

The Oregonian

Portland postpones vote on update to rules that regulate neighborhood associations

*By Everton Bailey Jr.
November 14, 2019*

The Portland City Council is considering extending a controversial process to amend part of the city code that regulates the civic life bureau and neighborhood associations so more feedback can be solicited.

Commissioners heard public testimony Thursday on a new proposal, which called for creating a workgroup made up of several different city bureau members, to examine how the city can improve on increasing civic participation from Portland's underrepresented residents. The city work group would present recommendations to the council in November 2020, then a public feedback process would stretch until 2023 and that would lead to another set of suggestions on how to change Chapter 3.96 of the city code.

City officials said the code revision was meant to update the Office of Community and Civic Life's responsibilities to help all Portland residents engage with city government and to better reach more people outside of neighborhood associations. But neighborhood association members and others took exception saying they weren't properly consulted in code amendment discussions and felt the 95 neighborhood groups were being cast as doing more harm than good.

Commissioner Chloe Eudaly, who presented the new work group proposal Thursday, oversees the Office of Community and Civic Life and championed the latest code amendment. The city was initially scheduled to vote on the code changes Thursday, but Eudaly proposed extending the process after public backlash and an apparent lack of support from other commissioners.

Eudaly said the new proposal provides "a pathway forward while maintaining our commitment to a more inclusive and equitable future." She noted this was the city's third attempt to update this specific section of the city code.

Around 150 people attended the council meeting Thursday held at the North Portland headquarters of the education nonprofit Self Enhancement Inc. More than 60 people signed up to testify, though the meeting ended without everyone addressing the council. Commissioners told the public they would still accept written testimony from anyone who didn't get to weigh in.

A 2016 audit found the city code governing the Office of Community and Civic Life outdated and didn't adequately represent the bureau's current programs and responsibilities. The review also found that segments of Portland's population, such as low-income residents and people of color, were being underrepresented by neighborhood associations. In July 2018, the city council ordered the civic life bureau to create a community advisory committee to come up with recommendations for rewriting the code that regulates the agency and the neighborhood associations.

While the committee's proposal in July didn't advocate getting rid of neighborhood associations, it eliminated references to them and other groups seen as long-time traditional paths to Portland civic involvement. It also emphasized a new structure for the office that specifically mentions better serving all Portlanders.

The current code recognizes – and provides certain powers to -- Portland’s 95 neighborhood associations, seven district coalitions and its many business district associations. The code also outlines requirements, such as making meetings open to all and retaining copies of records.

In return, the code states city agencies must tell recognized associations and coalitions of zoning changes and any other actions “which affect neighborhood livability.” The groups may, for example, appeal zoning decisions for free.

Opponents also were concerned the proposed changes would eliminate oversight of the groups as well as limit those groups’ oversight of the city. They argued that neighborhood involvement is especially important considering Portland’s system of government, where the Mayor and commissioner serve city-wide rather than representing geographic areas.

Despite the fact the code amendment vote was tabled, many speakers told commissioners if they were for or against it anyway. Several people testified that the new city workgroup meetings should be public as well as any drafts of their proposals. Others suggested that the Office of Community and Civic Life no longer oversee the process.

Linda Nettekoven, a member of the 25-person community advisory committee, said she voted no on the group’s final recommendation in July because she was concerned neighborhoods and coalitions hadn’t been properly informed about the code change process. She said she hopes future processes are more inclusive from the start.

“I think we need a better shared understanding of the problems that we are trying to solve,” Nettekoven said. “The diversity and wealth of experience of our code committee members was outstanding. However, because we came from different backgrounds and sometimes different experiences with our city government, we had different understandings of the problems at hand and the specifics.”

Molly Mayo, another advisory committee member and a former neighborhood coalition executive director, said the controversy caught many of her colleagues off-guard. She said it was driven by people wrongly assuming neighborhood associations were on the chopping block. She noted that there have been calls to improve Portland’s civic engagement to include historically marginalized and underrepresented groups for 20 years and opposition has partly led to inaction.

