

Committee Members Present: Joseph Andaya
Jack Ardner
Jacob Cleverley
Shelley Denison
Christopher Dresel
Tim Fier
Amanda Gayken
Jack Hollis
Cathy Keathley
Britt McConn
Dana Stroud
Marcela Wash

Committee Member Not Present: Rachelle Shepherd

Staff Present: Kevin McConnell, City Attorney
Margarita Contreras, Administrative Assistant
Dara Wright, Paralegal

A public meeting of the Charter Review Committee (CRC) was called to order by Chair Joseph Andaya, on the 9th of March, 2022, at 6:00 p.m., via Zoom. The meeting was digitally recorded and minutes were prepared by Dara Wright.

Chair Andaya welcomed the newly appointed members of the committee: Shelley Denison, Christopher Dresel, and Rachelle Shepherd.

1. PUBLIC TESTIMONY.

Written testimony was received from Paul Wilcox. He provided 3 emails for the CRC to review:

- 1.) Mr. Wilcox encouraged the CRC to complete their work in time to get recommended amendments to Council in time for the November 2022 elections because even-year November ballots have historically had the highest voter turnout.
- 2.) Mr. Wilcox suggested that Ranked Choice Voting could be considered and noted that Benton County has approved that system for their County Commissioner elections. He also felt that term limits are a reasonable question to put before voters.

3.) Mr. Wilcox researched whether cities elected their Councils according to position. He suggested an approach whereby the Major would have a two-year term while the Councils hold four-year terms beginning in alternate odd-numbered years.

2. OPEN PUBLIC COMMENTS.

No oral testimony was given.

3. APPROVE MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING.

Minutes from the February 7, 2022, meeting were unanimously approved by the committee members present.

4. PRESENTATION FROM LEWIS & CLARK PROFESSORS, DR. TODD LOCHNER AND DR. ELLEN SELJAN.

Dr. Todd Lochner and Dr. Ellen Seljan gave a PowerPoint presentation with an overview on municipal election systems, detailing various council sizes used nationwide as well as council sizes used in cities in Oregon of similar size to Gresham. The presentation provided advantages and disadvantages to various types of election systems, including at-large, ward/districts, ranked choice voting, multi-member voting, and cumulative voting. The presentation also provided general information on the legal obligations for districting.

After the presentation, Dr. Lochner and Dr. Seljan answered follow up questions from members of the CRC and there was general discussion about what type of election systems may work best in Gresham, and issues around term limits, campaign finance limits, and the salaries of elected officials. In general, Dr. Lochner and Dr. Seljan stated that there is no “best” election system. Determining which system may be best suited to Gresham would depend on the specific goals of the CRC.

Vice Chair Ardner asked if Multnomah County is open to ranked choice or other alternative voting methods, so that the CRC knows if those systems are an option. Mr. Kevin McConnell responded that he would research that question.

5. DISCUSSION ON REGARDING LEWIS & CLARK PRESENTATION; TIMING OF ELECTION SYSTEM RECOMMENDATION.

There was discussion on when a sub-final report would need to be submitted to City Council in order to allow time to place a measure on the November 2022 ballot. Mr. McConnell stated that he would need to confirm a specific date with the City Recorder, but he estimated that the sub-final report would need to be provided to City Council by late June or early July, 2022.

6. DISCUSSION ON PUBLIC INPUT IDEAS: FACILITATOR, SUBCOMMITTEES, PRESENTATIONS AT FUTURE MEETINGS.

Member Stroud suggested the formation of a subcommittee, which would work with a facilitator. The purpose of the facilitator would be to help the CRC obtain input from the community. Mr. McConnell advised the CRC that the City's Communications Department would be able to come to a future meeting to discuss a public outreach plan for the CRC. That department would also be able to assist with a facilitator should the CRC wish to proceed with that idea.

Mr. McConnell provided some general information about subcommittees and the process of forming a subcommittee. He also confirmed that subcommittees are subject to public meetings laws.

Member Gayken stated that she would like to review data on registered voters in Gresham and voter turnout, broken down by demographics, because the data would help guide the CRC's focus.

The members took a vote and the majority of members present voted to pursue the goal of submitting a sub-final report to City Council in time for a ballot to put on the November 2022 ballot.

The members discussed the formation of a subcommittee to focus on public outreach. The committee identified the following tasks for the subcommittee: 1.) Solicit community feedback regarding the City's election system; 2.) Solicit more general community feedback regarding other matters related to the City Charter; and 3.) Interface with the community outreach efforts provided by the City and interact with a facilitator.

Member McConn nominated Jack Hollis, Marcella Wash, Christopher Dresel, Dana Stroud, and Shelley Denison to serve on the subcommittee. Member Keathley seconded the nominations. Without objection, the subcommittee was formed and Members Hollis, Wash, Dresel, Stroud, and Denison were appointed to the subcommittee.

There was discussion on whether a second subcommittee should be formed to specifically tackle the City's election system. The CRC decided to only form one subcommittee at this time. An additional task was assigned to the subcommittee: research the election systems issue and report back to the CRC with a recommendation.

Member Stroud moved to request that the City Manager provide the CRC a facilitator experienced with working with diverse communities and to assist with community engagement; to lead guided discussions with Gresham residents and business owners who may self-identify as a member of a traditionally marginalized community, to include but not be limited to individuals within the BIPOC, LGBTQ+, disabled, and immigrant communities; to effectively interact with those communities and provide a safe and welcoming forum for these stakeholders to share their ideas, experiences, and recommended changes to the Gresham Charter of 1978; and then to transparently report back to the committee and to the community at large. Member Hollis seconded the motion. The CRC voted and the motion was passed unanimously by the members present.

The members decided to reconsider the membership of the subcommittee and nominated Vice Chair Ardner to serve on the subcommittee. Without objection, Vice Chair Ardner was appointed as a member of the subcommittee.

Chair Andaya expressed a desire to invite groups to present to the CRC, including the Sightline Institute. Member Gayken moved to invite the Sightline Institute to present to the CRC. Member Hollis seconded the motion. Member Gayken amended her motion to invite both the Sightline Institute and Healthy Democracy to present to the CRC. Member Hollis seconded the amended motion. The CRC voted and the motion was passed unanimously by the members present.

The members discussed other groups of interest that the CRC may want to invite to future meetings. Member McConn suggested that the members watch presentations that have already been compiled outside of meetings. There was discussion on whether the groups would be invited to present to the full committee, or to the subcommittee. The members agreed that the presentations would be a good use of subcommittee time.

Member Andaya moved that the Equal Vote Coalition and the STAR Voting Team be invited to present to either the full CRC or the subcommittee to present their research and professional opinion regarding election voting systems. Member Hollis seconded the motion. The CRC voted and the motion was passed unanimously by the members present.

7. AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETING; FUTURE SCHEDULE.

The next meeting will include public comment and a report from the subcommittee as Agenda items.

The members voted on whether a priority list should be discussed as an Agenda item at the next meeting. The majority of members present voted against adding the priority list as an Agenda item at the next meeting.

The date of the next CRC meeting will be determined after CAO obtains available dates from the members of the CRC.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:27 p.m.