

**Committee Members Present:** Joseph Andaya  
Jack Ardner  
Jacob Cleverly  
Shelley Denison  
Christopher Dresel  
Tim Fier  
Amanda Gayken (left at 6:56 p.m.)  
Jack Hollis  
Cathy Keathley  
Dana Stroud

**Committee Members Not Present:** Britt McConn  
Debra Stuart  
Marcela Wash

**Staff Present:** Kevin McConnell, City Attorney  
Margarita Contreras, Administrative Assistant  
Dara Wright, Paralegal  
Emily Bower, GRDC Executive Director  
Eric Schmidt, Assistant City Manager

**Also Present:** Elaine Howard, Elaine Howard Consulting, LLC

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A public meeting of the Charter Review Committee (CRC) was called to order by Chair Joseph Andaya, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of May, 2022, at 6:00 p.m., via Zoom. The meeting was digitally recorded and minutes were prepared by Dara Wright.

#### **1. PUBLIC TESTIMONY.**

Written testimony was received from Catherine Nicewood. She stated that unless the compensation for City Council members changes, the only people who can afford to be on City Council are community members who are self-employed, retired, or have a flexible work schedule. She felt that it is better to remain for the City Council to be voted on City wide.

#### **2. OPEN PUBLIC COMMENTS.**

No oral testimony was given.

### 3. APPROVE MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING.

Vice Chair Ardner asked for clarification on the following section included in the proposed minutes from the April 11, 2022, meeting:

“Member Wash expressed an interest in creating a working document to compile the committee’s priorities moving forward. Without objection, the committee asked the City to create a working document to compile **their** priority list.”

He stated that it was unclear whether the working document would be reflecting the committee’s priorities or the City’s priorities. City staff clarified that the intent of that statement in the proposed minutes was that the document would be a compilation of the Committee’s priorities.

Vice Chair Ardner moved to amend the minutes, so that the word “their” was changed to “Committee’s,” so that it was clear that the minutes were referring to a document with a compilation of the Committee’s priorities. Member Keathley seconded the motion. **Without objection, the motion passed.**

### 4. PRESENTATION FROM URBAN RENEWAL DEPARTMENT.

Emily Bower, GRDC Executive, and Elaine Howard of Elaine Howard Consulting, LLC, gave a presentation on the current language of the Urban Renewal provision in the Charter, which is in Chapter IX, Section 36A of the Charter. Proposed language changes to this section of the Charter were presented for the CRC’s consideration.

Elaine Howard explained that the current Urban Renewal Charter provision in Gresham is the most restrictive provision of its kind in Oregon. The current language states that any substantial change to the Urban Renewal Plan, other than typographical errors and clarification of language or polices, must be approved to the voters- and that no other city defines the term “substantial change” that narrowly The Charter provision in Gresham was compared to Charter provisions in cities of similar size, such as Tigard, Corvallis, and Beaverton.

The options presented for consideration were: 1.) Keep the existing Charter language; 2.) Match the language and requirements per ORS 457; and 3.) Match the requirements of a similar-sized City. In order to match the requirements in ORS 457, the CRC could recommend deleting the language which requires a vote of the people on changes to the plan. If the CRC recommended amending the Charter so that it matched the requirements of a similar-sized City, they could consider language used in Tigard and Beaverton’s Charters. Those Charter provisions only require a vote of the people when a new Urban Renewal Plan is created, or when there is a proposed increase to the maximum indebtedness of a plan.

Member Keathley asked Emily Bower for some examples of how the current Charter language has created barriers to completing projects. Emily Bower and Elaine Howard explained that the current language means that the money available for the plan must be spent during the early years of the length of the plan, because there is a timeframe within the length of the plan during which projects need to be commenced. This

can lead to the money needing to be spent and projects commenced expeditiously, which can leave less time for community engagement and input before projects are commenced.

Member Gayken asked how many projects have not been completed due to the current Charter language. Emily Bower stated that she would need to do some analysis, as there are projects that have not been completed but there are other variables which can impact project completion. She also pointed out that another barrier that the current language causes is that project lists have to stay the same, unless voters approve a change, even though priorities or needs of the community may change over time. Member Gayken also asked what would happen to unspent funds if they were left over after the deadline to commence projects has passed. Elaine Howard explained that these funds would be returned to the taxing districts.

