

# 2024 GENERAL ELECTION

## City of Portland Charter Amendment

### Measure 26-251: Parks, Sewers & Stormwaters

**OFFICIAL TITLE:** Amends Charter: Updates authority to manage parks, sewers and stormwaters.

**QUESTION:** Shall Charter be amended to update City authority regarding recreational and natural areas (defined), sewers and stormwaters?

**REFERRAL:** This measure is a Charter amendment referred to voters by the Portland Charter Commission on December 3, 2022, with a vote of 15 yes votes and one abstention.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT** City Budget Office determined measure has no direct financial impact.

**PROBABLE RESULT OF A “YES” VOTE:** If this measure passes, it would update City authority, last amended in 1966, to manage recreational and natural areas, sewers and stormwaters.

**PROBABLE RESULT OF A “NO” VOTE:** If this measure fails, there would be no update of the City’s authority to manage recreational and natural areas, sewers and stormwaters.

**BACKGROUND:** The City’s Bureau of Environmental Services initiated this proposal.

The bureau’s reasons for the proposed amendment include:

1. Federal and state laws enacted after 1970 have significantly changed what the City and bureau can and cannot do with respect to discharging to waterways and protecting fish and wildlife within the city;
2. Science and engineering knowledge and practices in Portland and worldwide have demonstrated that green infrastructure and habitat restoration are cost-effective means of meeting the requirements, whereas the current charter language favors destruction or alteration of habitat and natural features;
3. Environmental degradation most acutely impacts Black, Indigenous, and other people of color communities and exacerbates the impacts of climate change.

During the public comment period, the Charter Commission received 20 comments related to this proposal. There was general support for the proposal.

**PROPOSAL:** The description of the City's role to protect human health and the environment by managing sewage and stormwater was last updated in 1966.

Under the proposal, the City's role would be clarified with updated language.

**SUPPORTERS SAY:**

- Federal and state laws enacted since 1970 have modified permissible usage and treatment of the City's code concerning discharging to waterways and protecting fish and wildlife within the city, requiring the code's update.
- The code should be updated to reflect state-of-the-art science, engineering, and treatment of areas and resources not recognized more than 50 years ago.
- Environment degradation not addressed by the current code disproportionately affects historically disadvantaged communities.

**OPPONENTS SAY:**

*As of September 14, 2024, there is no known organized public opposition to this measure.*