

Forum fails to clarify plans

■ Eugene residents found the proposed election reforms confusing and complicated

By Aaron K. Breniman
Oregon Daily Emerald

If there is one thing that last year's election proved, it's that the election process in this country is not getting any simpler.

Thursday night, the Citizen Charter Review Committee held a public forum at the Amazon Community Center to discuss proposed alternative methods for conducting Eugene elections of city councilors that are intended to make the elections process simpler.

But the proposed changes only seemed to be confusing and complicated to many of the nearly 50 community members who attended the forum.

The Eugene City Council created the nine-person committee in August to review the Eugene Charter, the basic governing document of the city. The committee hopes to make a recommendation to the council in order to get a Eugene election reform measure on the ballot in September.

Community members repeatedly stepped to the microphone to express their displeasure with the electoral process and the proposed solutions.

"I feel bad; I know you've spent a lot of time on these options," Eugene resident Bob Mylenek said. "I'm really concerned that it is too complicated. I don't know if we need to get that deep so early."

The committee proposed four options for consideration and public comment to be submitted to the City Council. The complexity and confusion of the committee's options remained a consistent topic for many speakers.

"I'm not convinced that we fully understand the problem," community member Kathy Madison said.

Election reform

Current System:
Eight councilors

Eight wards

Single member district; majority needed to win; primary in May, runoff in November

Four year term

Mayor elected at large

Option A:

Eight or 10 councilors

Eight or 10 wards

Instant runoff voting

Four-year term

Mayor elected at large

Comments: If no candidate receives a majority of votes, instant runoff vote would eliminate need for a primary

Option B:

Nine or 12 councilors

Three wards

Four-year term

Three or four councilors elected from each ward

If nine councilors, mayor elected by council. If 12 councilors, mayor elected at large.

Comments: Mayor's term dependent upon number of councilors

Option C:

Eight or 10 councilors

Four or five wards

One half of the councilors are elected by and from wards using instant runoff voting. The other half are elected at large using coach or single transferable voting

Four-year term

Mayor elected at large

Option D:

Eight councilors

Eight wards

Councilors are elected using cumulative voting with each voter casting four weighted votes

Four-year term

Mayor elected at large using instant runoff voting

Comments: Each voter would be able to cast one vote for each position or cast all four votes for one candidate or spread votes among two or more candidates

The committee's four options addressed several issues: proportional representation, instant run-off voting, ward boundaries, term limits and city-wide voting.

Many present at the forum spoke out against the timeline set by the committee.

"I have concerns that we are really rushing through a serious issue," Terry Connelly said. "I think there are a lot of different issues that the public needs to be educated on."

Another Eugene resident, Gary Cook, presented what he termed his "far superior" plan for the election process to the committee. Cook's proposal would allow for a weight-

ed council vote, dependent upon the councilor's percentage of the vote in citywide cumulative voting, and the incorporation of multiple parties.

Councilor Gary Rayor also addressed the committee, asking them to think hard before proposing to increase ward size. He said that the small size of his ward allowed him to campaign door-to-door throughout most of it.

Rayor pleaded with the committee to make a final recommendation that is both tried and proven.

"I would like to see a proposal that is working somewhere," he said.

State officials search for budget solutions

■ Despite the higher education budget shortfall, legislators say the outlook isn't so bleak after all

By Andrew Adams
Oregon Daily Emerald

Faced with a \$96 million budget shortfall, the Oregon University System is looking to members of the state Legislature to ease their budget blues. But that relief may be hard to come by, now that the state revenue projection for March has come in more than \$100 million lower than expected.

Legislators made clear at a rally on the capitol steps last week that they support funding the OUS, but admit that finding the dollars to do it will be difficult.

Tom Anderes, OUS vice chancellor for finance and administration, said there are funds available in the state's tobacco settlement and other areas, so the situation is not that bleak.

"It isn't a matter of if a revenue estimate goes down, everything is lost," he said.

He said with three weeks of hearings coming in which the OUS can make its case for funding, and with support from legislators, there remains plenty of room for more higher education funds.

"I think all of that will hopefully come together for some positive impact," he said.

Rep. Phil Barnhart, D-Eugene, said funding education is one of his top priorities.

"I talk about that incessantly," he

said. "I think people get bored with Barnhart talking about that."

Barnhart said he has introduced legislation that would increase the corporate income tax by 1 percent. He said this would raise \$136 million.

"There would be enough to cover higher education and all the holes in senior services," he said.

Sen. Tony Corcoran, D-Cottage Grove, said the lower revenue estimates "make that deeper of a hole to climb out of," but said that doesn't mean it's impossible.

He said the key to finding the funds for higher education will be through increasing general fund revenue. This could come through using tobacco funds, or implementing a cigarette tax or a beer and wine tax, though Corcoran said he doesn't support "sin taxes."

The most direct method to raise revenue would be to change the state's tax model, which Corcoran said has helped create the shortfall. He blamed Republicans for retaining a tax system that does not place enough burden on the higher brackets.

Speaker of the House Mark Simmons, R-Elgin, said he supported raising higher education funding two years ago, and pointed out that the co-chairs of the Ways and Means Committee had already found an extra \$29 million for higher education.

While the Democrats are pushing for revenue-generating measures to fill budget holes, Simmons said the Legislature needs to look at every possible source for funding in the budget and do a better job of allocating funds.

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