopposed, and sometimes a group of more than two candidates run against each other for the same position. Voters may cast one vote per open position. From 2010 through 2018, there have been three elections out of five when at least one position had an unopposed candidate, while another position had three or more candidates running against each other.

The current system of electing candidates for City Councilor has been in effect for over 40 years.

**Summary:** This measure would change the election process for City Councilors. Under the proposed measure, candidates would not run for a specific position but rather run against all other candidates, in a process known as top-three voting. Voters may cast one vote for up to three candidates. The candidates receiving the most votes win election to four-year terms. (If shorter terms need to be filled, the candidates receiving the next-greatest number will be elected for the remaining years of a term.)

If passed, this measure would affect elections after November 2020.

**Supporters Say:**

- “Top three” voting gives voters more choice by allowing them to vote for their favorite three candidates among the entire field of candidates.
- Incumbents often get a free pass in elections, especially when they run unopposed. There would be fewer unopposed candidates if voters could choose from a field of candidates for all positions.
- The top-three election process may encourage new candidates (including minority candidates) because they would have a chance of winning one of three seats rather than competing for a single seat.

**Opponents Say:**

- Incumbent candidates may have no opposition because voters recognize they are doing a good job. Changing to "Top Three" voting would require those unopposed candidates to run unnecessary campaigns.
- The current system makes it easier for a candidate to run against an incumbent whose policies he/she opposes.
- The current system is familiar and simple to understand for voters. There is no need to change.