“If you consider which groups are for code change and which groups oppose code change, it’s virtually impossible to ignore how race, economic factors, power and privilege are at play,” Mayo said. She described the level of uproar over the latest proposed code amendment as “a fascinating study in and of itself around equity issues and systems of privilege.”

She said she supported the committee’s original recommendation.

Mike Linman, a member of the Maplewood Neighborhood Association in Southwest Portland, said he didn’t know anyone who was against updating the city code. But, he added, he was against the way it was presented. He said he felt the process “blamed neighborhood associations for basically everything,” and that he hoped Thursday’s meeting was the first step in the process of bringing more people together.

“As the city of Portland changes, I agree it’s necessary for our government to better reflect the depth and breadth of its population,” he said. “That’s why we need to create defined standards through the city code to make sure that we have the equality and participation that all Portlanders deserve.”

The council is scheduled to vote on the new workgroup proposal in December.

The Portland Tribune

UPS to deliver packages at Portland State using eTrikes

By Joseph Gallivan

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United Parcel Service to use electric assist tricycles to deliver packages around Portland State University Campus

UPS will deliver packages by electric-assist tricycle in a year-long pilot on the campus of Portland State University.

The Portland Bureau of Transportation has given Big Brown and the school the go-ahead to ride the trikes on campus. The school currently consumes about two van loads of UPS packages a day. With the trikes picking up four pods a day from a nearby UPS trailer, PSU Transportation & Parking Services Director Ian Stude said the plan could reduce that to one truckload.

UPS drivers will receive extra training for the trikes, which weigh 700 pounds unladen and have a 90-cubic-foot capacity and can go up to 20 mph. They have a 48-volt motor on the rear wheels with both cable and electronic braking. The driver's pedals turn a chain that powers the front wheel. With a high center of gravity, the eTrikes need an expert to steer them.

The eTrikes, called eBikes by PSU, and accompanying modular trailer, will operate on campus generally between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., depending on the delivery volume each day. The bike itself is the result of a collaboration between Portland companies Silver Eagle Manufacturing and Truck Trike.

Rome, now Portland

Like all bicycles, they are legal on sidewalks in the downtown core, as well as in bike lanes.

The University has used B-Line to deliver its supplies from Office Depot for five years and has been happy with the way its trike drivers minimize intrusion.

PSU Interim President Stephen Percy told a huddle of brown-clad workers, media and passers-by on Wednesday that the school is trying to reduce carbon emissions from the urban core.

"The UPS eBike delivery program promises to do just that, and we are thrilled to serve as a testbed for it and to connect to a business that is working so diligently to promote sustainable changes."

UPS launched a similar effort last year at Seattle's Pike Place Market with success. UPS has similar pilots in Germany (six), Belgium, Paris, France, Dublin, Ireland, Rome and Verona, Italy, and London, U.K.

"The goal of the initiative is to reduce vehicle miles traveled," said UPS Industrial Engineering Department Manager Travis Vaughter. "UPS, PBOT and PSU will evaluate the eBike's reliability, design and integration into Portland's infrastructure over the next six months."

"The competition for space to facilitate freight loading and unloading on campus continues to increase, as our campus continues to become denser and more active," said PSU Transportation & Parking Services Director Ian Stude. "The use of light footprint vehicles like the UPS eBike are an excellent match for the human-scaled design of the PSU campus."

Stude added that the safety was an issue.

"Across the nation, pedestrian and bicyclist-involved crashes frequently involve freight and service vehicles, often with fatal results," he said. "UPS has been a leader in analyzing and improving safety for vulnerable roadway users as part of their delivery practices."

Stude said PSU students in the supply chain program will have access to UPS's data for their research. Supply chain is a PSU specialty, given the presence of Nike, Adidas and Intel.

