

MINUTES
UMATILLA COUNTY CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE
Meeting of December 18, 2018
5:30 p.m., Room 114, Umatilla County Courthouse
Pendleton, Oregon

- Committee Members Present:** Chair Michele Grable; Vice-Chair Don Miller; Sally Anderson Hansell; Jerry Baker; Genna Banica; Dan Dorran
- Absent:** Mark Gomolski; Jennifer McClure Spurgeon
- County Counsel:** Doug Olsen
- Guests Present:** Ralph Wyatt, Linn County; Commissioner George L. Murdock; Sally Sundin

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting began at 5:30 p.m.

1. Call to Order - The chair called the meeting to order at 5:30, and reminded everyone that this is a public meeting.
2. Minutes of Previous Minutes - The minutes had been emailed to the committee members. Mr. Miller moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Mr. Dorran, Carried 6-0.
3. Additions to Agenda - None
4. Public Input. Sally Sundin was present for a portion of the meeting. She is an advocate for addiction services and had been a teacher. She had some questions regarding the hours worked by commissioners. She was informed that her questions were beyond the scope of the charter review and was invited to submit any relevant information to the committee.
5. Business Items:
 - A. Discussion with Ralph Wyatt. Ralph Wyatt is the County Administrative Officer for Linn County. He was appearing by telephone.

Linn County is a statutory county and has a full slate of elected offices - treasurer, assessor, surveyor, clerk, sheriff, and also three full time commissioners. The Board has budget authority over all of the other elected offices. The county is a very flat organization. He has multiple responsibilities, include HR director, labor relations, payroll, administrative services, motor pool, IT. He manages the support side of the organization - anything the Commissioners want him to do. There are 671 FTE, with a \$148 million budget. He has been with Linn County since 1992. His prior experience includes military and civil engineering, and civil management. He is not a county manager. He is in the same office as the commissioners and sees them periodically throughout the day.

Linn County has long serving commissioners, from 10 to 20 years. There are not any qualifications for serving as commissioner, other than the statutory requirements. It takes a commissioner 18 to 24 months to get up to speed. AOC is a source for learning office. A commissioner must take an interest in the state level, since the county is really an extension of the state.

For management of the county, communication is key. The administrator must make sure that the commissioners know what is going on; there should not be any surprises. The commissioners are full time and are paid approximately \$96,000 a year plus benefits. The commissioners divide up responsibilities at the first board meeting each year; they each have internal and external liaison assignments, which do not change much. The chair sets the agenda, and the chair is elected each year, though the same commissioner has been chair a number of years. The commissioners are elected at large for four year terms.

- B. Discussion with Commissioner Murdock. Commissioner Murdock was first elected a commissioner in 2013. He provided the committee with a proposed update to the county strategic plan. When he first became commissioner he did not know the full extent of what counties do and what services counties provided. He appreciated the work being done by the committee and emphasized that he would accept whatever recommendations were made by the committee.

When he first became commissioner, the county had a position that assisted the commissioners in running the county. Approximately three years ago, a number of positions were eliminated and the commissioners assumed the work of those positions and took a more active role in administering the county government. There has been a more direct relationship between the commissioners and the department directors. Recently the chair has taken on more of the day to day administration of the county. Administration requires a daily presence to address any issues that arise. This is balanced with outside responsibilities of a commissioner.

He attempts to model behavior for county employees. This includes acknowledging the value of each employee and the contribution to the county in providing good customer service to the public. It is important to create a vision on how the county should operate, and to develop stable funding to support it.

He was asked if a county administrator would be a benefit. With elections, no continuity is guaranteed. The less managerial experience held by a commissioner, the longer will be the learning curve. The responsiveness to the public is better through election. An administrator is possible, and funding would have to be found to pay for it. An administrator may help with continuity and institutionalizing the county vision. Of the Oregon counties, 27 out of 36 have some form of county manager. He is not in favor of a weak manager.

It is important that the committee understand that there has not been any discussion by the Board on what it wants or expects from the committee. The work of the committee will be honored. The recommendation could include transition periods for implementation. One item to note is the current system of election. An 8 month delay from election to assuming office is not productive. It also extends the period for campaigning, which also decreases production.

- C. Next Meeting. The next meeting will be in Pendleton, January 15, 2019, at 5:30 p.m. The Committee would like to talk with Commissioner Givens, and then begin the process of complying and synthesizing the information.

The meeting was adjourned by the Chair at 7:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Douglas R. Olsen

Umatilla County Counsel