



## **King County**

**Ron Sims**

King County Executive

### **King County Charter Review Commission Public Hearing Summary – June 5, 2007 Shoreline Center, 6:30pm-8:00pm**

The 7<sup>th</sup> District 2007-2008 Charter Review Commission nine public hearing was held on Monday July 9, 2007 at the Federal Way Senior Center. The purpose of the meetings is to gather input from the public on how the county charter should be amended.

Commissioner James Williams chaired the meeting. Other commissioners in attendance were Co-Chair Mike Lowry, Trisha Ann Bennett, John Jensen, Terry Lavender, and Kirsten Haugen. Councilmember Pete von Reichbauer was also present.

Mr. Williams gave opening remarks and introduced the commissioners.

Commission staff member Corrie Watterson Bryant gave a presentation on the charter and the charter review process.

Mr. Williams then opened the floor for citizen comments. 7 people made remarks.

#### **Summary of issues:**

##### Sheriff's Office (1 comments)

- Preferred elected (1 person)

##### Director of Elections Position (1 comments)

- Urges caution on electing an elections officer (1 person)

##### Council (1 comments)

- Preferred non-partisan (1 person)

##### Elections (3 comments):

- Instant Runoff Voting (IRV) (1 person)
- non-partisan primaries (2 people)
- Paid signature gathering for initiatives (1 person)

##### King County Library System (KCLS) (2 comments):

- Oversight of system by county council (2 people)

##### Campaign finance reform (public funding) (1 comment)

- Public funding is needed for county elections
- Take fundraising out of the process

- Restrained by current state law on freedom of speech

Other Comments

Regional Committees	1 person
Better announcement advertisement of meetings	1 person

**Summary of Comments by Name:**

H. David Kaplan of Federal Way:

- There is a lack of oversight of King County public library system. The library board is a taxing entity, with no accountable representation. Taxation without representation. Revision; the County Council should have oversight of the KCLS on tax revenue budgeting, financing, staffing, boardmember attendance, etc. The public needs recourse to a public agency that is taxing us.
- Feels the commission should concentrate on the library issue. There is an enormous amount of money being handled by an unresponsive board.

James W. Burrows, of Burien:

- Instant runoff voting (IRV), or ranked choice voting. It gets rid of the primary. You don't have the high costs of the primary. Everyone that wants to vote gets to rank their choices. Pierce County is already doing it.
- Paid signature gatherers - Democracy and freedom of speech vs. control of monied interests.
- There are challenges no matter if the director of elections was elected and non-partisan.

Margaret Nelson of Federal Way:

- Ms. Nelson is a member of an ad hoc committee of citizens who like the libraries in King County but have found problems over the last 15 months. The system is not run by the county, but operates as a rural library under state statute. Many of the municipalities are now part of the KCLS. There is no performance audit or oversight of the system. One member has not attended for over a year. It is a taxing district in which the trustees rely on the director and staff. There is no public process for planning. Meetings are closed to the public. Seattle residents can use the system but do not pay for the system. Seattle residents check out more books from KCLS than KCLS people check out from the Seattle Library system. This results in about \$5m of reciprocal dollars that is owed to the KCLS in the last 7 years yet there is no effort to make repayment to taxpayers. Federal Way's 320th library, Duvall, Vashon and Newcastle are not necessarily able to pay back these bonds.

Q: Trisha Bennett asked if Everett's system is a model?

A: Ms. Nelson feels it is. In King County, the Seattle Public Library is a separately taxed entity from KCLS. In Everett, it distributes its materials across the county. Ms. Nelson would like to see some accountability for the monies.

Linda Kochmar, Federal Way City Council:

- Councilmember Kochmar is here on behalf of the Federal Way City Council. A letter was sent to the county council supporting non-partisan positions. This is the home of the 30<sup>th</sup> District Democrats (Federal Way Senior Center) but don't want to wait to have an invitation to a party's meeting. Why does it make a difference if you're non-partisan or not? It's difficult when you have party affiliations (coercion) to vote a certain way. Everyone has strong opinions and egos and she feels that party lines get in the way of being able to come to decisions. The thing that identifies most elected officials is that they want to make a change. How do you arrive at consensus when you're serving on a body. It's difficult to serve on a body, deal with personal issues, and then partisan issues. Non-partisan voting increases freedom of votes. If you get rid of the partisan primary, the votes will be based on the merits of the individual.
  
- Non-partisanship:
  - county work is not ideological. 16/335 measures (.05%) were voted along party lines (Phillips' data)
  - primary problems and voter choice (freedom of choice)
  - parties limit competition; decisions made behind closed doors
  - non-partisan partners; most districts are non-partisan positions (fire, water, sewer). Would feel more comfortable if there were less partisanship.
  - Things that affect the area are both local and regional.
  - There was a lot of support for non-partisanship. 1967 the Muni League endorsed the idea of the 1995, League of Women's Voters nonpartisanship proposal. Put it into the hands of the voters.

## Questions/Discussion

Terry lavender - On the issue of partisanship, we've heard that at least partisanship gives you some information about the people running on the ticket.

Margaret Loos, of Federal Way

- Agrees that partisanship declarations tells you something about the person's ideals. The primary is a nominating election. You vote, you don't register partisanship in the primary. You can vote a different party every primary if you want.

James W. Burrows - You can have a non-partisan primary

Linda L. Jenkins, Federal Way

- Feels that we have had representation and advertisement to the local citizens but would like to see better advertisement to get the word out to the citizens.

## Other Comments & Discussion:

- Campaign finance reform is the issue of having the public foot the bill, take the fundraising out of the process. Restrained by state law currently. You can't limit spending because it's considered freedom of speech.
- Regional committees- too many meetings.
- Sheriff- should be appointed or elected.