Member Denison had questions about the recent measure on the May 2022 ballot, which was an extension of the Urban Renewal Plan through 2029. She asked if there were reasons that voters had expressed for why they might vote no. Emily Bower responded that based on surveys and input gathered early in the ballot measure process, that some voters may not fully understand where the money is coming from in order to fund the plan.

Member Stroud asked about the possibility of adding anti-displacement policy language to the Charter. Elaine Howard stated that she thought the Charter might be a difficult place for that type of language, and Emily Bower also felt that this topic may be more of a long-term policy discussion with Council. Assistant City Manager Eric Schmidt also explained that City Council passed a resolution with a DEI statement, and the DEI policy is being applied across City departments.

Vice Chair Ardner asked if a new Urban Renewal plan was created in a different geographic location, would the restrictive provisions in the Charter still apply. Emily Bower stated that yes, those provisions would still apply to a new Urban Renewal plan, if the Charter language remains unchanged. Member Ardner wondered whether it was necessary to amend the language in the Charter, or if the original plan could include more flexible language. Elaine Howard felt that the language in the plan would have to include very generic descriptions, but it still might be difficult with the current Charter language. Eric Schmidt added that the request to consider potential charter changes relates to economic development work throughout the City. The potential charter changes could allow the City to be a bit more nimble and responsive as it works on projects with developers.

Member Hollis asked whether there have ever been occurrences where problems occurred which may have been prevented or fixed by a more stringent system. Elaine Howard stated that an example of where people might feel that urban renewal financing was used inappropriately, was in Northeast Portland neighborhoods, where a displacement occurred when the Legacy Emanuel Hospital was built. She felt that displacement and gentrification were the two main issues that people may have with past Urban Renewal plans throughout Oregon.

Member Hollis asked whether there was a way to change the language in the Charter so that it was consistent with ORS 457, except in examples of displacement or gentrification. Mr. McConnell stated that yes, the CRC could put some displacement language in the Charter if they desired to do so. Member Denison stated that displacement and gentrification is subtle and felt that the displacement language may be outside of the scope of the Charter, and more of a policy question related to the Urban Renewal Plan itself. Member Hollis asked whether there was a way to reword the Charter to allow the flexibility that Urban Renewal needs to work more efficiently, while also allowing voter protection for some core aspects, such as displacement. Ms. Howard responded that she and Ms. Bower would need to research this question and consider potential language. Ms. Bower agreed and added that she felt that the displacement language really needs to be a Council action to set that policy.

Member Stroud wondered whether there may be groups who could speak to past displacement issues in the area, and Ms. Bower stated that she could provide a resource guide which may provide helpful historical information.

The members also discussed the possibility of adding displacements to a standalone provision in the Charter which would apply City-wide, rather than specifically within the Urban Renewal section of the Charter.

**Without objection, the members present decided to pursue making a recommendation on potential changes to the Urban Renewal section of the Charter and would revisit the discussion at their next meeting.**

## **5. REPORT FROM SUBCOMMITTEE.**

The subcommittee submitted a status report to the CRC, and Member Hollis provided an update on their work to date. The subcommittee created a mission statement to guide their work. The subcommittee also finalized their election systems survey, which is currently open. The subcommittee attended the Rockwood Dining Hall opening, in an effort to connect with community members. Since the April CRC meeting, the subcommittee has continued to invite groups to give presentations on election and voting methods, including Coalition of Communities of Color, Sightline Institute, Equal Vote Coalition, STAR Vote Team, City Club of Portland, FairVote, and Oregon Ranked Choice Voting.

At this point, the subcommittee now has a good grasp on the different election and voting options. They do still need to connect with community members to obtain input. The facilitator for the subcommittee is in place, and that person will assist the subcommittee with public outreach. Therefore, it appears that it would be difficult for the subcommittee to make a recommendation to the CRC in time for the November 2022 election. The subcommittee members plan on having a discussion at their next meeting to decide whether the timeline for the November 2022 election is feasible. The subcommittee also intends to invite More Equitable Democracy to a future meeting.

