

MINUTES
UMATILLA COUNTY CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE
Meeting of November 7, 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 (arrived 5:45); Genna Banica; Dan Dorran; Mark Gomolski
- Absent:** Jennifer McClure Spurgeon
- County Counsel:** Doug Olsen
- Guests Present:** Mayor John Turner; Robert Pahl; Jennifer Blake

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. Gomolski moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Mr. Miller. Carried 6-0.
3. Additions to Agenda - None
4. Public Input. There was not any public comment.
5. Business Items:
 - A. Discussion with John Turner. John Turner is the Mayor of the City of Pendleton. Chair Grable provided background on the purpose of the committee. Mayor Turner had talked with colleagues about government structure and benefits of commissioners managing the day to day operations versus a manger system. A manager system would not result in any money savings. The salary for a manager would be significant, and even if reduce salary of commissioner, there will be some additional cost. At the present time, there is good leadership at the county and he has a high regard for the commissioners. The City and its staff get along fine with the County. There are county employees on the City Council.

The mayor was asked who he interacts with at the county. He mostly interacts with the commissioners. If there is a concern or question, he does ask staff. At the present time there are not any controversies. He believes most interactions between the two organizations are through staff.

The commissioners do need to be advocates. At the present time, Commissioner Murdock is involved with the multiagency legislative advisory team.

The City has not had a problem in recruiting a manager. He is aware that some other organizations do have a problem. The salary must be reasonable. The Mayor does not believe there is too much of concentration of power in a manager system. The City has also not experienced any lack of dedication by volunteer council members. The members want to help solve problems that arise. The council has oversight over the manager. If there is a problem, it is dealt with by the manager. The structure must be clear that the manager interacts with and employs the staff, not the council or its members.

The county currently has in Commissioner Murdock a good manager. He has the experience and the background to administer the county. The question is how to keep or to elect someone with those attributes.

- B. Discussion with Robert Pahl. Robert Pahl is the CFO for the county. He has been with the county for over 14 years. The county currently is being run well. Because of the leadership, attributes and goals, the county is in a better financial position. The county is a complex organization, with its multiple departments and responsibilities. There is a lot for a commissioner to learn and to understand.

The county goals and priorities are set through the budget process. Primarily this starts with the directors, CFO and the Commissioners. The process begins in July, and he tries to set future financial projections. The county mission statement is the basis for the budget, and each department also has its goals.

The Commissioners use the liaison system to help manage the county. Commissioner Murdock has most of the administrative functions. The budget changes all of the time, and funds are allocated to fit the needs of the department.

Mr. Pahl was with the county during the period of the executive assistant. It was a different structure than a county manager. A manager does help with the continuity problem. A manager would have to have the ability to take control and administer the county. This would leave the commissioners time to set policy, goals and directives.

The Commissioners also have an advocacy role. Since 35 to 40% of the funding is from the state and federal governments, the county must be part of larger organizations. This allows the county to seek and be aware of funding. The department directors do this, but the Commissioners also have a role.

The cost of a manager is estimated at \$225,000. This funding will have to be found within the budget somewhere.

- C. Discussion with Jennifer Blake. Jennifer Blake started with the county in 1993, 27 years ago. She is the Human Resources Director. The office has 3 people. They handle employment, recruiting, labor negotiations and issues for all county employees. There are approximately 200 represented employees in four bargaining units, and 80 exempt employees.

The situation at the county has never been better. The county has not always been an enjoyable place to work, and the employees not always valued as should be. Due to Commissioner Murdock, the county culture has changed. He leads by example and wants each employee to feel valued by the organization. The question is how to maintain that standard. At the present time, the chair is

in charge of the staff - finance, HR and legal. If it changes each year, the continuity and momentum can be lost. A manager might help, but it will depend on the people in the position.

- D. Future Presentations. The committee would like to meet in other locations and start talking to the current commissioners.

- E. Next Meeting. The next meeting will be in Hermiston with City of Hermiston and Commissioner Elfering, on November 26 [This was later moved to November 28 due to schedules]. A meeting in Milton-Freewater will be set for December 17, 2018, to meet with the public and Commissioner Givens.

The meeting was adjourned by the Chair at 6:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Douglas R. Olsen

Umatilla County Counsel