

Received 1.20.2026

Emailed Commission: 1.21.2026

Dear Charter Review Commission

This is a note to encourage your work protecting Clark County citizens against private use eminent domain. We are faced with a new 60 mile 230kV transmission corridor expected 2029 diverting power over our heads from Swift Dam to Troutdale. This abandoned legacy easement of PacifiCorp's is undersized and riddled with encroachment. This old easement is unused and 100' wide at best. Regulatory agencies recommend 125' at least, with 200' recommended within residential areas. Below is a letter to our State representatives concerning a wildfire shield fund for powerlines. The issue is that this Swift to Troutdale line will divert green power from our area, overhead to Oregon (proposed data center), utilizing eminent domain to widen the easement using Washington State taxpayers as the safety net without benefiting our community.

I do hope our Commission can help keep our community safe from wildfire and property rights risk.

Thank you for your consideration,

Christine Neill

Dear Members of the Agriculture & NR Committee:

We are writing to you as a resident of East Vancouver, WA regarding HB 2275. While the legislature is focused on utility stability, I am deeply concerned that this bill will provide a "liability shield" for utilities that prioritize out-of-state corporate profits over the safety of Washington communities. Please include safeguards (outlined below).

Specifically, I am drawing your attention to the PacifiCorp TSR Q0456 project (Swift-to-Troutdale). PacifiCorp is fast-tracking a 230kV line corridor through heavily populated rural and suburban areas of Clark County, utilizing an antiquated 100-foot easement from the 1950s that modern safety standards would never approve. They are opting out of the EFSEC safety guidelines.

My concerns regarding these bills and this re-direct of our power project are as follows:

1. Washington Burdens for Oregon Benefits. The primary driver for the TSR Q0456 expansion is not the reliability of the Washington grid, but a "customer" in Oregon (speculation of a data center). Washington residents in Clark County are being asked to bear 100% of the wildfire risk, the loss of property value and safety concerns, while the economic benefits and tax revenues of local green power generation transfer over our heads to Oregon. Centralia might be a next data center hub, Swift and Merwin dams with the potential of Pumped Storage Generation could fuel this tax boosting industry base. This is power diverted to Oregon, but Washington taxpayer risk. We ask for protection from this risk and a State Benefits Analysis of new projects before we bear the burdens.

2. The "Least-Cost" Fallacy and Siting Negligence PacifiCorp justifies this re-route (away from BPA) as "least-cost" simply because they hold a legacy easement. However, the CH2M HILL/FSR study confirms this path is riddled with home encroachments. By choosing this route over safer alternatives like the I-5 corridor or upgrades with GETs, they are intentionally building in a High Fire Threat District with substandard clearance. Modern safety standards for 230kV lines in high-risk zones recommend a 200-foot right-of-way—this will be an abuse of eminent domain to force the widening of the inadequate easement.

3. Moral Hazard in HB 1656 and HB 2275. HB 2275 creates a protection fund that could socialize the utility's negligence. This removes all incentive for PacifiCorp to choose the safest route. They know that if their 1950s-era easement causes a catastrophic fire, the financial fallout will be borne by Washington ratepayers and the state fund rather than their own shareholders or Oregon.

4. The Insurance Crisis for Washington Homeowners The externalized costs of investor owned utilities re-routing to "customers" is actually a wealth transfer from homeowners to shareholders. I have personally experienced a non-renewal of my homeowners insurance recently due to wildfire risks. We pay double now and what will happen to us if an unsafe narrow 230kV corridor is installed, sandwiched, between dense rural properties? (I can

Received 1.20.2026

Emailed Commission: 1.21.2026

provide proof if requested). Washington law should protect its citizens from becoming "collateral damage" for a utility's interstate power-wheeling projects.

I urge you to include the following safeguards:

Prohibit Securitization for Negligent Siting: Deny the protections of HB 2275 for any project that utilizes legacy easements that do not meet modern (200ft+) safety widths in high-risk districts.

Interstate Equity Review: Require the WUTC to prove a direct, primary benefit to Washington ratepayers before a utility can utilize state-backed liability funds for new transmission projects.

Require an Alternatives Analysis on new projects to protect communities from wildfires.

Insurance Indemnity: Require utilities to compensate homeowners for the loss of insurability or increased premiums caused by new high-voltage siting.

