

Multnomah County Ballot Measure 26-236

Official Title: Amends Charter Review Committee qualifications, appointment, length; requires public engagement

Question: Should Charter require County board to appoint Charter Review Committee by Commissioner district for 18-month process with public engagement?

Financial Impact: Unclear. Members of the Charter Review Committee currently may opt in to receive a stipend, and this stipend would likely increase if the current 11-month review period increased to 18 months.

Probable Results of “Yes” Vote: The Charter Review Committee would meet every six years, and be appointed by the County Chair, with four members from each Commissioner’s district; members from the same district would not have to be from different political parties but would represent the district’s diverse communities. The Committee would work for up to 18 months and would decide on its own leadership.

Probable Results of “No” Vote: The Charter Review Committee would meet every six years and would consist of members appointed by state senators and representatives from each senate district in the County; members from each district would need to be from different political parties. Members would work for up to 11 months.

Background: This measure arose from a proposal by the Multnomah County Office of Community Engagement. Currently, the Charter Review Committee meets every six years and consists of two members from each senatorial district having the majority of its voters in Multnomah County. Senators and two representatives receive applications from the Office of Community Involvement and appoint committee members, who must be from different political parties. The Committee convenes in September and has until the following August to complete its work.

According to the Office of Community Involvement, this process creates several problems:

- The timeline for applications and appointments don’t work well for many community members, who submit applications beginning in January and sometimes have to wait for up to seven months to be appointed.
- State legislators tasked with appointing committee members are often unfamiliar with the work of the committee and their time may be too limited to thoroughly assess applications.
- Appointing members by legislative district creates an unbalanced committee in terms of districts represented by County Commissioners. For example, seven of the sixteen members of the current committee reside in County Commissioner District 1 (Northwest and Southwest Portland and the inner east side) while only two live in District 2 (North and Northeast Portland).
- Charter language also doesn’t address what happens when committee members move within the County, which may impact renters.

Summary of Measure: The measure addresses these problems by

- eliminating the timeline and deadlines from the Charter (although the application process would continue to be overseen by the Office of Community Involvement);
- stipulating that Committee members be chosen by Commissioner district: four members from each of the four districts;
- requiring that the County Chair and Board of Commissioners appoint the Committee;
- providing that members who move within the county can continue to serve on the committee;
- allowing the committee to choose the form of its leadership instead of naming a single chairperson;
- eliminating the requirement that committee members be from different political parties and instead providing that they represent the diverse communities in the district;
- allowing the committee up to 18 months (March through August of the following year) to fulfill its duties.

Supporters Say:

- A longer timeline would allow for a more thorough Charter review.
- A community-oriented, streamlined application and appointment process would allow for more meaningful constituent engagement.

Opponents Say:

There is no organized opposition to this measure