

Report of the 2003 - 2004
Charter Review Committee, Umatilla County
Findings and Recommendations

Submitted June 14, 2004

The activity of the 2004 Charter Review Committee was initiated by the Umatilla County Board of Commissioners on November 2, 2003. The following listed persons served on the committee. Connie Caplinger, Executive Assistant to the Board of Commissioners (BOC) deserves a special thank you for her committed, sincere efforts to assist the committee arrange agenda, take notes and prepare minutes of the meetings and otherwise help move the committee work along.

I. COMMITTEE MEMBERS

1. Clinton B. Reeder, Chair (Farmer; member, Umatilla County Planning Commission)
2. Lewis S. Key (Mayor, City of Milton-Freewater; Farmer)
3. Richard Winter (Mayor, City of Echo; Consultant, Umatilla Chemical Depot)
5. Carolyn McBee (Citizen, City of Pendleton)
6. Gary Reed (Director, Oregon State University's Agricultural Research and Extension Center, Hermiston)

Connie Caplinger, Executive Assistant to the county Board of Commissioners, served as the facilitator and recorder for the Charter Review Committee.

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2004 Charter Review Committee ("Committee") was generally impressed with the apparent qualifications of the Dept. Directors, and the effectiveness of the departments they manage. They were well prepared for their presentations, and appeared to know their respective departments very well.

In addition, there seemed to be a significant level of mutual understanding among the department heads concerning the responsibility and challenges of departments other than their own. This reflects a relatively high level of interaction among the department heads, which the Committee assumes to be a positive benefit of the regular periodic meetings of the department heads and the Board of Commissioners (BOC).

If we are going to highlight the areas of concern, we should highlight the strengths as well. Overall, the committee concludes that the positive benefits of the re-organization of county government continues to be quite evident, especially in the improved communications among departments, in the improved coordination and delivery of county services and in the continuing improvement of the county's up-to-date financial accounting and reporting system.

The two most serious areas of concern appear to be the following, county-wide long term strategic planning and law enforcement:

1. **Strategic Planning and Economic Development.** Considerably more attention should be given in the immediate future, and periodically thereafter concerning the long term prospects for the county. If continued economic development is desired, it appears considerable attention must be given to planning appropriately to encourage the types and sizes of development, consistent with the nature of resources available in the county and the character of the jobs preferred. The Committee recommends that year-end reports be prepared by each Dept. to not only review the prior year/s but to also project needs into the next year in particular, as well as longer term prospects for the dept.

2. **Sheriff's Department Staffing.** The Sheriff's department does not appear to be able to adequately provide for the safety and security of the citizens of the county, considering the shortfall in appropriate number of deputies. Improving the overall capability of this department to perform its essential services should be a high priority over the next budget period.
3. **District Attorney's Office.** The District Attorney indicates that while the workload in his department is linked to the activity of the Sheriff's office, the DA's workload is in certain respects independent of the Sheriff's office, for example, due to interaction with the State Police. According to the current DA, this office prosecutes cases from eleven (11) different law enforcement agencies (email Chris Brauer to Clinton Reeder, dated March 15, 2004). This email also indicates that the state formula for calculating attorney caseload suggests Umatilla County should have 12 deputy district attorneys, but in fact only has 6 (maybe 7, depending on how the juvenile deputy is included).
4. **DA Vs Sheriff's Office.** Increased staffing in the Sheriff's office will undoubtedly generate increased workload for the DA's office. Since the DA's office is reported to be understaffed already, attention should be given to bringing the DA's staff up to more appropriate numbers and coordinate staffing of the Sheriff's office with the DA's office so as to keep staffing in both Dept.'s reasonably compatible as to workload.

In general, it appears the structure of Umatilla County government is functioning reasonably well, with few major limitations. The Charter Review Committee does very much appreciate the apparent level of dedication of county personnel to maintaining a high level of professionalism and productivity in their job assignments.