I request a written response regarding how the legislature plans to hold utilities accountable for negligent siting decisions that benefit out-of-state interests at the expense of Washingtonian lives and property.

Sincerely,

Christine and Roger Neill

WA Legislature website.

Here's the links. You can also ask to be email notified if/when the bills advance.

<https://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=2275&Year=2026&Initiative=false>

<https://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=1656&Year=2025&Initiative=false>

Charter thoughts

Process:

- Prioritize and limit changes
 - The electorate doesn't want to slog through a lot of changes
 - The electorate needs to understand what they are voting on.
 - We want to see how changes work a few at a time.
- Timing
 - Get it done in one year – to Elections office by Aug 4th (per elections Calendar).
The original charter team got the **entire charter** done in time for the next November ballot.
Implies that the commission prioritize and focus.
 - Changes in 2 out of 5 years is just nuts
 - Consider every 6 or 10 years (so not back and forth between partisan and non-partisan ballots.)
- Don't get distracted by stuff that doesn't belong in charter
- In future, hold first meeting within 2 weeks of the election being certified. Waiting till January loses you almost 2 months. Require county staff to be ready on election certification day with staff, materials, training, email access, budget.

Read the Rules of Procedure (might want to get from county manager to make sure have latest, not easy to find on county website). Some things are more suited to that than the Charter.

County Manager/Council relationship. No change to duties, but require annual review. Disliking the current manager is NOT a reason to make changes.

Redistricting commission

- No good reason to have gone from 5 to 7 members.
- Having the council appoint the committee members is bad. Before, the parties submitted 5 (I think?) names each from which the council selected 2 each, and those 4 selected the 5th. That worked ok, but excluded non-party folks. But at least the council technically didn't select it. I don't know how to do this so the council isn't picking their own districting team, and not sure reverting to the old way would fly on the ballot.
- Recommend consulting with Greg Kimsey on any changes.

Clerk – consider making this an appointed not elected position. Who would it report to? Section 3.5

Initiative and Referendum - It has been suggested that proposed initiatives be reviewed by the PAs office for legality. This should be discussed.

Section 5.5 Salary of electeds – Consider aligning council pay with other County elected executives (excluding sheriff) out of consideration that this is a full time job.

Ranked Choice Voting – HB 2210 would define RCV, making implementation easier and consistent across jurisdictions. <https://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary/?BillNumber=2210&Year=2025&Initiative=false>

Section 2.2 Organization – D: boards and commissions assignment. Spell out that there will be a primary and backup for each board/commission. Clarify that the person assigned represents the County Council, not themselves or their district. Possible this could go into Rules of Procedure (see Rules of Procedure III C [SMSCOMM0125020516040](#))

1/28/2026 8:05am

From: Clark County Citizens United, Inc. <cccuinc@yahoo.com>

Sent: Tuesday, January 27, 2026 8:29 PM

To: patrick.adegweme@clark.wa.gov; Ann Donnelly - Charter Review Commission <Ann.Donnelly@clark.wa.gov>; Eric LaBrant - Charter Review Commission <Eric.LaBrant@clark.wa.gov>; Brandon Erickson - Charter Review Commission <Brandon.Erickson@clark.wa.gov>; Cathie Garber - Charter Review Commission <Cathie.Garber@clark.wa.gov>; Kim Hamlik - Charter Review Commission <Kim.Hamlik@clark.wa.gov>; ben.christy@clark.wa.gov; Janet Landesberg - Charter Review Commission <Janet.Landesberg@clark.wa.gov>; John Jay - Charter Review Commission <John.Jay@clark.wa.gov>; Liz Cline - Charter Review Commission <Liz.Cline@clark.wa.gov>; Dorothy Gasque - Charter Review Commission <Dorothy.Gasque@clark.wa.gov>; Morgan Holmgren - Charter Review Commission <Morgan.Holmgren@clark.wa.gov>; Brad Benton <Brad.Benton@clark.wa.gov>; Peter Silliman - Charter Review Commission <Peter.Silliman@clark.wa.gov>; Michelle Belkot <Michelle.Belkot@clark.wa.gov>; Matt Little <Matt.Little@clark.wa.gov>; Wil Fuentes <Wil.Fuentes@clark.wa.gov>; Glen Yung <Glen.Yung@clark.wa.gov>; Sue Marshall <Sue.Marshall@clark.wa.gov>; Kathleen Otto <Kathleen.Otto@clark.wa.gov>; Oliver Orjiako <Oliver.Orjiako@clark.wa.gov>; Jose Alvarez <Jose.Alvarez@clark.wa.gov>; CommDev OA Land Use <CommDevOALandUse@clark.wa.gov>; Duncan Hoss - Charter Review Commission <Duncan.M.Hoss@clark.wa.gov>

Subject: Fw: Can the County Council tell the independent Charter Review Committee what to do?

