

Live Notes from the June 30th Information Session

9:34 AM — Ted Wheeler starts with a note on settler-colonialism and a hope for inclusion of native voices on the commission, followed by a discussion of current events.

Agenda

- Overview of the Charter Commission Process — Shoshanah Oppenheim, Office of the CAO
- Overview of the City's Charter — Maja K. Haium, City Attorney
- Lessons Learned from Previous Commissions — Anita Yap, 2010 Charter Commission Chair & Shelli Romero, Charter Commission Member
- Community Conversation on Equitable Governing — Collin Jones, City Club Board of Governors
- Why Does This Matter to Community? — Andrea Valderrama, Coalition of Communities of Color

City of Portland's core values (adopted 2 weeks ago)

- Equity
- Transparency
- Anti-racism
- Communication
- Collaboration
- Fiscal Responsibility

Timelines will be flexible

Overview of the Charter Commission Process — Shoshanah Oppenheim, Office of the CAO

The charter review process is a continuation of a years-long conversation about the governance of Portland.

The process will be guided by three principles: equity, engagement, and representation.

Commissioner Hardesty asks Oppenheim to pause presentation to discuss what the role of the charter is, before the City Council tells an independent commission how to do its job.

Oppenheim continues with mechanical details:

- The commission is independent, including setting their own agenda, creating their own outreach materials, etc.
- A conservative timeline expects a report from the commission in January 22.
- The commission will be comprised of 20 individuals, 4 appointed by each council member
- The process will be online
- Efforts will be taken to remove barriers to participation (stipend, translation)

The 'One City' approach differs from previous charter review

- Residents will apply to participate
- Applications will be screened, including on demographic information

- City council members will select from those applicants

The city council will assist the commission without impeding their work, including by holding a work session in August to discuss types of government, voting methods, and related topics.

Commissioner Hardesty asks Oppenheim questions regarding the process and how it deviates from prior commission reviews.

- October and January reports are a new addition.
- Recommendations by the commission with the support of 15 or more members will be referred by the city council to the ballot automatically. Recommendations with support of 12 or more members may be referred. The City Council can also refer ballot measures without a recommendation.

Commissioner Fritz voices a concern that the current slide implies that the charter commission will automatically examine the question of changing the form of government.

- Oppenheim says that policy issues will be more thoroughly discussed in August, after the new commissioner is seated.
- Wheeler responds that the commission is entirely independent. But he says that the commission will obviously talk about the form of local government, because there are multiple efforts in the community to ask the charter review commission to take up that issue.

Oppenheim continues with a list of next steps:

- Launch selection process
- Launch communications plan
- Plan for 2nd work session
- Understand council priorities

Office of the CAO will be providing staff: project managers, administrative support, communications team, a city attorney

- This is a larger team than has supported the charter review commission in the past.

Overview of the City's Charter — Maja K. Haium, City Attorney

The city charter is what gives the city of Portland its power. Oregon granted this power to cities in 1906 (as opposed to other states which don't grant cities the power to set their own charters).

The charter authorizes city powers and is amended by Portland voters. In comparison, the city code deals with day to day operations and is amended by the city council.

A charter should be concise, avoid the need for frequent amendments, and set broad fundamentals of good city governance. It can include details like the following:

- names and boundaries
- powers
- council construction
- elections
- personnel
- public improvements
- legislative authority
- administrative authority

- quasi-judicial authority

Portland's charter doesn't entirely follow best practices:

- Includes day-to-day operations (like fire and police retirement and disability)
- Uses a commission form of government

Lessons Learned from Previous Commissions — Anita Yap, 2010 Charter Commission Chair & Shelli Romero, Charter Commission Member

Yap was appointed to the previous commission by Commissioner Fritz.

To ensure a successful commission, the city council must:

- provide adequate support
- empower the commission
- respect the commission's recommendations
- recruit diverse individuals
- commit to independence
- promote transparency

The prior commission had no political or administrative support (Commissioner Fritz allowed the 2011 review commission to use her website for sharing information with the community). Yap feels like the commission did not have the opportunity to really do their work.

Commissioner Hardesty joined that commission as a replacement member part way through.

The commission was intended to be the first of two reviews, only supposed to cover administrative issues, with a planned second commission to cover policy issues. The review commission pushed back and almost immediately started considering a wider set of issues.

