

**ASHLAND CITY RECORDER POSITION AD HOC COMMITTEE**

November 4, 2015  
2:00 – 3:30 p.m.  
City Hall, Upstairs Conference Room  
20 East Main Street

- I. **CALL TO ORDER**
- II. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
- III. **PUBLIC INPUT**
- IV. **DISCUSSION OF PROS & CONS**
  - a. Elected position pros and cons
  - b. Appointed position pros and cons
- V. **WHAT ADDITIONAL INFORMATION IS NEEDED?**
- VI. **NEXT MEETING/NEXT STEPS**
- VII. **ADJOURNMENT**

*In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact the City Administrator's office at (541) 488-6002 (TTY phone number 1-800-735-2900). Notification 72 hours prior to the meeting will enable the City to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to the meeting (28 CFR 35.102-35.104 ADA Title I).*

**Items the Ad hoc Group may wish to consider in this discussion:**

1. If elected what would any changes need to be made to the charter through an amendment , if so what would need to be addressed.
2. If this position became an appointed position, who would appoint?
3. If appointed, would this position be a department of its own?
4. Would this be considered a department head level position, if appointed? What type of supervision or evaluation would be considered appropriate?
5. Would the position be more integrated into the structure of city management if appointed?
6. Would skill level of the person filling this level be more apt to be at a higher level if qualifications were established for the position? Would this be possible in either situation with a charter amended if elected?
7. Does the salary level need to be adjusted if appointed with an entry level option? If remaining elected, does the salary formula need revision?
8. If elected, do the duties of this position need to be adjusted?
- 9 . If appointed, what duties would this position continue to perform?
10. If duties were reduced, how would this effect the public perception of the importance of this position? Would this effect the public's vote in a charter amendment?

**MINUTES FOR THE ASHLAND CITY RECORDER POSITION ad hoc COMMITTEE**  
**Wednesday, October 28, 2015**  
**Siskiyou Room, 51 Winburn Way**

**1. Call to Order**

Chair Stefani Seffinger called the meeting to order at 2:02 p.m. in the Siskiyou Room.

Committee members Bryan Almquist, Pam Lucas, Barbara Christensen, and Dave Kanner were present.

**2. Public Forum**

None.

**3. Review of Committee Charge**

Chair Seffinger welcomed the committee members. She asked if the members of the group had read the charge of the committee as presented in the packet and if they had any questions. No member had any questions. She asked if there were additional questions they felt should be added to this process. No members suggested any additional questions.

Seffinger explained that additional staff resources may be used during this process for research purposes. She stated that all committee members have equal right to express themselves in this process. She also stated that there is no intent for any of the outcomes of this process to effect the current recorder position, this process is only regarding the future of the City Recorder position.

**4. Discussion of Work Plan**

Seffinger reviewed the information provided in the packet. Christensen stated she had concerns with the information provided to Council for their August 31, 2015 study session. She stated she had expressed those concerns at that meeting.

Group discussed the differences with the descriptions of the duties of the position between the Charter and the Ashland Municipal Code (AMC). The AMC is more detailed than the Charter. Both were written over 20 years ago and so are very outdated, particularly with regard to new electronic processes and duties.

Group discussed the Charter requirement for periodic audits of all City accounting records. Christensen stated this is a very little used part of the position, largely because the City engages outside auditors who are experts in municipal auditing. This wasn't the case when the Charter was written. She has conducted, with staff assistance, smaller audits based on concerns brought forward by staff, Council or citizens. There was concern that an elected recorder may not have any audit experience and so may not be able to handle even the smaller-scale audits. The larger-scale ones would remain in the hands of professional auditors.

Group discussed both the Charter and AMC requirements for the recorder to handle finance and tax levy duties. Christensen stated she isn't very involved with any of this, as it is better suited to the Finance Division. Group agreed that this would be a good thing to be removed from both the Charter and AMC.

Group discussed the challenges of finding a singular city recorder position description. Every

city does a variation, dependent upon the size and needs of that city. There are some basics amongst all – essentially the duties listed in Ashland’s Charter, minus any financial or auditing duties. Kanner stated that when creating the potential job description which was part of the August 31 study session, staff looked at roughly twenty position descriptions and incorporated duties which were common to at least three.

Group discussed how most city recorder training is on-the-job as there is very little training available beforehand. Christensen described some of the trainings and certifications available through the Oregon Association of Municipal Recorders.

Christensen stated that there have been lots of non-statutory duties assigned to this position over the years. Group discussed whether those could be re-assigned to other departments. Christensen agreed that many could. Almquist reminded the group that they cannot make any major changes to the duties without a Charter amendment.

Group discussed whether there was anything which could be done to protect the City from errors or concerns regarding an unskilled recorder being elected into the position. Group expressed concerns about the lack of basic requirements for the position. The uncertainty of the skill or knowledge level of an elected official is not something most were comfortable with. Christensen stated that as a recorder there is the additional uncertainty of your job being up for election every four years. This uncertainty may keep qualified or highly skilled people from seeking the office.

Group discussed whether there were duties and responsibilities listed in the AMC which could be altered without needing to go for a Charter amendment vote. Both Christensen and Kanner agreed that AMC could be altered to better reflect current job duties.

