

Portland City Charter Review

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How the Charter Review Process Works

- Charter Commission makeup and authority
- Phase I
 - Form of government
 - City Council elections
- Phase II
 - Service alignment and bureau coordination
 - Accountability and transparency
 - Democracy growth
 - Other?

CHARTER REVIEW TIMELINE



	Aug 2021	Sept 2021	Oct 2021	Nov 2021	Dec 2021	Jan 2022	Feb 2022	Mar 2022	Apr 2022	May 2022	June 2022	July 2022	Aug 2022	Sept 2022	Oct 2022	Nov 2022	Dec 2022
	Monthly Work Sessions with Public Comment																
Phase I Issues	Evaluate and synthesize data and information Host community listening sessions					Determine charter amendment proposals		Collect feedback on proposals through public hearings and revise			Phase I Report	Educate Portlanders on proposed charter amendments				Election	
Phase II Issues						Determine phase II priority issues		Evaluate and synthesize data and information Host Listening Sessions			Determine charter amendment proposals		Collect feedback on proposals through public hearings and revise			Phase II Report	

Current Commission **Form of Government**

- Last remaining US city with Commission form of government
 - Adopted in 1913; Portland population 200,000
 - City Councilors double as bureau commissioners
- Problems with Commission form of government
 - No uniform vision
 - Bureaucratic siloization, infighting, and inefficiency
 - City Councilors/Mayor represent bureaus not electorate
 - Lack of expertise—no background in issue
 - Bureau heads change every 2-4 years
 - Inability to address long-term issues (climate, homelessness)
 - People don't know where to address their problems (trash, emergency)



Desired Outcomes for Form of Government Reform

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|---|---------------------------------------|---|------------------------|
| 1 | Participatory and growing democracy | 4 | Responsive government |
| 2 | Accessible and transparent government | 5 | Accountable government |
| 3 | Reflective government | 6 | Trustworthy government |

Form of Government Research Questions

- Who has executive authority?
 - Does mayor have veto power?
- Who has legislative authority?
 - Does mayor vote with city council?
- Who manages bureaus?
 - Who appoints and removes chief administrative officer?
 - Who appoints and removes bureau directors?
- Who is responsible for developing policy?
- Who is responsible for preparing budget?

Form of Government Consensus Recommendations to date

Remove the role of Commissioner-in-Charge of bureaus from Commissioners and shift the management authority elsewhere

Redefine the roles and responsibilities of the Mayor and City Council

Current **City Council Elections** System

- Four City Councilors elected at large
- Problems with current system
 - Too few representatives for 650,000 people
 - Advantage to wealthy or powerfully-backed candidates
 - Lack of diversity on Council
 - Lack of local knowledge, representation, and public access
 - Primary/general system promotes divisiveness
 - Low voter turnout in off-year and primary elections



Desired Outcomes for City Council Elections

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|----------|---|----------|---|
| 1 | More voices heard | 4 | Councilors who understand community needs |
| 2 | Councilors who are easy to reach | 5 | Councilors who answer to the people |
| 3 | Councilors who look like the community they represent | 6 | Councilors who safeguard democracy |

City Council Elections Research Questions

- Size of City Council
- How should Councilors be elected (district, at-large, or hybrid)?
 - How many districts; how drawn?
 - Single representative or multi-member?
- Form of voting (winner-take-all, rank choice, approval)?
- Timing of elections
- Who has the right to vote?
- Campaign finance

Council Elections Consensus Recommendations to Date

Increase size of City Council

District representation

Problems We Face

- Measure to change form of government has failed 7 times
 - Last 2 times (2002, 2007) failed by a margin of over 3 to 1
- Primary reasons:
 - Strong mayor—too much power
 - No need; Portland is a model US city; most livable
 - Current form of government is accountable, responsive, and innovative
 - Recommendations went to City Council, which largely opposed it
 - Addressed only ending commission form of govt, not council elections
 - Voters felt reform bill was rushed; no time to really study issue
 - Top-down change; public not involved

Differences from Past

- No one any longer believes Portland is a model city.
- Amendment goes straight to voters if 15 or more agree
- Studying and rectifying reasons for past failures
- Extensive research on comparable cities' experiences
- Meeting with bureaus, unions, and civil society
- Open meetings and high level of community engagement—**listening**

Questions/Comments

- Charter Review Website: <https://www.portland.gov/omf/charter-review-commission>
- Join a community listening session, Nov 13 (12-2 PM) or 16 (6-8 PM)
<https://www.portland.gov/omf/charter-review-commission/information-about-community-listening-sessions-0>
- Sign-up to give testimony: <https://www.portland.gov/omf/charter-review-commission/chartertestify>
- Provide written comment: <https://www.portland.gov/omf/charter-review-commission/charter-public-comments>
- Get updates: <https://signup.e2ma.net/signup/1934477/1887537/>
- Invite charter commissioner to speak with your group by emailing CharterReview2020@portlandoregon.gov (or contact me directly)