

**MINUTES**  
**UMATILLA COUNTY CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE**  
Meeting of October 11, 2018  
5:30 p.m., Room 114, Umatilla County Courthouse  
Pendleton, Oregon

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- Committee Members Present:** Sally Anderson Hansell; Jerry Baker; Genna Banica; Dan Dorran (via phone); Mark Gomolski
- Absent:** Michele Grable; Don Miller; Jennifer McClure Spurgeon
- County Counsel:** Doug Olsen
- Guests Present:** Tom Fellows; Bob Waldher; Paul Chalmers; Rick Pullen

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**CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting began at 5:30 p.m.

1. Call to Order - Jerry Baker, the acting chair, called the meeting to order at 5:30, and reminded everyone that this is a public meeting. He gave a short statement on the purpose for the committee and process for the review of the charter.
2. Minutes of Previous Minutes - The minutes had been emailed to the committee members. Ms. Banica moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Ms. Anderson Hansell. Carried 5-0.
3. Additions to Agenda - None
4. Public Input. There was not any public comment.
5. Business Items:
  - A. Discussion with Tom Fellows. Tom Fellows is the Public Works Director. He has been with the county since January 1994. The Public Works Director has always worked closed with the Board. The Board has always taken the stance that any complaints or concerns will be first directed to the department to resolve. The department has the first opportunity to respond to complaints. He believes that any complaints should be resolved at the lowest possible level.

Mr. Fellows has had the chance to see how the manager position has worked in other counties. Both structures have drawbacks and advantages. He does not have a position on which one is better. If there is a manager, the direct access to the Board is limited. He is satisfied with the current opportunities.

The liaison for the department currently is Commissioner Givens. That has worked well and Commissioner Givens is available. Mr. Fellows has worked with other commissioners, some of which take a less involved approach and only want to know if issue. He does work with all three

commissioners and has a lot of contact with all. All three commissioners are available for road issues.

The department takes care of 1700 miles of road, 500 of which are paved, along with over 300 bridges. There are 10 fewer employees than 15 years ago. There are always gaps, but do as much as possible with limited funding. Recently there has been additional funding to allow for updating of fleets. Besides roads, the department also includes the county park, county surveyor and the county noxious weed program.

Mr. Fellows is involved with public works at the county and state level. This has provided the county with a voice when trying to restructure the method for distribution of funding.

A question was raised as to establishing priorities for the department. The department includes three separate shops to address different areas of the county. Each is staffed independently and can address problems in each of the areas. The highest priority is the paved roads, which are cheaper to maintain than repair or replace. The remainder of the roads is addressed depending on the need and time of year, such as grading or plowing, and trying to focus on the collector first with the most traffic. The senior staff is usually the one to set the priorities. There are not any capital projects unless special funding is obtained.

- B. Discussion with Bob Waldher. Bob Waldher is the Planning Department Director. He became the director over a year ago. Planning has a staff of six people, including 2 planners, administrative staff and code enforcement. Originally his liaison was Commissioner Elfering, it has now been changed to Commissioner Givens. He is comfortable with the arrangement, has a good relationship with the commissioners and feels comfortable going to them. He has been able to meet with all three as much as needed.

He has been with Umatilla County for three years. Prior to that, he was a landscape architect for 10 years. He was familiar with working with governmental agencies. He has worked with agencies with manager structure. There are some advantages to a manager, but what makes the largest difference is who is in the position.

The department engages in long term planning. The county comprehensive plan is outdated. The transportation system plan also needs updating. Priorities are set and reviewed each year for the department. Individual goals and professional growth are also completed each year as part of performance evaluations.

The county has used technology to its advantage. Thanks to IT, the county has its own permit tracking program, unique to the county. They also try to do as much as possible electronically.

- C. Discussion with Paul Chalmers. Paul Chalmers began work with the county in January 1990, and has been with the county 28 years. He has been the director for the Assessment and Taxation Department since 1995. In 1990 there were 33 full time positions in the two departments. After Measures 47/50, staff was cut in half, and there are now 16 positions. There is adequate staff to complete the function, just need to make sure the right people in the positions.

The situation in the county is the best it has ever been. At one time there was a fear factor, uncomfortable, with people not knowing if would still have a job. Today, professional development and growth are stressed. The budget is being well managed. The director has some control over budget, versus in the past when cuts were directed.

\$98 million is collected in property taxes, of which 19% is the county portion. They work to keep taxes from going delinquent and are paid timely.

His thoughts on if a manger system would be better, is it depends on who is filling the position. There are trust issues, and making sure matter is been related onto the Commissioners. It makes two layers to get to the Board. Currently Commissioner Murdock has taken on the role of the county manager. It fits his talents and experience. He has worked for 8 different commissioners and overall the current is the best. Efficiency is encouraged. Customer service is emphasized, as well as professional development. A manger position encourages continuity, but it is not elected. He is just not sure of the benefit of a manager. There is plenty for three commissioners to do. In past experience with the county, advancement was based on who you knew, rather than capabilities. That is not the current situation

When requested about advocacy role, Mr. Chalmers responded that he is involved in two state associations. These groups work on legislative priorities. He passes this information onto the Board. The groups do not set policy, just work on administrative oversight.

In most counties, the position of the Assessor is elected. Only 11 counties have appointed Assessor. A lot of the Assessors have little experience.

- D. Resignation. Darla Huxel submitted to the Board of Commissioners her resignation from the committee. The position will not be refilled by the Board.
- E. Future Presentations. The committee would like to meet with staff for the Board of Commissioners, and also city mayors.
- F. Next Meeting. The next meeting will be in Pendleton to have discussion with Commissioner staff and city mayors. The date for the next meeting is set for November 7, 2018, at 5:30 p.m., at the Umatilla County Courthouse. The meeting was adjourned by the Acting Chair at 7:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Douglas R. Olsen

Umatilla County Counsel