On the other hand, it appears prolonged budgetary limitations are increasingly stressing personnel. Department heads voice concern about how long continued pressure to increase personnel productivity can be effective without increasing staff numbers to acknowledge the need for increased service delivery capability. If budgetary constraints continue to be severe, there may need to be some rather challenging re-prioritizing of service delivery focus by the county.

III. PROCESS USED BY THE CURRENT CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE

The purpose of this Charter Review was to investigate how well the structure of Umatilla County government is functioning at the level of the Board of Commissioners and the Department Directors. The Committee was not instructed to explore further than the upper levels of management.

The Committee first met on November 2, 2003 to discuss their assignment and how best to conduct the charge given them by the Umatilla County Board of Commissioners. As background material, the Committee reviewed the Charter Review report submitted by the two previous Charter Review Committees (1994 and 1999-2000).

In a series of subsequent meetings, the Committee interviewed the following persons for detailed information concerning the trends impacting Umatilla County government structure, function and services provided. More specifically, each Director was instructed to provide information concerning

- a) How well their department was functioning,
- b) Any limitations on improving or expanding their services, and

- c) In particular, whether they judged that the structure of county government was itself limiting, and therefore changes might appropriately be considered.
1. Department Directors
 - a. Finance (Doreen Benschoter)
 - b. Assessment and Taxation (Paul Chalmers)
 - c. Administrative Services (Jim Barrow)
 - d. Health and Human Services (Connie Caplinger)
 - e. Public Works (Hal Phillips)
 - f. Resource Services and Development (Tamra Mabbott)
 - g. Sheriff's Office (John Trumbo)
 - h. District Attorney (Chris Brauer)
 2. Board of Commissioners
 - a. Bill Hansell
 - b. Dennis Doherty
 - c. Emile Holman
 3. County Employee Union Representatives
 - a. AFSCME, Courthouse (Patty Perry – Made presentation to the Committee)
 - b. SEIU (John Fultzdid – chose not to comment)
 - c. AFSCME, Road Dept. (Bob Nooy - chose not to comment)

Each person interviewed was requested to provide information concerning

1. Trends and pressures impacting their area of responsibility and the population they primarily represent; plus
2. Strengths and limitations of their department or population represented in terms of ability to adapt to the changing social, political and economic circumstances.

All interviewees were encouraged to comment on any other factors that might concern the structure, function and financing of Umatilla County government.

IV. FOCUS OF COMMITTEE REPORT

This report of the Charter Review Committee will focus on the following:

1. A review of the current status of the structure and function of county government, in terms of its ability and capacity to adapt to the changes likely to occur as the county responds to social, political and economic pressures.
2. Recommendations concerning Longer-Term Strategic Planning, including assuring an ability to continue providing Essential Services in the face of potential prolonged adverse economic circumstances and/or unforeseen major damage to county facilities and functional capability .
3. Recommendation concerning effectively coping with the impacts associated with increasing cultural diversity in the county, including improving means of involving non-Caucasian cultures in the process of county government.

V. AREAS OF CONCERN, COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following material outlines the areas of concern examined by the Committee during the interviews with Umatilla County Department Directors and the Board of Commissioners. Comments are provided for each area of concern, followed by recommendations from this Committee.

1. **Elected Vs Appointed Department Heads.** After completion of the Department Directors, the Committee discussed in some depth the nature of the changes in organization of county government, with special attention given to how effective the change from elected department heads to appointed had been. The Committee unanimously supports the obvious benefits

generated by this change in organizational structure. Accountability has improved; coordination and integration of department activity has improved considerably, in large part because the level of direct control of county government by the Board of Commissioners has markedly improved. Instead of each departmental Director being essentially their "own" part of county government, all the departments now function as elements of a coordinated, integrated governmental unit under the focused supervision of the county Board of Commissioners (BOC). Under present structure, the BOC have direct supervisory control over all personnel rather than having only budgetary control over the various departments, as was the case under the previous structure with elected department heads.

Recommendation. Continue the present structure, with appointed department Directors.

2. **Structure of County Government.** While the committee discussed the possible benefits of further modifications to the structure of government in Umatilla County with each department Director, without exception those who came before the committee indicated they thought the structure of county government was generally functioning very well. Those who spoke before the Committee were generally supportive of the Board of Commissioners and their mode of operating, and the level of interaction between the Commissioners and county department heads.