Group discussed the Charter section which states, “The Recorder must draw all orders for the proper payment of monies against the proper funds...” They agreed this means the Recorder must, as she currently does, sign all checks. Other banking transactions and issues, however, are better suited and should be transferred to the Finance Division.

Group discussed the Recorder’s duties regarding investments as stated in the AMC. Christensen stated these duties used to be a much more involved, but with recent market issues, now is mostly handled by going through the State pool, and that Finance could easily take on these duties as well. Group agreed this would be a good transition.

Group discussed how much of Christensen’s current time is spent on Charter required duties such as; clerk of the Council, records maintenance, check signing and the AMC required elections officer duties. Christensen stated about 50% of her time is spent on these duties. She also stated that a good portion of her time is spent maintaining the AMC, which isn’t in either Charter or AMC, but is important to have someone be a centralized control.

Almquist asked if the current duties were reduced to only those in the Charter, would that reduce her workload to 50%? Christensen stated that it’s not clear if that’s the case, due to State regulations. She stated that her assistant handles all records management issues, but not records requests. Christensen handles the business meeting of the Council, her assistant attends the Study Session and assembles the minutes for both meetings, which are then reviewed by Christensen.

Seffinger requested that Christensen put together lists of all current duties – one list of those which are directly required by Charter, and one with all those duties performed which are outside the Charter requirements.

Group discussed what means were available to handle an elected recorder who may not be fulfilling their duties. The Charter states that the Council can remove this person, and have a new one appointed by Mayor until a new election. Additionally, citizens can vote for removal from office.

Group generally agreed that if the position is to remain an elected position it would be good idea to change the AMC to only reflect the duties listed only in the Charter or those which are now mandated by State laws.

Group discussed whether they could have minimum education requirements for the position. Determined it could be added into the AMC, but would not be enforceable without a Charter amendment.

Group determined there are three basic options they are working with:

- 1) Keep the position elected but have the Charter amended via vote to reflect current duties
- 2) Keep the position elected but update the AMC to reflect current duties
- 3) Amend both the Charter and the AMC to change the position to an appointed position and to reflect current duties.

Group expressed concerned with the compensation requirements for any future recorder. Should we be paying anyone over \$87,000 to only handle the three duties listed in the Charter?

Group discussed the possible concern of the position needing to remain an independent voice for citizens. Seffinger wondered if it would help alleviate those concerns if the position were appointed by the Mayor and Council, but managed by the City Administrator. Group agreed that as the City Administrator is a direct report to the Mayor and Council, this set up wouldn't really increase the independence of the position. Christensen stated that one of the current downsides of it being elected and having such independence is that the position isn't staff and so is not particularly connected to decision making. It's hard to be a member of the team if you're elected.

Group discussed the challenges with considering an elected position equal to a professional, appointed position because they have no minimum requirements and no supervisions. This is a possible argument for it needing to be appointed. On the other hand, citizens in previous Charter-related elections have preferred having an elected official. The group agreed this isn't a reason to stop consideration of the position being appointed, but wanted to clearly acknowledge the previous preferences and possible concerns of the community. Group discussed whether citizens feel comfortable approaching Christensen because she is an elected official or if it is because she has been a part of the community (and in the position) for over 20 years. They agreed that it is likely a bit of both, but may be more due to her familiarity than her being an elected official.

Group wondered if there were a way to improve citizen's confidence in an appointed position if there were strong, clear requirements for that position. Agreed that with the open-meetings laws, which were not in place when either the Charter or AMC were written, having the position be an

independent, elected official to maintain citizen trust might no longer be as necessary.

Almquist stated that it is impossible to predict what would happen in an election and that the group shouldn't base their decisions on what citizens may or may not feel, but rather on the best possible decision. Christensen stated she is trying to keep an open-mind about all possibilities in order to achieve what is best for the community. She agrees that both the Charter and the AMC are antique and must be changed but isn't sure yet about appointed versus elected.

Christensen wondered if there has been a history of this being successful as an elected position, would citizens see a need for change?

Group discussed whether, if Charter amendments are recommended, a plan needs to be in place for what to do if that amendment fails. Discussed whether or not the group needs to come up with multiple options for consideration. Kanner stated it is always better for clarity to have one, best option. Council wouldn't have asked for this ad hoc committee if they weren't looking for one best option with clear pros and cons to show how that option came about. All members of the group agreed with this, except Christensen, who stated that she prefers the group gives Council multiple options and let them choose which they believe is best.

*Committee member Kanner left the meeting at 3:25 p.m.*

Group continued to discuss whether putting forth one option or multiple options was the best approach for the Council and the community. Group determined that they would work through all the options available and see if one option clearly becomes the strongest. Seffinger stated that the group needs to know what can be done if the electorate does not agree with this group's recommendation. It might be wise to have a second best option in the group's proverbial hip-pocket.

## **5. Future Meetings Schedule**

Group agreed that at the next meeting they would flesh out pros and cons of elected versus appointed. Additionally, they requested that Christensen bring a list of all current duties, broken out by Charter requirement, AMC requirement, State requirements, etc... They will also discuss what things have to stay in the Charter and agreed they may need the City Attorney at a future meeting to make sure their suggestions on this are legal.

The next meeting will be held on November 4 at 2:00 p.m., in the upstairs City Hall conference room.

## **6. Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at 3:41 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Diana Shiplet  
Executive Assistant