



Dear Charter Commissioners:

It would seem a shame to lose out on a powerful and needed good-government improvement because a meeting ran long. So we, the coalition advocating for a Transparency Advocate in Portland's charter, respectfully urge you to reopen the work session on Saturday to explore whether the Commission has flexibility to refer this low-cost, proven tool to the City Council — and then do so.

It is our understanding that the city attorney's office has determined that something along these lines is indeed possible even at this late date, using as a basis the charter language we submitted Oct. 11, 2022.

In the Nov. 29 meeting it appeared some commissioners were not aware that the Transparency proposal was on the agenda, slated as the next-to-last item. The slide describing it was on page 81 of your [meeting materials](#). Our October submission included fully baked charter language developed in consultation with experts and lawyers, and loosely based on a draft charter amendment prepared by Portland Ombudsman staff but never submitted by Auditor Mary Hull Caballero.

On Saturday, we'd ask you to consider two friendly amendments that were suggested by former City Ombudsman Michael Mills in his comments to the Charter Commission:

- 1) Require the Auditor's selection for Advocate be confirmed by City Council by majority vote; this would help ensure buy-in and independence. Also require that any termination of the Advocate be confirmed by majority council vote, for the same reasons.
- 2) Ensure that the Advocate is "empowered to have access to all city records, even those which are confidential, though confidential records received must be protected from disclosure as prescribed by law."

We urge you to take a simple up-or-down vote on whether to refer this proposal to the City Council for more tweaking, either as a stand-alone measure or an amendment to Item 13 — where it would add a mechanism to make engagement and access to government a reality.

Please take 45 seconds to watch State Archivist Stephanie Clark [describe to lawmakers \(relevant part at 20:28\)](#) the dramatic improvements seen after the Oregon Legislature created a similar position in 2018. A Transparency Advocate aligns precisely with the Commission's goals, promoting accountability, equity and responsive government.

We urge you to not lose this opportunity.

Sandy Chung, Executive director
American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon

Debbie Kaye, President
League of Women Voters of Portland

Emily Harris, Board member

Open Oregon

Nick Budnick, Co-chair, Freedom of Information Committee
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