Bikes on Trikes

UPS President Joe Braham warmed up the crowd by pointing out that the company's last CEO, Scott Davis, graduated PSU in 1974. He added that UPS transports 6% of everything that is manufactured in the United States, and that ecommerce has grown annually at 12% for the last three years.

"By the year 2050, 68% of the world's population will live in downtown cities. That translates into two and a half billion more people living in the cities in the next 30 years. What impact would that have on logistics, congestion and the environment?" asked Braham.

UPS Managing Director of Sales, Jeff Courtney revealed that just the day before, its new subsidiary, Flight Forward, made the first residential drone delivery of prescription medicine, with partner CVS pharmacy.

Chris Warner, director of PBOT made it clear that his agency is as much about emissions reduction (carbon and more toxic ones) these days as about reducing congestion or building roads. "If we are going to really tackle climate change, we have to work on transportation because otherwise we won't be able to cut those emissions and really get to our goals."

Warner said he was grateful that the university is stepping up. "We're just so excited that they can really help add to the vitality and the vibrancy of the city."

Bill Alcorn is president of Bike Flights, an e-commerce international bicycle shipping service which allows people to box up their bikes (and eBikes) for air travel. He made the case that now eBikes can be delivered by eTrikes.

PBOT Director Warner said the bikes will also help the city address climate change. He was the first to test one, after an aide supplied a helmet.

"We want to use this as a model to test this around the city," he added. "I can't wait to see what other innovative solutions we can work on together as we move forward," he said, before proceeding north at 2 miles per hour.

The Portland Mercury

Portlanders Might Get to Vote on Replacing the City's Form of Government in 2020

*By Alex Zielinski
November 14, 2019*

The November 2020 election might give Portlanders another chance to scrap the city's outdated form of government.

Nine months after publishing a report on the disadvantages of Portland's antiquated government structure, the City Club of Portland is looking to hire a campaign consultant to research if a 2020

ballot measure calling for a new form of government would be a success. The City Club, a civic-minded nonprofit, says the decision was inspired by the public's positive response to the February 2019 report.

"We believe it's time to test the waters," says City Club spokesperson Erin Haley.

The City Club's report gave a detailed history on Portland's 106-year-old "commission" form of government—a wonky structure that tasks five Portland commissioners, including the mayor, with overseeing a number of massive city bureaus such as parks, transportations, and police.

Unlike the vast majority of modern city governments, Portland City Council members are not elected to represent a specific regions of a city, where they would be required to live and to represent in city council meetings. Instead, all of Portland commissioners are expected to speak for the city's entire population, while also overseeing specific city bureaus.

One unfortunate side effect of this system has become readily apparent in Portland elections: Since commissioners are elected at-large, the victors are nearly always those who have the most money and name recognition, and can thus gather the most citywide votes.

Early in the twentieth century, many major US relied on a commission form of government. But after seeing the structure give way to rampant corruption and inequities, nearly all switched to district-based representation. Portland is the only remaining city of its size that still has a commission form of government.

The City Club's 35-page report ended with a clear recommendation: Axe the commission form of government and replace it with a more popular "council-manager" structure, where elected officials are solely responsible for policymaking while an appointed, nonpartisan city manager takes over the administrative work that comes with running city bureaus. The report suggests the city expand the council to eight people, each of whom would be elected to represent specific geographic districts.

Along with publishing the report, City Club paid a research firm to poll Portland residents on the city's government structure and found that 70 percent of voters would support a change to a district-based council. That data—along with community feedback over the past months—was enough to convince City Club to take a step toward the 2020 ballot.

"We have been strongly encouraged by the public to pursue this," says Haley. "We think that proposing a new form of government through a ballot measure requires a coalition, and we believe City Club could be the place where that coalition could be built."

On November 1, City Club issued a request for proposal to find an "experienced campaign professional to research and submit a report on the viability of a citizen initiative or referral campaign to make changes to the City of Portland's form of government."

