



# King County

**Ron Sims**

King County Executive

## **King County Charter Review Commission**

Public Hearing Summary – April 15, 2008

RiverRock Grill and Ale House, 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm

The 2007-2008 Charter Review Commission held the last of its four public hearings on Tuesday, April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2008 at the RiverRock Grill and Ale House. The purpose of the meetings was to gather input from the public about the amendments the Charter Review Commission is proposing.

Commissioner John Jensen chaired the meeting. Other commissioners in attendance were Tara Jo Heinecke, Gary Long, Gov. Mike Lowry and Allan Munro. In addition, Councilmember Reagan Dunn (District 9), Jay Covington, Renton CAO and Renton City Councilmember Parker King were present.

Councilmember Dunn thanked the Commission for its work.

Mr. Jensen gave opening remarks and introduced the commissioners. Commission staff member Becky Spithill gave a presentation on the charter process to date. Commissioners discussed each of the recommendations, with the exception of recommendation about qualifications, clarifying the appointment process and transitory provisions, which staff presented.

Mr. Jensen opened the floor to citizen comments. Seven people made remarks; a total of 14 citizens attended the hearing.

### **Comments on recommendations and actions**

1. Open Space Amendment (2 comments)

Tom Carpenter – expressed objections to OSA amendment

Pat Traub – strongly supports the OSA

2. Unincorporated and Rural Area Representation (2 comments)

Tom Carpenter – expressed some objections to the amendment

Pat Traub – Supports the amendment, but has concerns that rural citizens will not be represented and wants the senior official to be from rural areas.

3. Anti-Discrimination (2 comments)

Kathy Sakahari (Board member, Religious Coalition for Equality) – supports adding the language that includes “gender identity.” The county legal definition is different than the state definition, and to minimize ambiguity, protection of gender identity and expression should be made explicit to protect transgender people and people who do not fit traditional gender stereotypes.

Becky Cox (President of the League of Women Voters King County South and speaking on behalf of the LWV-Seattle) – the League of Women Voter’s formal statement includes a recommendation to add gender identity to the protected classes in the anti-discrimination amendment.

4. King County Library System (2 comments)

Barbara Spindel (representing KCLS Patrons) – supports amendment and appreciates the Commission’s letters to the Council, the Executive and the Board of Trustees.

Phyllis Forester – supports amendment (emphasizes rural nature of KCLS)

Additional comments on the amendments:

- Becky Cox (President of the League of Women Voters King County South and speaking on behalf of the LWV-Seattle) – the League of Women Voter’s formal statement is attached to this summary, and expresses support for most of the CRC’s recommendations, and adds campaign financing as an area of concern and a recommendation to add gender identity to the protected classes in the anti-discrimination amendment.
- Jay Covington (Board member for the Suburban Cities Association) – the SCA’s formal statement is attached to this summary and expresses support for many of the CRC’s recommendations, including those amendments pertaining to regional committees. Specifically, the SCA states:
  - The amendment regarding the Regional Committees does not include all elements brought forward by the SCA, but still believes much progress was made and supports the amendment.
  - SCA supports the Senior Official for Unincorporated Areas amendment, and believes that it may help to address the issues it had previously brought to the Commission’s attention regarding urban annexation.

- SCA supports the amendment for the citizen initiative process, and though it does not require a supermajority vote to amend the charter as SCA had suggested, it does set an appropriately high bar for the signature threshold.
- SCA believes that the amendment requiring the council take action on all Commission recommendations is a step in the right direction, and supports the amendment.

- Instant Runoff Voting (1 comment)

Kelly Haughton (Gig Harbor resident and Pierce County charter review commissioner) – supports IRV as a charter amendment and, at the request of John Jensen, provided explanation of how IRV would operate in a United States Presidential election, as it would play out from a voter’s perspective. King County Charter Review Commission should take note of the following:

- Supreme Court ruling changing Washington State primary system from pick a party to top-two candidates
- Non-partisan initiative goes to the ballot this November
- IRV eliminates voting for the lesser of two evils



**THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS  
OF SEATTLE**

8 April 2008

King County Charter Review Commission  
701 Fifth Avenue, Suite 3210  
Seattle, Washington 98104

Co-chairs Lois North and Mike Lowery and Commission Members,

The League of Women Voters of Seattle and the League of Women Voters of King County South *support a Home Rule Charter free of statutory law. We believe that King County Metropolitan Government should have public involvement as a core value. We commend you for your participation in this Charter review process. We would like to submit the following comments on the proposed amendments.*

Charter Amendment by Citizen Initiative

- The Leagues of King County support measures that *provide ways for citizens to amend the charter.*

Council Action on Charter Review Recommendations

- We have a long-standing position that *Charter Review recommendations to the council should be placed automatically on the ballot.* This position was developed in response to the concern shared by the commission that the County Council ignores amendments. We support this amendment that requires the Council to act on recommendations as a possible solution to the Council's past "pick and choose" approach to the commissions amendments.

Regional Committees

- The League *supports a countywide policy making body with legal authority to establish policy for functions which require area wide solutions.* We understand quite well the importance of regional planning and governance for some of our most important issues. We support efforts of the Commission to enhance the effectiveness of these committees.

Open Space Protection

- The League Women Voters of Washington supports establishing *priorities for open space that are based upon the character and needs of the population.* The Leagues of King County support the amendment providing additional protection over open space land owned by the county acquired for their high conservation value.

