



# League of Women Voters of Portland

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**Board of Directors**

June 28, 2021

Debbie Kaye  
*President*

To: Portland Charter Commission

Marion McNamara  
*1<sup>st</sup> VP*

From: League of Women Voters of Portland

Chris Cobey  
*2<sup>nd</sup> VP*

Debbie Kaye, president

Nancy Donovan  
*3<sup>rd</sup> VP*

Audrey Zunkel-deCoursey, Board member

Re: Transparency Advocate Proposal

Adrienne Aiona  
*Treasurer*

Dear Charter Review Commission:

Anne Davidson  
*Secretary*

The League of Women Voters is a 101-year old grassroots non-partisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government.

Debbie Aiona  
Carolyn Buppert  
Judy Froemke

We commend the City of Portland for adopting Transparency as one of its Core Values. We feel, however, that the city has far to go in implementing this stated value. The League joins the Society of Professional Journalists, ACLU Oregon, and Open Oregon in encouraging the Charter Review Commission to consider the recommendation to add transparency as one of the topics you research this year.

Linda Mantel  
Amber Nobe  
Margaret Noel  
Audrey Zunkel-  
deCoursey

**Off Board Leaders**

Transparency is important to the League as a matter of principle. We believe governmental bodies must protect the public's right to know by giving adequate notice of proposed actions, holding open meetings, and making public records accessible.

Jen Jacobs  
*Budget*

Ann Dudley  
*Nominating*

Mary McWilliams  
*Membership*

Philip Thor  
*Endowment Fund*

Transparency is also important to our League as a practical matter. We rely on public information in the course of researching city government, assembling nonpartisan voters guides, and advocating about specific city functions. We have seen firsthand the inconsistency of access to public records and information. For example, last summer, we were surprised to have to file a public records request to access information related to long-term parks funding and the proposed local option levy.

There are many topics facing your commission that are important to our League. We chose to highlight transparency today because it is vital to a healthy democracy, yet most Portlanders will not have the need personally to request public records or search the city's website for information, and thereby discover the barriers that might stand in their way.

To promote political responsibility through informed and active participation in government.

Should the commission decide to consider adding a Transparency Advocate and Transparency Commission to the charter, we encourage you to make them responsible not only for advocating for access to public records, but also for the public's right to participate in and influence governmental decision-making. We are particularly concerned about reduced opportunities to offer oral testimony to City Council on critical issues like reports on police shootings. We believe city government should solicit broad and inclusive input through fully representative, accessible and robust public involvement processes.

Thank you for your consideration and for your service to the city.