

Multnomah County Ballot Measure 26-235

Official Title: Amends charter: auditor unrestricted access to information, requires “right-to-audit” clause

Question: Should Charter provide County Auditor timely, unrestricted access to employees, information, records, and require “right-to-audit” clause in County contracts?

Financial Impact: Little to no financial impact.

Probable Results of “Yes” Vote: The Charter would underscore the County Auditor’s access to information necessary to conduct audits.

Probable Results of “No” Vote: The County Auditor’s access to information would not be affirmed in the Charter.

Background: This measure arose from a proposal submitted by the County Auditor. The Auditor’s office conducts performance audits and studies that measure and assess the success of a variety of County efforts. Additionally, the Auditor provides information relevant to redistricting after the federal census and appoints a salary commission. The Charter currently does not delineate the methods used by the Auditor’s office nor does it address the Auditor’s access to information.

In her letter to the Charter Commission, Auditor Jennifer McGuirk noted a “a spectrum of responsiveness” to requests for information. Examples include difficulty accessing information from Animal Services after a change in leadership and delays in getting data from the Joint Office of Homeless Services. In an earlier letter, the Auditor noted difficulties in obtaining information from the County’s new financial and human resources data system after it came on line in 2019.

Summary of Measure: The measure requires that the Auditor have access to employees, information and records necessary to perform the functions of the office. The County and the Auditor would determine how legally to deal with confidential information or limited-access records. The measure also provides that contracts with outside contractors and sub-contractors include a “right-to-audit clause.”

Supporters Say:

- According to Auditor Jennifer McGuirk, “Having access to information clearly spelled out in the Charter would reduce confusion with staff and minimize delays.”

Opponents Say:

- The County agrees already that the Auditor should have access to necessary information. It is not necessary to enshrine that access in the Charter.