Dear Commission and Councilors,

I am sending a corrected version of the following testimony. It appears that when the emails were being collected for all of the numerous affected email addresses, one of the email addresses would up in the text of the testimony, which was a mistake. Please see the corrected email of the first paragraph. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Susan Rasmussen, President

Clark County Citizens United, Inc. P.O. Box 2188 Battle Ground, Washington 98604 E-Mail
cccuinc@yahoo.com

----- Forwarded Message -----

From: Clark County Citizens United, Inc. <cccuinc@yahoo.com>

To: patrick.adegweme@clark.wa.gov <patrick.adegweme@clark.wa.gov>; ann.donnelly@clark.wa.gov <ann.donnelly@clark.wa.gov>; eric.labrant@clark.wa.gov <eric.labrant@clark.wa.gov>; brandon.erickson@clark.wa.gov <brandon.erickson@clark.wa.gov>; cathie.garber@clark.wa.gov <cathie.garber@clark.wa.gov>; kim.hamlik@clark.wa.gov <kim.hamlik@clark.wa.gov>; ben.christy@clark.wa.gov <ben.christy@clark.wa.gov>; janet.landesberg@clark.wa.gov <janet.landesberg@clark.wa.gov>; john.jay@clark.wa.gov <john.jay@clark.wa.gov>; liz.cline@clark.wa.gov <liz.cline@clark.wa.gov>; dorothy.gasque@clark.wa.gov <dorothy.gasque@clark.wa.gov>; morgan.holmgren@clark.wa.gov <morgan.holmgren@clark.wa.gov>; brad.benton@clark.wa.gov <brad.benton@clark.wa.gov>; duncan.hoss@clark.wa.gov <duncan.hoss@clark.wa.gov>; peter.silliman@clark.wa.gov <peter.silliman@clark.wa.gov>; Michelle Belkot <michelle.belkot@clark.wa.gov>; matt.little@clark.wa.gov <matt.little@clark.wa.gov>; wil.fuentes@clark.wa.gov <wil.fuentes@clark.wa.gov>; Glen Yung <glen.yung@clark.wa.gov>; Sue Marshall <sue.marshall@clark.wa.gov>; Kathleen Otto <kathleen.otto@clark.wa.gov>; Oliver Orjiako <oliver.orjiako@clark.wa.gov>; Jose Alvarez <jose.alvarez@clark.wa.gov>; CommDev OA Land Use <commdevoalanduse@clark.wa.gov>

Sent: Saturday, January 24, 2026 at 03:00:53 PM PST

Subject: Can the County Council tell the independent Charter Review Committee what to do?

Clark County Charter Review Commission

P.O. Box 5000

Vancouver, Washington 98666

FOR THE PUBLIC RECORD AND CHARTER REVIEW

Re: Can the County Council tell the Charter Review Committee what to do?

Dear Charter Review Commission Members,

Clark County Citizens United, Inc.(CCCU) a 501c4 non-profit with approximately 6,000 members, has reviewed the January 14, 2026 meeting of the Clark County Charter Review Commission. This meeting was the second of the series of weekly meetings held on Wednesdays. CCCU has great concern that the Commission members were expected to use a Charter by-law document that had been reviewed and

revised by the Clark County Manager and a Clark County attorney, without any input from the Commission members.

Such documents are legally questionable and inappropriate, coming from the county, and should be disregarded. The Charter Review Commission needs to start where the last Commission left off. CCCU fears that allowing county manager, county attorney and county councilors to interfere with the Commission's work and set the stage over who will control the Commission. The Commission only requires one attorney available for advice, and that person should not be the Councilor's attorney. In fact, CCCU believes the Commission can choose their own attorney, independent of the county.

