

Law of unintended consequences at work – citizens file charter initiative

On Tuesday we will find out if the voters reject outright a scheme hatched by a small band of chamber of commerce members to bulldoze over public process by manipulating two interim commissioners to change the county over to a council-manager form of government without a vote of the people. The movement is funded by a few local business interests, including ORC and the Coquille Tribe and organized by the board members of a political action committee, CCAP (Coos County Alliance for Progress).

In nature, for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction and the strong arm tactics used to centralize political power in the county have already received push back in the form of radio ads placed by a private citizen, John Shank, arguing against an administrator and encouraging a vote for candidates not funded by CCAP. Shank spoke with me yesterday and has experience in municipal government and explained that he initially supported candidates Fred Messerle and John Sweet until he discovered they were trying to force an administrator on the public. “I don’t like that”, he said. “I know a lot about administrators and while there are positives there are also a lot of negatives.”

Proponents of hiring an administrator have not addressed the potential downside not just of centralizing the authority into one person but of enacting sweeping changes suddenly and without careful consideration of the unintended consequences.

Another group calling itself ARRRG (Americans for Responsive,

Responsible, Representative Government) took the matter a step further and drafted a charter with the help of Salem attorney Nathan Rietmann and filed paperwork to get the initiative on the ballot by November. The charter calls for five full time commissioners and requires a super majority of four to pass any motion. A quick review of the charter offers no change in services provided that would require state approval but calls for a vote of the people on matters like hiring an administrator or the extension of urban renewal district terms or boundaries.

- COUNTY MANAGER OR ADMINISTRATOR WILL REQUIRE VOTE OF THE PEOPLE – Section 3.24
- COUNTY URBAN RENEWAL DECISIONS WILL GO TO VOTE OF THE PEOPLE – Section 12.
- TRANSFER OF MAJOR COUNTY ASSETS WILL GO TO VOTE OF THE PEOPLE – Section 7.2
- FIVE COMMISSIONERS WILL BE FULL TIME AND ELECTED AT LARGE – Sections 3.1 & 3.9
- COMMISSIONERS WILL VOTE ONLY AT REGULARLY SCHEDULED BOARD MEETINGS, NOT AT WORK SESSIONS OR OTHER TIMES – Section 3.12
- CITIZEN COMMENTS WILL BE ALLOWED AT ALL PUBLIC MEETINGS – Section 3.20
- STANDARDIZED OPEN BID SYSTEM FOR SUPPLIES AND PROJECTS; STANDARDIZED CONTRACTS; ACCOUNTABILITY FOR QUALITY, COMPLIANCE – Section 16.

Read the [Final Charter May 9, 2012](#)

Last year it was discovered that [Jon Barton and friends](#) were hoping to get a home rule charter on the ballot for the May election, although one would imagine it would look very different than this proposed charter and would not favor public empowerment. Should this initiative acquire the 1,500 signatures required to put it on the ballot and be accepted by the voters then any actions taken by the current board of commissioners will be overturned on January 1, 2013 which

means the CCAP may have to rethink its current strategy on the chance the charter is adopted.

Below is the ARRRG press release

" Voice of the Voters "

Would you like a vote on having a County Administrator? Would you like a vote on Urban Renewal taxation? Would you like a vote on the transfer of major county assets?

Would you like five full time commissioners, paid, representing the whole county? Would you like to have Citizen Comments at all the public meetings? Would you like the commissioners to be restricted to voting only at regularly scheduled Board meetings (versus also at scattered Work Sessions)?

Would you like open competitive county bids and standardized contracts? Would you like to have accountability in quality and contract compliance with these county bids?

You can have it all.

The Home Rule Charter for Coos County 2012 has just been filed as an initiative to be decided in the November election. It contains all of the above provisions, and more. It is sponsored by Americans for Responsive, Responsible, Representative Government (ARRRG).

This county does not need a captain. It needs a rudder, and a map. This Home Rule Charter provides both, in detail. It features the values and rights of the voters while defining the requirements of the county governing body. It is unique. It is designed for Coos County.

Feel free to contact us. We're available to meet with any of the various local groups. We have Charters for anyone who wants them. We can e-mail the complete Charter.

Contact information: ARRRG, PO Box 826, Coquille, Oregon 97423. Phone: 541-396-4200 (machine after six rings). E-mail: ARRRG@harborside.com Donations are made payable to ARRRG. Donations are not tax deductible.

Submitted by Ronnie Herne, Secretary, ARRRG