



## **Beaumont Wilshire Neighborhood Association**

### **General Meeting Notes**

Meeting Held: Monday, October 10, 2022, 7:00 – 8:30 pm

Location: Zoom Meeting

Board Attendees: Patty Nelson, John Sandie, Gary Hancock, Laurel Marshall, Aaron Breakstone, Susan Trabucco, Tim Gillespie, Colin O’Neil, Carlos Montalvo, Karla Lenox, Sam Balto

Absent Board Members: Barbara Struck, Al Ellis, Angela Frome, Patti Koehler

Guest Speakers: Melanie Billings-Yun, David Knowles

Resident Attendees: Mary & Charles, Adam Ballard, Linda Leyva & Michael Clark

### **Welcome**

#### **City Charter Reform Ballet Measure Forum Intro**

- Current City Government Structure:
  - City Council: 4 city commissioners plus Mayor (administrative and legislative roles), elected for specific positions, at large (elected by city-wide vote - not by districts)
  - Overlap with two commissioners elected one year and the other two and the mayor two years later. Each serves four years.
- Ballot Measure Proposal:
  - City Council: 12 members, Mayor is not a voting member. Four districts with 3 representatives from each district, elected using ranked choice-transferable voting. Mayor elected at large. Council legislative and new position City Manager administrative.
  - No primary elections.

#### **Presentation in Support: Presenting Melanie Billings-Yun**

- The goal is not to create from the top down but from the bottom up to find out what Portlanders want and need
- Have to get rid of the commission form of government, many inefficiencies
- Cross-bureau problems like homelessness, trash, and climate change because of silos
- Residents do not feel represented, feel frustrated, lost
- The city created the system we have back when we had only 200,000 residents

- Portland currently has 650,000 residents but the number of representatives has not changed
- No local knowledge or accountability
- The proposal includes district representation; 4 districts with three representatives each (only exists in one city in the U.S. but is a common system worldwide)
- Three representatives allow for more people to reach out to
- All representatives must live in the district and have an office in the district
- Two examples: Dublin, Ireland (a multi-member district with ranked choice voting; 95% of residents said they had a high level of satisfaction and 65% believe that having more representatives could solve problems more quickly) and Glasgow, Scotland
- Ranked choice voting allows more people within a community to be represented
- At least 75% of people within the community will feel at least one person they voted for represents them
- Oregon's incumbency rate is 95%
- The city budget office has produced a wide range for the cost of the measure: \$900,000 to \$8.7 million (the top of the range includes no savings in solving all government issues), which is about 0.14% of the city budget

**Presentation in Opposition: Presented by David Knowles**

- Agree with the proposed form of government with the city manager in charge of the administration of daily city business and legislative left to city council with elections from districts. Does not support the experimental ranked-choice voting with transferable votes. The current belief is it does not provide accountability and is confusing
- Disagree with the council structure of 4 districts and three people per district; should be more districts and single winners
- Strongly disagree with the single transferable vote method; the charter tax is 300 words long and complicated
- Mayor's role in this proposal will leave the mayor in a weaker position than the current form of government
- On Sunday, The Oregonian supported this position
- Name familiarity and incumbency are powerful influences in election
- Combination dilutes accountability; no single person to go to talk to about issues (trash, potholes, intersections); who do you hold accountable?
- Because this has never been done in the United States, there's no clarity on what it takes for a candidate to win; people deserve to know how a candidate wins office
- The threshold for election is 25% of the vote; a person can be elected in the number 3 position and can be the last person standing with less than 25% of the vote
- 33%, 25%, or less than that is unclear; voters deserve to know
- The proposal was developed using statistical modeling and academic research; has never been used in the U.S. with this combination
- Lack of real-world experience is troubling, a test kitchen for recipes in government