Member Hollis also addressed the resignation of Member Wash from the subcommittee. The subcommittee members discussed the possibility of adding another

member to the subcommittee. Their expectations would be that a new member would get up to speed by watching past meetings and reviewing past presentations and written materials, so that they could catch up to where the subcommittee is in its process, rather than having to start over.

Chair Andaya asked the subcommittee members to share what type of election or voting system they are currently thinking about recommending. Member Hollis stated that he thinks the current at-large system should be changed. STAR and Ranked Choice Voting seem to be the best voting options from his perspective, with a slight preference for Ranked Choice Voting. There was discussion among the members between the pros and cons between STAR and Ranked Choice Voting and the idea that either system would be better than the City's current voting system. Member Hollis also discussed proportional representation systems, and the possibility of incorporating that type of system with multi-member districts.

Member Denison agreed with Member Hollis that either Ranked Choice Voting or STAR are both immeasurably preferable to the City's current system. She is currently leaning towards Ranked Choice because there is more precedent and data on how it works, and because she felt that strategic voting could happen more in STAR than in Ranked Choice Voting. Chair Andaya stated that he felt that strategic voting could be a potential issue in either voting method.

Vice Chair Ardner stated that he found it helpful to think of these issues within the context of two questions, the first being, what is the structure of the Council? Is it at-large, is it within districts, how many members per district, etc. The second question is a determination of the methodology of the system, such as the type of voting system.

Member Stroud stated that she also agreed with Members Hollis and Denison and sees great benefits to either STAR or Ranked Choice Voting. Her personal preference is currently STAR, because of the efficiency of the calculation method, though she did note her concerns with potential strategic voting or "gaming the system" within STAR.

Member Fier asked the subcommittee whether they had a sense of how many districts, and how many council members they may want to recommend. Member Hollis stated that they would be looking at 3-5 Councilors per district. The number of districts is limited by how many total Councilors there are on Council.

Member Keathley asked about the purpose of the mission statement. Member Hollis stated that the mission statement would help the subcommittee determine how they would make decisions. Member Stroud added that it was a way to determine what the subcommittee's values were, which would help inform the subcommittee's goals and decisions within any recommendation. Vice Chair Ardner added that the mission statement would help the subcommittee evaluate whether a decision is proper, based on those values and parameters in the mission statement.

The members discussed the possibility of adding another member to the subcommittee. Member Fier moved to join the subcommittee. Member Hollis seconded the motion. **Without objection, Member Fier was appointed to the subcommittee.**

## **6. DISCUSSION ON COLLABORATION BOARD.**

City staff created a Miro collaboration board, which was created with members' Charter amendment ideas and priorities. Without objection, the members asked City Staff to add the Urban Renewal provision of the Charter to the Miro board.

Member Stroud proposed adding the community input received at the Rockwood Dining Hall event to the Miro board. Member Hollis stated that it would be important to be able to distinguish between CRC feedback and community feedback and suggested the possibility of creating a second board for community feedback which could be considered together with the original board.

Vice Chair Ardner mentioned that the printed version of the board was challenging to read. Dara Wright responded that she had a hard time getting so much information onto one page but would also send out the link to the board to the CRC members, where they could navigate through the board and zoom in on items as needed. **Without objection, the CRC asked City staff to create a second board for community feedback.**

## **7. AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETING; FUTURE SCHEDULE.**

Future agenda items are: public testimony, approve minutes from previous meeting, subcommittee status report/discussion on timeline of election and voting systems recommendation, discussion on Urban Renewal provision of Charter (as time allows), and further discussion on Miro priority board items (as time allows).

Member Hollis expressed an interest in hearing from groups who may be able to speak to potential harm caused by taking the power of the vote away concerning Urban Renewal Plans. Member Stroud also expressed an interest in inviting Participatory Budgeting or Sunrise PDX to a future meeting to discuss other potential Charter amendments.

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

## **8. OTHER ITEMS.**

Vice Chair Ardner asked whether the CRC would take on some of the high priority items on the Miro board, other than the election/voting system that the subcommittee is addressing. Member Hollis clarified that the subcommittee was charged with the election systems topic and general community input. There was discussion that the CRC could identify and take on some of the other priority items. Vice Chair Ardner suggested using the Miro board to determine other items for the CRC to focus on.

**There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:01 p.m.**