*Serving the Greater Seattle Area*

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#### Anti-Discrimination

- The League believes that *all levels of government share the responsibility to provide equality of opportunity for education, employment and housing for all persons regardless of race, color, gender, religion, national origin, age, sexual orientation or disability.* We support adding sexual orientation and gender identity to the classes protected from discrimination.

#### Qualifications for Assessor and/or Elections Director

- We also support *a system of clearly fixed responsibilities* and we believe *jobs requiring technical skills should be appointed.* Since the Office of Assessor and/or Director of Elections may become an elected position before the next Charter Review, we support the amendment that minimal qualifications be required for this increasingly technical position as they are for Sheriff.

#### Charter Review Commission Appointment/Confirmation Process

- We support the Charter Review Process but we agree there must be a *clear, consistent and open process for appointing and confirming the Review Commission members.*

#### New Commitments to Unincorporated Area Residents

- We commend you for acknowledging the concerns raised by the unincorporated areas residents regarding representation. We support the changes made to the preamble .

#### Amendments on which we are taking no position

- Sheriff's Office and Collective Bargaining, , Budget Timeline, Elections Division Deadlines, Transitory Provisions and Budget Allotment Requirements

#### Issue of concern

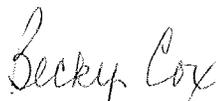
- In light of the recent campaign financing reform at every level of government recommended with the passage of ESSB 5278 by the state legislature, *we recommend that the commission address public funding of campaigns for King County office during this review session.* We believe the commission has the opportunity to influence this important reform process within King County.

Once again we thank you for your time and efforts participating in this process and we applaud you for your accomplishments.

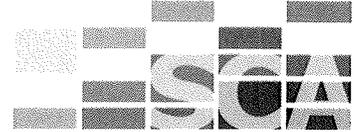
Respectfully,



Denise D. Smith, President  
League of Women Voter of Seattle



Becky Cox, President  
League of Women Voters King County South



**Suburban Cities Association**  
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Good evening.

My name is Ava Frisinger. I am the President of the Board of Directors of the Suburban Cities Association and the Mayor of the City of Issaquah.

I appreciate this opportunity to testify on the proposed amendments to the King County Charter on behalf of the Suburban Cities Association.

The Suburban Cities Association provides information, education and advocacy on behalf of its 35 member cities. Collectively member cities represent approximately 785,000 King County residents or 53% of the population of incorporated King County.

SCA has been pleased to be invited to participate throughout the review process of the King County Charter. Newcastle Councilmember Sonny Putter and SCA Executive Director Karen Goroski have attended and participated in most meetings of the Commission as well as its Regional Governance Committee and work groups. They have been complimentary of the inclusive process of the Commission's work.

Early in 2007 SCA formed a work group to draft the SCA recommendations for amendments to the King County Charter. Those recommendations were vetted at our Public Issues Committee where an average of 25 cities coalesce on a monthly basis. The SCA Board of Directors acted on the work of the Public Issues Committee and on September 20<sup>th</sup> forwarded our recommendations to the Charter Review Commission. The issues of the suburban cities were grouped into four subject areas:

1. Annexation and Transition
2. Regional Committees
3. County Wide Special Purpose Districts
4. Good Government

Recognizing that the Commission had a limited amount of time to address a myriad of issues, we are pleased that so many of the issues of the suburban cities were included in the areas of "Good Government" and the "Regional Committees".

Although the Commission's proposed amendments to the Charter regarding the Regional Committees do not necessarily correspond to the original recommendations from SCA, we feel much progress was made and appreciate the efforts of all parties involved. Therefore, SCA wholeheartedly supports the recommended amendments in **Sections 230.10, 270.20, and 270.30** for the Regional Committees.

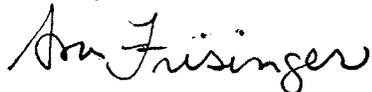
Under the heading of “Good Government”, SCA had recommended ***“that there be urban unincorporated transitional committees in the urban unincorporated areas. We felt that the Charter did not intend for there to be any kind of government structure in urban unincorporated areas.”*** SCA feels that the compromise reached with the Office of the King County Executive and the County Council which has resulted in a proposed Charter amendment in section 320.20 may address our concerns.

SCA had also recommended that ***“the charter review process should be amended so that the recommendations of the commission must be submitted to the voters as drafted by the commission. This new provision will strengthen the role of the Charter Review Commission. It will guarantee that the work of the commission will be reviewed by the voters.”*** The proposed amendment to the Charter in **section 800** that would require the County Council to review and take action on all Charter Review Commission recommendations is a step in the right direction.

Finally, SCA recommended that ***“citizens should be permitted to amend the charter through the citizen initiative process by means of a super majority vote. This option creates a more responsive government which allows the public to submit charter amendments to the voters through the initiative process.”*** The Commission’s proposed amendment in **section 800.20** clarifying the citizen initiative process is generally responsive to the intent of SCA’s recommendation. While the proposed amendment does not require a supermajority vote, it at least sets the threshold for required number of signatures at 20%. This would help ensure that only initiatives with broad-based support are successful

SCA appreciates the many, many hours that the volunteers committed to the Charter Review process. We believe the results were well worth the effort and will encourage the County Council to review and act on your recommendations as written.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ava Frisinger". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.