The Clark County Charter Review Commission is an independent policy creating body, that is not beholden to the Clark County Council, County Manager, county attorneys or county staff in any way, and must not be swayed by their input. The Commission has broad discrepancy over what they do. The Commission was elected by the voters to represent them, as changes are considered and made to the Home Rule Charter. They can completely change the whole Charter, if they so choose. There are state laws that give direction to the group, but they are independent of the County government. CCCU has included portions of that state law in this testimony.

Imagine being a county official where you are expected to *represent the needs and interests* of the citizens that elected you into office. As a Councilor or a Commission member, you are tasked with approving and adopting county-wide public policy. All this must be done *while representing and advocating* for your constituents. Now imagine that you must create public policies with limited information, without the benefits enjoyed from independent analysis because your public policy work is wholly dependent on data and reports from members of staff.

Members of the constituency should be incensed, that critical decisions are being made dependent on limited data provided by staff. This data could easily be contaminated with bias and manipulations that lead to forgone conclusions. The conclusions may not be according to your constituents. This hobbles democratic processes and speaks to silencing public voices.

Importantly, conducting county government business while being wholly dependent on the branch it balances, creates an imbalance in the power structure. How are the elected officials able to fully address the concerns of their constituents if they are intentionally fed a diet of potentially biased, limited information? To add insult, there is little accountability as little oversight of how county business is conducted.

County elected officials should have access to independent data and analysis so they may effectively represent and advocate for their constituents. Independent, expert analysis would be justified as it should bring forth a stronger balance between the branches.

Elected officials should not be reliant on support from staff when making critical decisions, that directly impact their citizens. The officials need respectable, *independent* analytic resources available to them that provide a high level of support currently enjoyed by staff. They need to be equipped with the necessary information to intelligently question, review and challenge all aspects of staff decisions. The county manager, heads of departments, already enjoy a level of professional support. The Council and

this Commission need to be strengthened so public policies and tax dollars enjoy careful, thoughtful examinations that are free of bias.

- **Oversight.** Ensuring the elected officials have the critical support and resources required to oversee the executive branch's decisions, actions and inactions. This is key for accountability.
- **Democratic Representation.** Elected officials need the necessary impartial resource tools to balance the scale of powers. This ensures the elected officials are empowered and able to provide representation of the needs and interests of the constituents that elected them.
- **Balance the Powers.** Ensure prevention of conflicts of interests, prevent bias from contaminating data in staff reports, ensure both branches function independently and one does not dominate over the other.
- **Accountability.** *Establish a definitive chain of accountability that includes consequences for inefficiencies, improper actions and inactions.*

Clark County Citizens United, Inc. looks forward to meaningful and positive changes to the much aligned Home Rule Charter, which was pushed through to the voters, with little accountability to the public. It was adopted at a time of duress and political pandering, and needs major changes to reflect what the citizens of Clark County want and need.

Sincerely,

Susan Rasmussen, President

Clark County Citizens United, inc.

P.O. Box 2188

Battle Ground, Washington 98604

Can the County Council tell the Charter Review Committee what to do?

AI Overview

Generally, a **county council (or board of commissioners) cannot dictate to a Charter Review Committee (CRC) what to do or what amendments to propose, as the CRC is designed to be an independent, often elected or specially appointed body representing the public.** While the council may request reviews of specific sections or set the overall timeline, the CRC determines its own scope, conducts its own research, and independently decides which changes to recommend to voters.

Key Aspects of the Relationship:

- **Independence:** The CRC acts independently of the council to ensure objective evaluation of the charter.
- **Recommendation Power:** The committee reviews the county's foundational charter and proposes amendments to the voters.
- **Voter Approval:** Ultimately, any changes proposed by the CRC must be approved by the voters in a general election, not by the council.
- **Council Role:** The council usually only facilitates the process by appointing members (if not elected) and placing the CRC's approved recommendations onto the ballot.

Although the council may not control the substance, they are sometimes responsible for receiving the final report and initiating the ballot process for the proposed changes.

AI Overview

In most home rule counties, the county council does not have direct authority over the Charter Review Commission (CRC). The CRC is typically an independent body, often elected or appointed specifically to review the county's "constitution" without interference, though the council may sometimes convene or fund it

Key Aspects of Power Dynamics:

- **Independence:** The CRC acts independently to review, debate, and recommend changes to the county charter.
- **No Veto Power:** Charter amendments proposed by the CRC generally go directly to voters, not the council.
- **Convening Authority:** While the council may be responsible for formally convening the commission every 5–10 years, they cannot override its findings.
- **Budgetary Control:** In some jurisdictions, the council may have budgetary control over the expenses of the commission.