**Questions & Answers**

- How did three members per district and ranked voting evolve?
  - Support:
    - The best representation of all people in that district
    - Currently, if you vote for each individual, the same dominant group wins each time
    - Single-member districts are challenging because Portland doesn't split well
    - Broad-based representation (race, housing, political)
    - Combine multi-member with proportional representation to get 75% or more of the electro
- How will it provide better representation with three representatives instead of one
  - Support:
    - They are all responsible; when you call the office, one person needs to be there to answer
    - By having more employees, you have a bigger voice and can handle a wide variety of issues
    - One human can't be an expert on crime, houselessness, streets
    - Allows for a robust city council that can respond to a variety of problems and people within the district
- How will boundaries be established in communities of common interest?
  - Support:
    - By Oregon law, the four districts must all be equal in population and must be contiguous, and must not break up communities of interest
    - Added they must be compact
    - By not breaking up communities of interest, we've clarified that neighborhoods won't be broken up; can't cross natural boundaries
    - If passed, starting January 1, 2023, the city council will put together a district committee made up of 12 Portlanders around the city, conduct interviews around the city, by June would have to come up with a proposal for what districts would be
    - Must be reassigned every 10 years to resize using the census to adjust
- How will adjustments affect or not affect the city?
  - Opposition:
    - Commission focused on inclusivity and diversity
    - None of the goals adopted by the commission deal with functionality
    - Putting people together in a single room won't make it a more functional government
    - Not divided into separate questions so people can have a voice in this new untested election method
    - Accountability and potential dysfunction come from the city administrator effectively having a dual reporting relationship with Mayor and Council

- The city council can fire the administrator, but the mayor can't fire the city council, which creates confusion. Won't be an effective model, and lack of accountability, dispersed authority, lack of governmental objectives
- Support:
  - Mayor appoints and oversees the city administrator
  - Mayor would name and the city council would confirm; then mayor oversees
  - Mayor can fire at will but Portlanders are concerned about checks and balances
  - By a super-majority of three-quarters, the council could remove the city administrator
  - Concern proposal doesn't go far enough
- What is the relationship of the mayor to the commission within the proposed amendment
  - Support:
    - Currently, the mayor is a member of the city council
    - The system put forward is much more separation of powers
    - Mayor is an executive who runs the city on a day-to-day basis using the city administrator who reports directly to the mayor
    - The city council becomes a legislative body and amends/approves the budget
    - Greater separation of powers
    - Mayor would have a tie-breaking vote in case of a tie in the city council
    - Mayor does not have a veto
  - Opposition:
    - Mayors under this system will be weaker than in the current structure
    - Mayor kicked off the council
    - No ability to veto city policy adopted by the council
    - Authority over the city administrator shows lines going from the city council and the mayor
    - The city council retains an influential role over what happens with the city administrator
- What is the optimal number range for the city council?
- If charter reform is approved, and there are some glitches, can those be resolved, or would that require another ballot measure to fix?
  - Support:
    - Anytime it involves the charter, it goes to vote (except for tiny glitches with language)
    - Any change to the charter would have to go to the voters
    - The city council could bring forward another measure
    - Unclear on who owns an Instagram account, but will investigate the 33% on a social post
    - The threshold is 25%, but it could be lower
    - Not precise because of third-party candidates
  - Opposition:
    - Needing to do fixes is a real prospect, including how city candidate

- No clear threshold on what to win (33%, 25%, or something else)
  - People deserve to know what it
- If this new form of government is put in place, what is the effect on east Portland?
  - Support:
    - They would have a much bigger voice than they do right now
    - Having one representative, now having an equal voice, the effect would be immediate and quite serious
  - Opposition:
    - The proposal is for four districts. With 650,000 people in Portland, those are quite large districts
    - No assurance that people from East of 82nd or 102nd will have additional or stronger representation on the city council; the districts are too large
- Special interests don't override the voice of the people
  - Support:
    - The whole object is to give people more voice
    - In Oregon, we have a 95% incumbency rate
  - Opposition:
    - If only one person wouldn't be a problem. It's highly beneficial to incumbents
    - After a few election cycles, entrenched in incumbents
    - Won't achieve diversity and inclusion methods
- Why aren't there five districts and how does north Portland fit in?
  - Support:
    - Districts haven't been drawn but will depend on the district commission
    - Four quadrants but unclear what it will be
    - Targeting 50,000 people per representative (that would be 12)
    - Five districts would lead to 15 people, which feels too big of a jump for Portlanders
    - One of the concerns to keep at four, early talks were with the mayor of San Francisco
    - With a lot of single-member smaller districts, you get more district-ness and nimbyism
  - Opposition:
    - Academics developed four districts and a voting system
    - Commission used a statistical model to develop a model for where the districts should be and how many per district
    - Districts have yet to be identified and drawn
- Individual representative or district basis
  - Support:
    - Within the district, three people are elected but you only have a single vote
    - Get to choose your favorite, second favorite, and third; a vote still counts for one
    - The top three vote-getters that receive 25% +1 are all elected

