

**MINUTES**  
**UMATILLA COUNTY CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE**  
Meeting of May 1, 2018  
5:30 p.m., Room 114, Umatilla County Courthouse  
Pendleton, Oregon

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**Committee Members Present:** Chair Michele Grable; Vice-Chair Don Miller; Sally Anderson Hansell; Genna Banica; Dan Dorran; Mark Gomolski (excused at 6:30); Darla Huxel; Jennifer McClure Spurgeon

**Absent:** Jerry Baker

**County Counsel:** Doug Olsen

**Guests Present:** Dennis D. Doherty; Glenn Youngman

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**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.
2. Chair’s Introductory Comments - Chair Grable reminded those present that the meeting is a public forum. It is being audio recorded and minutes will be taken.
3. Minutes of Previous Minutes - The minutes had been emailed to the committee members. Mr. Dorran moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Mr. Gomolski. Carried 8-0.
4. Resignation - Mr. Olsen reported that Kim Puzey had submitted his resignation from the committee. The Board of Commissioners appointed Darla Huxel as full member of the committee to replace Mr. Puzey. An updated list of committee members and contact information was provided to the committee members. Ms. Huxel provided a brief personal history. She has been involved in city government, and wanted to obtain more on the county perspective and compare the different styles of government.
5. Additions to Agenda - Mr. Dorran wanted the committee to consider meeting at other locations in the county.
6. Public Input: None
7. Business Items:
  - A. Discussion with former Commissioners. Dennis D. Doherty, former commissioner, was present to provide information and answer questions regarding the county structure of government. Mr. Doherty provided a summary of his background, being raised in Morrow County, attending St. Joseph’s Academy, prosecuting in the Umatilla and Morrow County District Attorney’s Offices, private practice, and then Umatilla County Commissioner from 1996 to 2013.

Mr. Doherty passed out to the committee members a written summary of his thoughts on the county home rule charter. The statement included benefits and weaknesses of the charter. He does not believe the charter is clearly written or easy to follow. It would benefit from a total rewrite, but that would be a huge job.

Since there is not a general governance role of the commissioners, there can be challenges to the Board's authority. It is helpful for the board to adopt policies to fill in some of the blanks created by the charter. Compensation was always a question, and what was included in the compensation package, such as the car and credit card rewards.

Overall, though, Mr. Doherty did not feel strongly enough about any of the weaknesses to change the charter.

Mr. Dorran asked if commissioner election by district would be beneficial. Mr. Doherty was not personally in favor. He felt at large elections made a commissioner responsive to the entire county, not just one portion or component, and would lose the visibility factor in the communities, and create disharmony. The commissioner should be acting for the greater good of the county, not just a small area of it.

Mr. Miller inquired about the work load of the commissioners, and if full time is warranted. Mr. Doherty said that full time is needed. As it is, the commissioners are stretched too thin. Everyone wants to have a part in the decision making process, and it comes a question of how to control the work load. Additional commissioners could spread the work load. Since there is no description on what a commissioner is to do, self-imposed side boards or priorities are helpful. The first priority for a commissioner is policy making, then administrative.

There was a general discussion on the duties and responsibilities of a commissioner. Mr. Doherty felt that a commissioner needs to be involved, and be hands on. The duties are not in charter, but are more self-imposed by a commissioner. When funding is limit, the commissioners, like most county employees, take on more responsibilities. He does not see this changing. A copy of the latest commissioner liaison chart was distributed to the Committee by Mr. Doherty.

Mr. Doherty was questioned on the need for a manager. He thought that a manager removes a commissioner from contact with citizens. There really was not the funding for it, and would have to have the right people in the positions. He did not see it happening.

Ms. Grable asked how Mr. Doherty felt about term limits. He was not personally in favor. A commissioner takes time to learn the responsibilities and to have background on matters. It is over time that can acquire the knowledge needed to make policy decisions.

The same was true for part time positions. Unless you can get the right people, it would be a disaster. The commissioners would not have the knowledge necessary to know what to do.

Mr. Doherty was in favor of electing a chair. His preference for any changes would be to expand the board to five, and to elect the chair at large. Funding is the biggest problem, that, and finding enough time.

He felt that the present system for establishing the salary for a commissioner is fair. His recommendation would be that tasks of a commissioner need to be flushed out and documented. A commissioner does need to be full time. He added that he had accomplished some of his goals as a commissioner, but a lot he was not able to get to.

Glenn Youngman was asked for his views on being a commissioner. He said that he had covered this at the previous meeting. To reiterate, he believed a manager is needed due to the complexity. A manager would allow commissioners to focus on other matters, such as getting additional funding, priorities, mental health issues, and economic development. He was in favor of short term tax incentives to encourage development, but not longer terms. The board should be increased from three to five. The chair should be elected by the board; a rotating chair is more responsible to the entire county. The five should be part-time, three elected by district, and two at large.

Mr. Miller added that any changes must be financially feasibility, but should not be done to save money.

- B. Clinton Reeder Comments. Mr. Reeder had provided his thoughts on the charter review, based on his participation in past reviews. The document was distributed to the committee members, and the consensus was to discuss at the next meeting after the members could read the comments.
- C. List of Topics. Discussion for future meeting.
- D. Future presentations or interviews. Consensus was to have more public input, and to hold a public hearing at future dates.
- E. Next Meeting. The consensus was to schedule the next meeting in Milton-Freewater, to allow for discussions with Jim Barrow and City of Milton-Freewater representative. A date other than a Monday was needed to allow for all members to attend. The date for the next meeting is set for June 6, 2018, at 5:30, in Milton-Freewater

The meeting was adjourned by the Chair at 7:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Douglas R. Olsen

Umatilla County Counsel