Ultimately, the Charter Review Commission is accountable to the voters, as any proposed changes must be approved by the public in a general election.

AI Overview

In Washington, a charter form of government—often called home rule—allows cities (typically with over 10,000 population, per RCW 35.22.010) and counties to adopt their own, locally tailored governance structure, effectively superseding inconsistent state statutes on purely municipal matters,

[as explained in this report](#). Under Article XI, Section 10 of the state constitution and associated statutes, these jurisdictions can adopt charters to determine their own structure,, [as explained on the MRSC website](#).

Key Aspects of Charter Governments in Washington:

- **First-Class Cities (RCW 35.22):** Cities with 10,000+ residents can frame a charter by electing fifteen freeholders to draft it, which must then be adopted by voters. Charter cities have broad authority, including initiative and referendum, and can dictate their own officer numbers, terms, and duties.
- **County Home Rule (RCW 36.16 & Art. XI, Sec. 4):**

Counties may adopt a charter to move away from the standard three-member commission form. This allows for a council-elected executive or a council-appointed administrator structure, giving counties more flexibility in their organization.

- **Legal Standing:** Charter provisions relating to purely local affairs override inconsistent state laws, according to this report from the Association of Washington Cities. However, they must still conform to the state constitution and general laws concerning, for example, the justice system.

RCW 35.22.120

Petition for submission of charter amendment.

On petition of a number (equal to fifteen percent of the total number of votes cast at the last preceding general state election) of qualified voters of any municipality having adopted a charter under the laws of this state, asking the adoption of a specified charter amendment, providing for any matter within the realm of local affairs, or municipal business, the said amendment shall be submitted to the voters at the next regular municipal election, occurring thirty days or more after said petition is filed, and if approved by a majority of the local electors of the municipality voting upon it, such amendment shall become a part of the charter organic law governing such municipality.

[[1965 c 7 s 35.22.120](#). Prior: [1949 c 233 s 1](#); [1903 c 186 s 1](#); Rem. Supp. 1949 s 8963.]

RCW 35.22.130

Requisites of petition—Effect of favorable vote.

A petition containing the demand for the submission of the proposed charter amendment or for an election to be held for the purpose of electing a board of freeholders for the purpose of preparing a new charter for the city as provided in RCW [35.22.140](#) shall be filed with the city clerk and each signer shall write his or her place of residence after his or her signature. This and RCW [35.22.120](#) do not deprive city councils of the right to submit proposed charter amendments but affords a concurrent and additional method of submission.

[[2009 c 549 s 2044](#); [1967 c 123 s 2](#); [1965 c 7 s 35.22.130](#). Prior: (i) [1903 c 186 s 2](#); RRS s 8964. (ii) [1903 c 186 s 3](#); RRS s 8965.]

RCW 35.22.140

New or revised charter—Petition—Freeholders.

On the petition of a number of registered voters of a city equal to twenty-five percent of the total votes cast at the last preceding city election, the city council of a charter city shall, or without such petition may, cause an election to be held for the purpose of electing a board of fifteen freeholders for the purpose of preparing a new charter for the city by altering, revising, adding to or repealing the existing charter including all amendments thereto. The members of the board of freeholders must be qualified electors and must have been residents in the city for a period of at least two years prior to their election. At such election the proposition of whether or not a board of freeholders shall be created at all shall be separately stated on the ballots and unless a majority of the votes cast upon that proposition favor it, no further steps shall be taken in the proceedings.

[[1965 ex.s. c 47 s 11](#); [1965 c 7 s 35.22.140](#). Prior: 1945 c 55 1, part; 1925 ex.s. c 137 s 1, part; 1895 c 27 s 1, part; Rem. Supp. 1945 s 8955, part.]

NOTES:

Amendment of charter: State Constitution Art. 11 s 10 (Amendment 40).

RCW [35.22.150](#)

Submission of new charter.

Within ten days after the results of the election have been determined, if a majority of the votes cast favor the proceeding, the members of the board of freeholders elected thereat shall convene and prepare a new charter by altering, revising, adding to, or repealing the existing charter including all amendments thereto and within one year thereafter file it with the city clerk.