Yap notes that community outreach needs to start now, not wait until the commission members are appointed.

Haium clarified the process of sending ballot measures from the commission to voters. Fritz offered further details about the lack of budget for the previous review commission.

Yap noted that because several commission members were community leaders, they found attending all meetings difficult. During the recruitment process, Yap recommends setting expectations about who should be on the charter review commission around diversity. The people who could afford to spend the time did so.

Yap also suggests that accountability should be part of the selection criteria.

Romero notes a specific success of the last review commission — the Public Utility Board. It improved transparency.

Romero says that the experience fell short of expectations. Key issues included:

- the city council waited until very late to recruit members to the commission
- there wasn't sufficient funding to operate the commission — they had one designated 'staff person', an intern from the mayor's office, who confided to Romero that he felt like he was in way over his head in the work

- the city council tried to limit the scope of the commission, felt like the council disregarded community feedback
- was a painful experience

Romero notes that Portlanders will not accept a repeat and is encouraged by the city council budgeting time, money, and other resources for the upcoming commission

Community Conversation on Equitable Governing — Collin Jones, City Club Board of Governors

Jones notes that Portland City Club has spent a lot of time researching the commission form of city government; over the past century, the only issue they've spent more time on is water fluoridation. The recommendations have been consistent for years; systemic change is necessary to make our local government more equitable.

City Club's recent research focused on engaging with community members and an extensive literature review. A diverse group of residents who likely wouldn't agree on most policy issues all concluded that the form of government Portland currently has does not work for the city's residents.

City Club further concluded that the only way to collectively find a new system of local government is through a thorough, transparent process accessible to all residents, ideally the charter review process.

Fritz asks if City Club is going to reexamine its findings in light of the new accessible elections system. Jones responds that they don't expect to repeat its two-year research process and that the larger issues of equity stand.

Wheeler asks how much deeper an outreach process the charter review commission than City Club did for its research. Jones responds that the commission can go much deeper, has more resources, and should talk to more of the community. Wheeler and Hardesty both concur.

Why Does This Matter to Community? — Andrea Valderrama, Coalition of Communities of Color

Valderrama describes the commission system of government within the context of White supremacy in Oregon. In 1913, the same year the first charter was written for Portland, Oregon used its state constitution to ban Black residents in Oregon. Furthermore, Indigenous communities never agreed to this system. The commission form has institutionalized the following:

- disenfranchisement of BIPOC communities
- 3 people of color have served, including Commissioner Hardesty. The first Latinx commissioner will soon be joining the commission
- disenfranchisement of outer East Portland
- places significant workloads on top of legislative and judicial responsibilities of leaders

Valderrama looks forward to setting this charter review commission for success. Starting from a lens of liberation and Indigenous sovereignty will let the city address inequities from institutionalized racism and White supremacy. She advocates for a meaningful community engagement process throughout the review commission.

The City Hall for All Coalition will be helping with recruitment and outreach. The City Hall for All Coalition asks for the following:

- Appoint members to the review commission who adhere to anti-racism and equitable representation as cover values

- Commit to making City Hall a place for all Portlanders
- Ensure the process address issues that most directly impact BIPOC communities
- Meaningfully engage with community and resource engagement best practices

Questions

Commissioner Fritz asks for more details about the recruitment process. Oppenheim describes the process, as well as how members of city council can comment on the application.

Oppenheim notes that the application was scheduled to open today. Candidates in the August special election can suggest applicants prior to being elected. The decision-making process will likely be collaborative, but hasn't been finalized.

Commissioner Hardesty asks for more details about the timeline and asks why the application process is starting so early. She questions the assumption that the charter review commission is working towards the 2022 election cycle. Oppenheim notes that board and commission members must complete training before serving, including equity training and education around public meetings. Oppenheim also notes that the review commission can start working early and the goal is to give the commission as much flexibility as possible.

Commissioner Fritz asks for a delay in opening the application. Commissioner Hardesty asks for a longer application window for more effective outreach. Oppenheim notes that December 15th is the deadline for the appointment and says that the Office of Civic Life estimated about three months for training (given that commission members will be attending meetings and trainings around their normal schedules). Commission members should expect 5 to 12 hours per work a month (though the commission ultimately sets its own work schedule and workload). Oppenheim will discuss modifications with city council members' staffs after the meeting.

Adjourned — 2:08:06 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Za0rxoYUTEc>