

WARD SYSTEM INTERVIEWS, CITY OF BEND CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE

September 2017

INTERVIEWS: MAJOR OREGON CITIES WITH WARD SYSTEMS

Bend Charter Review Committee members will interview small groups of elected/appointed officials of six comparable Oregon cities, five with and one without a ward system, during September. The timeline is to conduct interviews by phone by the September 26 Charter Committee Meeting. The Charter Review Committee will then summarize each interview as part of its initial report to the Bend Council in October.

1. WHO TO INTERVIEW?

Small group interviews with six (of 10 largest) Oregon cities, that have Council-Manager government: *Hillsboro, Gresham, Medford, Eugene, Springfield, Corvallis*. **Expert Interview** with Phillip Cooper, Professor of Public Administration, Portland State University. Small groups (2-3 persons) from each city should include a **councilor or mayor, City management staff** and may include one other major stakeholder (selected by a City Manager's office).

2. SCHEDULING

Bend City Manager's office will coordinate scheduling of interviews with other City Manager Offices. Charter Committee members (2 at a time) will conduct 45-minute interviews with representatives of other major Oregon cities and with one regional expert. One Charter Committee member is the designated questioner and the other is the note taker. Other Charter committee members may sit in on Interviews.

3. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1) Does your Council system provide for direct citizen and community influence (with a local Council representative)?
- 2) Does a ward system provide community members with accountability (i.e. someone who represents me and my area) from City Councilors?
- 3) Does a ward system provide for broader geographic community representation on City Committees and programs? Would this be different without a ward system?
- 4) Is there a system (ward or all at-large) that leads to broader diversity (i.e. socioeconomic, gender, race, religion, etc.) on a City Council?
- 5) What is your City doing to increase diversity on Council? What are the barriers in your community to creating a more diverse Council?
- 6) Because you have a ward system, what has been your City's experience in creating and operating wards? Do any community members feel slighted by wards. Is gerrymandering a concern?

- 7) Does a ward system create an environment for cooperation among Councilors? Or do wards tend to engender an environment of councilors seeking to benefit his or her ward first before the entire city?
- 8) How does the cost of running a Council campaign differ between campaigns for ward positions vs at-large positions? (Does it make a difference if ward positions are voted on by the entire city?)
- 9) Does your Council system have any perceived impact on the diversity of your City committees?
- 10) For Gresham: What were the reasons your community chose not to go to a ward system?

NOTE: Interviewers may customize some questions, based on a city's Council system.

ADDENDUM: POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND PITFALLS OF WARD SYSTEMS

(The Charter Review Committee and a Bend 2030 report identified these potential benefits and pitfalls)

BENEFITS

- 1) Wards let area residents choose Council representatives directly
- 2) Wards support balanced Council representation from throughout the city
- 3) Wards lower the cost of Council campaigns
- 4) Wards Attract new blood to Council, City committees and programs, support more diverse representation (E.G. underrepresented populations or neighborhoods, lower income and minority residents)
- 5) Wards support broader community participation in City decision making, City Committees and programs, and elections from throughout the city
- 6) Wards support more integrated Council goal setting and services that address both Citywide/local issues.
- 7) Wards support a closer alignment of Council, Committees, and programs with neighborhoods/associations

PITFALLS

- 1) Ward Councilors may not represent the full community
- 2) Wards may create division and territorialism
- 3) Wards may “balkanize” Council and City attention, services, and issues
- 4) Council and City may not get a broad community perspective— just a ward focus
- 5) Ward residents may be stuck with electing a certain individual, due to where they live
- 6) Potential difficulties in attracting well-qualified Council candidates for all wards
- 7) Could a mix of wards and at-large councilors help mitigate these pitfalls?