[[1974 ex.s. c 1 s 2](#); [1965 c 7 s 35.22.150](#). Prior: 1945 c 55 s 1, part; 1925 ex.s. c 137 s 1, part; 1895 c 27 s 1, part; Rem. Supp. 1945 s 8955, part.]

NOTES:

Severability—1974 ex.s. c 1: See note following RCW [35.22.055](#).

RCW [35.22.160](#)

Election on adoption of new charter.

Upon the filing of the proposed new, altered, changed or revised charter with the city clerk, it shall be submitted to the qualified voters of the city at an election to be called therefor pursuant to the provisions of law applicable to the holding of elections in such city.

[[1965 c 7 s 35.22.160](#). Prior: 1925 ex.s. c 137 s 2, part; 1895 c 27 s 2, part; RRS s 8956, part.]

NOTES:

Times for holding elections: RCW [29A.04.311](#) through [29A.04.330](#).

RCW [35.22.170](#)

Publication of proposed charter.

The proposed new, altered or revised charter shall be published in the newspaper having the largest general circulation within the city at least once each week for four weeks next preceding the day of submitting the same to the electors for their approval.

[[1985 c 469 s 23](#); [1965 ex.s. c 47 s 12](#); [1965 c 7 s 35.22.170](#). Prior: [1925 ex.s. c 137 s 3](#); [1895 c 27 s 3](#); RRS s 8957.]

NOTES:

Publication of amendments to charter: State Constitution Art. 11 s 10 (Amendment 40).

- **How, and how often, the charter will be reviewed and potentially amended. The legislative authority (council council/board of commissioners) may propose charter amendments and submit them to voters for approval. In addition, each charter county provides for the election or appointment of a temporary charter review commission every 5-10 years to propose amendments. Charter amendments may also be submitted directly by voter initiative if authorized by the charter.**

-

-

Charter review commission

Clark County (2015)	Council-Appointed Administrator	5-member (NP)	Assessor (NP); Auditor (NP); Clerk (NP); Prosecuting Attorney (NP); Sheriff (NP); Treasurer (NP)	County Manager, Medical Examiner	Elected at least every 5 years
--	---------------------------------	---------------	---	-------------------------------------	--------------------------------

Guide for Charter Commissions

<https://mrsc.org/getmedia/64cb955c-fb66-4fb9-9f71-e21c9ce257d5/chartercommissions.pdf>

Foreword.....3

Chapter One: Introduction to the Charter Process.....4

Chapter Two: The Charter Review.....11

Chapter Three: The Charter Document.....24

Appendix.....37

Clark County Charter Review Commission
2026
P.O. Box 5000
Vancouver, Washington 98666

January 31,

FOR THE PUBLIC RECORD

Re: Complete independent review of the Charter is necessary

Dear Commissioners,

Clark County Citizens United, inc. believes that ultimately, the work for the Charter Review Commission should

be completely independent. Without assured independence, their work could be subjected to bias if the Commission remains reliant on county *executive members of staff* to provide support, resources, technical expertise and analysis. The elected members of this commission need independent resources so they may thoroughly be educated and intelligently examine complex issues. The members need to know how various issues may impact the communities they represent and allow better, more effective representation for their respective communities.

The function of this Commission, at it's core, is about equipping the members with the resources and tools necessary to allow high levels of educated questioning and reviews. In turn, this allows the elected committee members to represent their respective communities to the best of their abilities.

This elected Charter Review Commission deserves independence from county staff. Give them the best chance at fair representation for all communities. It is a requirement of the Charter that Clark County provide the financial assistance for this Commission to do their work. They should have an adequate budget to allow them to hire independent aides, researchers, and technical analysts to assist the Commission for the very best outcome.

Sincerely,

Susan Rasmussen, President

Clark County Citizens United, Inc.
P.O.Box 2188
Battle Ground, Washington 98604

Clark County Charter Review Commission

January 31, 2026

P.O.Box 5000

Vancouver, Washington 98666

FOR THE PUBLIC RECORD

Re: CCCU Suggestions for the Charter - considerable changes need to right the ship

Dear Commissioners,

The membership of Clark County Citizens United, Inc. recognizes that considerable changes need to be made to the Home Rule Charter, to improve fair representation for all communities Throughout the county. It is tClah Charter Review Commissions legal responsibility to make those changes. The following are concerns that CCCU and its member have regarding the ill favored Charter.