- Opposition:
  - Not 25%, it's potentially less than 25% based on the campaign website
- Seattle has a large population and nine districts; Las Vegas has a similar population with 7 districts; why not follow Seattle or Las Vegas?
  - Support:
    - Seattle: has had 9 people since 1895, the city has grown, haven't gotten around to fixing it
    - Boston: 690,000 population has thirteen districts
    - Members: 650,000 population has thirteen
    - Washington D.C.: thirteen
    - Las Vegas: seven
    - Louisville: twenty-six
    - Spent a long time doing research with bureau heads and Portlanders
    - Not like Seattle; no big money from Microsoft, Seattle, or Boeing with different problems
- How will the proposed structure address homelessness more effectively than the current system?
  - Opposition:
    - Agree there should be a city administrator and all the executive functions should be under it
    - City administrators and mayors responsible for functions will have hands tied because they don't have full authority
  - Support:
    - Various commissioners and various bureaus overlap and have great division; can't cooperate
    - City administrators can untangle the mess
    - Mayor carries out rules and oversees the city administrator
- Twelve individuals voting or some form of causing between and the district casts a vote; what's the mechanism for interaction between the three in each district?
  - Support:
    - One would assume there would be some type of communication between the districts
    - A tremendous amount of negotiation behind the scenes, but comes down to the people to elect
- If we vote no, how long do we have until a chance to pick a form of government?
  - Opposition:
    - Commissioner Mapps has proposed an alternative concept form of government that would have a council of 7 people elected by district, a city administrator, a mayor that is not on the council but has veto power and the ability to appoint the city manager, and would have ranked-choice voting
    - Mapps will work with the city council to put the proposal on May 2023 ballot
    - Dan Ryan has committed to voting for this

- Risk to try a system that has no track record and is likely to create more dysfunction and end up with a council elected not with a majority or anything close to it
- Support:
  - If it passes, then we've started on the road to change
  - Remove the commission form of government and have district representation
  - Mapps can do another initiative even if it passes to try an alternative; at least we've begun
  - Very leery of promise this will happen
  - In the past 6 months, Mapps has changed his position on ranked choice voting, initially wasn't concerned about districts but now is, said he would get on the ballot by May but not by September, we think the mayor is on board
  - Getting this started and a promise
- How do you avoid representatives being special interest groups? Doesn't it risk creating repeated dysfunction?
  - Support:
    - It is hard to control the voter
    - Confident the system proposal will have an effect on that
    - Special interests are powerful now because people run at large, requiring a lot of money
    - Moving to a district base, it's less attractive and less expensive to run
    - Representatives will be closer to the populace, rather than the Willamette corridor
- Why no consideration of more, smaller districts?
  - Support:
    - All the districts are the same size population
    - The entire west side would not make up a single district because the East is so populous; power will go to the east side
    - Couldn't find by making smaller districts; couldn't find a way except for Northwest with a 7-district basis, any district that wasn't dominated by white homeowners with an income of \$70,000
    - Portlanders have an average income of \$45,000
  - Opposition:
    - Districts have not been drawn
    - Modeling has been done in the commission preparation for the proposal
    - There is no district proposed now and no assurance East County is incorporated, or the west side of the river is divided into the districts stretching across the east
- How would Mapps' proposal allow for running for the government without a war chest?
  - Opposition:
    - Personal contributions are limited, city matches are limited contributions

### Closing Statements

- Support
  - True Oregonian endorsed opposition; also opposed simple ranked choice voting proposed by Multnomah County
  - Supported by numerous community groups
  - Cambridge, Massachusetts since 1941 multi-member district with proportional representation with four attempts to alter the structure and has been denied
  - Not untested since multiple countries internationally use it
- Opposition:
  - How exactly is this form of government going to address our most critical issues? homelessness, gun violence
  - Likely to lead to more dysfunction and confusion
  - Biggest campaign contributions from businesses outside the state in support of the proposal
  - Don't let us be a 'guinea pig' and lots of deep concerns
  - Over half of those who commented expressed concern or outright opposition; asked to separate the change proposals; it's not all or nothing

### Board Business

- Meeting Agenda: Approved with no edits
- Meeting Notes from the September 12th meeting were approved with no revisions.
- Treasurer's Report:
  - Checking account: \$13,941.90
  - Venmo account: \$185.38
  - Accounts receivable: \$120
  - Paying Angela for items purchased at the retreat: \$113.16
- **MOTION:** It was moved, seconded, and approved to re-establish check-signers on BWNA accounts at Beneficial State Bank: President, Patty Nelson, Treasurer, Karla Lenox, Vice-President Al Ellis, Secretary Carlos Montalvo, and Ronda Johnson from CNN as a backup. Andrew Rinke and Barbara Strunk are removed as check-signers

### Action Items:

- Save the video recording to the website (Carlos)
- Re-establish check-signers on BWNA accounts (Karla)