The selected consultant will also be asked to create a detailed campaign plan and budget to effectively get a measure on the November 2020 ballot.

If successful, the November election would mark the ninth time a measure to undo the commission government would be included on a ballot. But recent attempts have asked voters to approve a "strong mayor" structure, where Portland's mayor would essentially become the CEO of all city bureaus. Many voters saw these attempts as little more than a power grab; if done correctly, City Club's pitch for a council-manager structure could assuage those fears.

With less than a year until the November election, City Club's working on a tight schedule. Interested consultants have until November 22 to submit a proposal, and City Club will select a consultant no later than December 13. The chosen consultant must turn in their report by

February 28. Only then will City Club decide whether to go forward with a ballot measure—which would have to be submitted and approved by the county no later than September 3.

Kyle Chisek, a former policy advisor for Mayor Ted Wheeler and former Mayor Tom Potter, is one of several local political consultants interested in the quick-turn job. Chisek led the city's last campaign to end the commission form of government in 2007. More than a decade later, Chisek says he believes Portlanders are ready to give the idea another shot.

"The city is in a different place now," Chisek says. "There's been a growing recognition that some of the goals we have struggled to accomplish as a city stem from how the government is structured. As Portland grows and changes, our government needs to evolve with us."

Other political consultants have shown interest in the proposal, but few are prepared to discuss it publicly.

If this hypothetical ballot measure passed, it's currently unclear how long it would take for the city to draw districts, hold new elections, and hire a city manager—but it's expected those complexities will be fleshed out in the next few months.

Members of the public will have an opportunity to hear about the City Club's take on Portland's government—and a possible ballot measure—at a November 26 meeting. It's the nonprofit's intention, Haley says, to have as many communities represented during these discussions as possible.

"Everyone deserves a seat at the table when we're talking about fundamentally changing our government," she says. "That's what this is about."

OPB

Portland Plans For New First Responder Program To Assist People In Crisis

*By Meerah Powell
November 14, 2019*

About half of the people Portland Police arrested in 2017 and 2018 were people experiencing homelessness.

The city of Portland is developing a program to combat that criminalization.

The program is called Portland Street Response. It's looking to take police off of low-priority 911 calls and instead send a new branch of first responders, trained in behavioral health, to address issues related to people experiencing homelessness or mental health crises.

"Historically it's been up to the police to shoulder most of the responsibility as first responders in crisis calls, but in many cases, police are not the right resources to respond," Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler said at a press conference Thursday. "They are the final safety net when all other safety nets have failed."

This past May, Portland City Council approved \$500,000 toward Portland Street Response. Now the city is working on a pilot set to launch next spring.

"Today we start down the path of ensuring that we have the right first responder at the right time for the right incident," commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty said.

Hardesty and Wheeler convened a 40-person work group in May made up of people experiencing homelessness, business-owners, neighborhood associations and service providers. City Council will discuss the work group's recommendations for the program at a Nov. 21 meeting.

"The Portland Street Response is, in my opinion, one of those rare proposed programs that has broad support from police, the business community, from homeless advocates, from nonprofit leaders and many, many others," Wheeler said.

At Thursday's press conference, along with city leaders, community and business leaders gathered to express support for the program.

Darren Golden, with the Urban League of Portland, said Portland Street Response could help the relationship between communities of color and the police.

"It's no secret that the black communities in Portland have deep-seated, well-earned mistrust with the Portland police and that is magnified for our black houseless neighbors," Golden said. "It is time for Portland, being the progressive city that it is, to stop taking active steps to criminalize poverty and instead adopt a public health approach to begin repairing our community."

Hardesty said the city, with help from Portland State University, will monitor the pilot program's effects when it begins in the spring.

"We must do better and Portland Street Response is our opportunity to do just that," Hardesty said.

The Eugene and Springfield area has a similar street response program, called CAHOOTS (Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets) that serves as a 24/7 mobile crisis team. The program has been a model for other cities since it started in 1989.