1. Elected Council members should not be reliant on county executives for information regarding public policy making. The elected officials need dedicated aides, independent from county staff, to allow technical assistance, resource information and analysis on how proposed legislative actions may impact their respective communities. This also should allow independent investigations on complaints concerning behaviors from agency staff members impacting constituents. This should also provide analysis on how legislative actions may affect particular communities represented by the Officials.

2. Create a County Ombudsman Office. Because of a greater need for communication between citizens and staff, the county needs an Office of the Ombudsman. This office may also be tasked with investigating complaints against staff behaviors and how certain public policies may be mis-interpreted by agency staff. This may involve creating an independent public office that may be staffed by an elected official.

3. **Establish Public Performance Audits.** Establish routine performance auditing by an independent auditor tasked with reviewing, evaluating and reporting issues with county agencies, staff behaviors, and performance inefficiencies.

4. **Expand and distinguish the duties of Elected Officials.** County electeds may include the office of county manager, department heads.

5. **Inhibit county executive staff from interfering with legislative actions.** This concerns crafting public policy and allowing more independence between branches. The executive branch should not influence the legislative. Establish preventive measures that impede or prevent executive staff interference and uphold independent research, technical expertise and analysis.

6. **Accountability.** Ensure accuracy, accountability for all reporting in all county processes so all business may be free of bias and manipulations. There should be severe consequences if there are violations by any members of agency staff.

7. **Establish a bi-annual land supply analysis of buildable parcels to apply across all of Clark County.** Require the executive branch to publish a report stating how much buildable land is inventoried, rural and urban, and the impacts to ALL communities.

The Charter is too open-ended. Because of that, it allows all sorts of poor policy decisions that negatively impact housing, jobs and communities. The Charter Commission has an opportunity to right the ship and make the Charter a working document with specific language that spells out what is expected of elected officials.

Sincerely,

Susan Rasmussen, President

Clark County Citizens United, Inc.
P.O.Box 2188
Battle Ground, Washington 98604

Clark County Charter Review Commission
2026

Clark County Council

January 31,

P.O.Box 5000

Vancouver, Washington 98666

FOR THE PUBLIC RECORD

Re; Elected independent Charter Review Commission must answer to the voters

Dear Commission Members and Councilors,

Clark County Citizens United, Inc. is aware that the Charter Review Commission is an elected body of officials that is supposed to independently represent the people. The review process only happens every 5 to 10 years so it is critical that the work not be confined by a narrowed agenda, but opened up to provide a broad review that may lead to important amendments. The confined scope of work, provided by county executive staff, is astounding.

Over the course of the last 10 years, CCCU has issued many concerns over how members of agency staff are conducting county permitting business, primarily regarding the process used for rural structures. We are recognizing and testifying, in the public record, over many glaring problems that fail to be acknowledged by the county executive staff and are failing to get before the commission for review. These issues need to be addressed if we are to have an effective and responsive charter review. Stability and efficiency are not practiced in county permitting. The lack of respect given to CCCU's rural membership, the research, reports and recommendations is also alarming as it demonstrates a meaningless public process.

There is substantial CCCU input and research, already submitted in the public record, that should be brought before this commission to enable a broad review of county permitting practices.

- **Can anyone explain the criteria applied to the decision and the rationale to limit the scope of the commission's work?**
- **Can anyone explain the insufficient regard for public outreach and inclusion?**
- **Can anyone explain the criteria to minimize Commission independence and rely on staff's expertise?**
- **How much weight do you give the resources and recommendations from staff when there are substantial issues raised, already submitted in the public record, over staff-driven permitting inefficiencies and errors?**
- **How much weight do you give staff generated reports and analysis when their behaviors and the manner in which they conduct the public's business, are the topics of complaints?**

These questions must be answered by both the Commission, with changes to the Home Rule Charter, and answered by the Clark County Council. The Charter Commission cannot ignore the many problems that are a direct result of the adoption of the Home Rule Charter. The Commission has an opportunity to correct these problems, regardless of what staff or councilors say. One Commission member stated that it is a collaborative effort between the Council and Commission, which is incorrect. The Commission is directly responsible for making changes and corrections to the Charter to exclusively benefit the citizens and not a government agency. Commission members must act independently of any other county government body.

Sincerely,

Susan Rasmussen, President

Clark County Citizens United, Inc.

P.O. Box 2188

Battle Ground, Washington 98604