

**Draft Outreach Plan  
Charter Review Commission  
2011**

**Background:** The Portland City Council has appointed a Charter Review Commission in accordance with Chapter 13 of the City Charter (Article 3; Section 13-301). While some would prefer to wait until the completion of the Portland Plan process, the charter requires the seating of this commission at this time. Additionally, budgetary realities dictate that there are few resources available for this charter review process.

**Outreach Plan Introduction:** Despite the lack of resources and the ongoing strategic planning connected to the Portland Plan, the Charter Review Commission does have a charge that comes from the charter itself (and the voters who approved the charter) that must be met. The commission can avail itself of low- and no-cost methods to allow Portlanders to provide input into the process so that commission members can consider potential issues to determine which issues may be appropriate to consider presently and which issues would best be considered in the future.

**Need for Outreach Balanced with Budget Restrictions:** This outreach plan strives to recognize the fact that very little financial support has been allocated to the charter review process. Nonetheless, the commission owes it to Portlanders to provide a wide variety of avenues to offer their views on key issues that a charter review should include. There are a wide range of outreach tools that the commission should employ to fulfill its mission. This plan outlines those tools and suggests how those tools could be used.

**Outreach Plan:** The following plan is intended to be implemented mainly over a two-month period. The infrastructure can remain in place throughout the process ongoing communication outlets.

**Development of Materials:** The commission's outreach/communications subcommittee should develop some basic materials that can be used in numerous ways throughout the outreach process. The subcommittee should develop a brief (one-page) description of Portland's charter: what it is; what it does; what's in it? The description should also clearly note that the Charter Review Commission is interested in hearing from Portlanders about three key questions:

What's in Portland's charter that shouldn't be?

What's not in Portland's charter that should be?

How important is it to address the item(s)? (1 [very important] to 5 [not that important])

These questions will help the commission identify potential issues to consider and Portlanders will be able to help the commission prioritize the issues.

**Earned Media:** There should be significant media attention in the charter review process. The commission should communicate with media outlets (print, radio and television) to publicize its process

and the avenues it is making available for public input. The commission should also consider developing an op-ed to publish in the Oregonian and/or the Portland Tribune to describe the review process and encourage public input. Representatives should also meet at some point with the editorial boards of the Oregonian, Portland Tribune, Willamette Week and Mercury. Additionally, the commission should arrange a steady stream of Letters-to-the-Editor to targeted local publications to augment the articles and op-eds. Information should be provided regularly to the various neighborhood and local culturally-targeted newspapers as well. Finally, the commission should approach the local Oregon Public Broadcasting show "Think Out Loud" to do a show about the review process and initiate an on-air and online discussion.

Technology: If resources are available, a simple website can be developed as an overview of the process and provide input into the process. In addition, the commission should utilize free technology available to it. The commission should establish a Facebook page. This enables a central location for discussions, event notices, video feeds, links to other resources, surveys, etc. at no cost. In addition, the commission should establish a Twitter handle ("@PDXCharter" or "@PDXCharterReview" are available). In addition, the commission should claim the hashtag "#pdxcharter" or "#pdxcharterreview" as well to collect the Twitter traffic on the charter review process. An e-mail address should also be established to collect input. The e-mail address would be included on all outreach material.

Finally, to serve Portlanders that do not have access to the Internet, the commission should establish a telephone number with a voicemail recorder and a postal address so that anyone can provide input.

Either commission members or other volunteers should take on the responsibility for maintaining and monitoring the various communication outlets (FB, Twitter, voicemail, postal mail, etc.) that are established.

Community Media: Portland is fortunate to have several community media organizations that have a significant reach. The commission should engage Portland Community Media, MetroEast Community Media and KBOO radio to explore possibilities for programming dedicated to the charter review process with the ability to have viewer/listener call-in comments.

Organizational Outreach: Portland is also fortunate to have an exceptionally well-organized set of neighborhood associations, community organizations and city boards and commissions that involve a broad cross-section of the community. This part of the plan seeks to solicit input into the review process from that broad cross-section.

First, all neighborhood associations, business district associations, city bureaus and city boards and commissions should be requested to put a link to the charter commission Facebook page on their websites.

The commission should send the three questions outlined above to the following and request a response:

- All city bureaus (25 listed on the city's website)

- All neighborhood associations (95 associations)
- All business district associations (Alliance of Portland Neighborhood Business Associations and 36 business associations)
- All city boards and commissions (41 listed on city's website)

In addition, there may be some community concerns regarding how the current commission was seated. This concern could be partially addressed by involving community members in outreach to independent organizations. These members could serve as outreach volunteers who can be trained to give short presentations about the charter review process to organizations and collect responses to the three questions. Broad-based involvement will provide a solid legitimacy to the charter review process. The commission should also approach student organizations at Portland State University, Lewis and Clark College, University of Portland and the various campuses of Portland Community College to potentially develop additional volunteers.

The input process should be implemented over a two-month period. This will allow the commission the opportunity to sort through the input, prioritize issues and schedule a process to consider and take action on the issues in a timely manner to conclude its work this summer. Some of the issues raised through the input process may need to be referred to a future charter review process.

A final word about the Portland Plan: the commission decided to hear reports on the ongoing development of the Portland Plan. With this information and with input from other community members and commission members involved in the Portland Plan process, the commission will be able to evaluate incoming information to determine whether a particular issue may be affected by the Portland Plan and should be dealt with at a later date.

**Conclusion:** This is a broad outline of an outreach plan that could lead to broad-based community input into the current charter review process. Despite the lack of resources to the current process, the commission should make an effort to solicit input from all sectors of the Portland community. This can be accomplished with few resource, a volunteer effort and a minimum of staff support. Even a rather short charter review process could result in addressing issues that are truly important to the community as a whole.