

## **From the Desk of the City Auditor, Dec 2, 2016 at 3:04 PM**

This week I announced a Charter amendment proposal to ensure the public's interest is protected by an organizational structure within the City of Portland that enables unfettered audits and investigations of bureaus.

The proposal will be discussed at a City Council work session scheduled for Jan. 10 at 9:30 a.m. Hull Caballero will seek Council approval on Jan. 25 to refer the Charter changes to voters in May 2017.

Independence is the bedrock of the City Auditor's ability to serve the public with reliable and credible audits and investigations. The Auditor's Office today is more of a watchdog than it was 30 years ago, and its independence has become impaired by organizational entanglements with bureaus it must hold accountable. The Charter should be updated to ensure my office is able to meet the public's expectations for accountability and transparency in City government.

The changes I am proposing essentially change responsibility for decision-making about the Auditor's Office from the City's executive branch to the elected Auditor. They would address the organizational impairments that exist and mitigate the inherent conflicts of interest caused by Portland's commission form of government. If adopted, the Auditor would be solely responsible for ensuring the office is accountable to the public with appropriate management controls and periodic internal and independent assessments, the results of which would be readily available.

The Charter amendment proposal includes:

- **Placing the Independent Police Review and the Office of the Ombudsman into Charter.** Currently, these functions, which investigate Portlanders' complaints against the City, are in Code and can be removed from the Auditor's Office or eliminated by a simple majority vote of the City Council. Placing them in Charter will mean only a vote of the people could eliminate these offices, which have been in the Auditor's Office for 15 years. Charter protections would insulate these offices from political pressure and reprisal.
- **Authorizing the Auditor to obtain independent legal advice that is focused on the mission of the Auditor's Office.** The Auditor should be able to obtain independent legal advice rather than being required to rely on the same attorneys who advise those she holds accountable. This is especially important when investigations involve other elected officials who appoint and supervise the City Attorney.
- **Creating an independent budget process that ensures the Auditor's Office is appropriately funded and insulated from political interference.** The current process leaves the Auditor's budget vulnerable to other elected officials whose bureaus are the subjects of audits and investigations. An independent budget process would respect both the City Council's fiduciary role and the Auditor's watchdog role.
- **Affirming the Auditor's Office is autonomous from the Office of Management and Finance and other bureaus.** The Auditor should be responsible for personnel, procurement and other decisions and well as ensuring that proper controls are in place to comply with state and

federal laws. The Auditor will periodically procure or conduct internal quality control reviews of divisions in the Auditor's Office and report results to the public.

See news coverage:

*Our Opinion: City should turn its watchdog loose* (Tribune) <http://portlandtribune.com/pt/10-opinion/334355-213937-our-opinion-city-should-turn-its-watchdog-loose>

*Auditor seeks more autonomy with reform measure* (Tribune) <http://portlandtribune.com/pt/9-news/334384-214175-auditor-seeks-more-autonomy-with-reform-measure>

*Portland City Auditor seeks more autonomy for her office* (OPB) <http://www.opb.org/news/article/mary-hull-caballero-portland-city-auditor-more-autonomy-for-office/>

*Portland's elected auditor wants more autonomy* (Oregonian) [http://www.oregonlive.com/portland/index.ssf/2016/11/portlands\\_elected\\_auditor\\_want.html#incart\\_river\\_home](http://www.oregonlive.com/portland/index.ssf/2016/11/portlands_elected_auditor_want.html#incart_river_home)

*Hall Monitor – A declaration of independence: Portland's Auditor says she's unduly strained. She wants you to change that.* (Mercury) <http://www.portlandmercury.com/news/2016/11/30/18720329/hall-monitor-a-declaration-of-independence>