Recommendation. Make no changes in the departmental structure of government in the county at the present time.

3. **"Keep It Flat"**. Regardless of the position taken by those appearing before the Committee, there is a rather strongly held belief that the county will function much more effectively if the organizational chart for county government is kept "flat", i.e., with a minimum number of levels in the chain of authority so that department managers can obtain access to the key decision makers in a relatively short time period.

Recommendation. The Committee concurs with this preference, and recommends that to the extent possible, the chain of command in county government be kept short and flat, to maximize communication effectiveness, credibility and timeliness of the communication process.

4. **Liaison Duties Demand an Increasing Commitment.** Judging from the long and very detailed list of agencies and programs with which the BOC strive to maintain contact, the task of managing government increasingly becomes more complex and time-demanding. The BOC especially, and the Planning Department Director divide up liaison duties, and have ongoing "liaison assignments" that are part of each manager's ongoing job responsibilities.

While this might seem to be a diversion from "real" job responsibilities, the practical reality today seems obvious: in order to maintain a well-coordinated public sector service delivery capability, all elements of that delivery system must somehow be "coordinated" and kept informed, if for no other reason than to avoid unknown duplication of effort and costs.

Recommendations. The Committee recommends that the county carefully monitor its time and financial commitment to liaison activity, and periodically re-assess the costs Vs benefits pertaining to each liaison commitment. Some liaison commitments will likely be "mostly politics" while others may generate substantial benefits.

5. **The Umatilla County Fair.** The Umatilla County Fair (Fair) is one liaison relationship needing attention. There is apparently a certain degree of "tension" between the county and the Fair Board and/or staff. This is not unique to Umatilla County. The county fairs have certain statutory status, rather independent in many ways from direct control of the BOC. On the other hand, the county provides part of the funding for the fair, and provides liability protection to the fair. Therefore, in order to assure appropriate accountability, the following is recommended.

Recommendation. The BOC should maintain a written contract between the Fair Board and the county. This contract should be rather specific about the respective responsibilities and obligations of the county and the Fair Board and staff. Continued county funding and liability coverage should depend on good faith compliance by the Fair Board and staff with the terms of this agreement. The county should not continue to provide funding and liability protection without assurance in writing that the Fair will not unreasonably pose liability costs and exposure to the county and that funds provided by the county will be appropriately accounted for and reported back to the county.

General Recommendation re “Liaison Relationships”. Where the financial costs associated with any liaison commitment is significant, the Committee recommends that considerable attention be given to accountability. In situations where the recipient entity side-steps appropriate accountability measures implemented by the county, the liaison commitment should be seriously re-considered. For the county to continue assuming liabilities and costs associated with the liaison commitment, but experiences unacceptable cooperation relative to the issue of financial accountability, those relationships should likely either be terminated or the contractual relationship between the county and that entity re-defined to make more evident that without the accountability there will not be continuing support. The county should not be apologetic about taking this stance. It is an obligation owed to every citizen of the county.

- 6. Delayed Decisions Vs Budget.** One frustration mentioned by one or more of the department Directors was the occasional delay in decision making relative to budgeted outlays. The Department Directors stated they would much prefer to have the personal discretion to move ahead with already budgeted outlays without further intervention by the BOC. Sometimes, waiting for the Commissioners to formally authorize already budgeted expenditures is frustrating to the department Directors.

On the other hand, the BOC not too many years ago had to deal with an embarrassing and difficult financial situation in the county. Due to shortcomings in the county’s accounting and reporting system, expenditures outran income without the knowledge of the BOC, leaving the county with a difficult shortfall in budget funds. As a result, the BOC continue to think they should review and authorize especially larger dollar outlays, to protect their ability to monitor and manage county finances in a manner that will assure avoiding another shortfall in county funds. Since revenues and expenditures often diverge from budget, it is likely a reasonable precaution to continue the current practice, at least in general.

Recommendations: This issue could likely be resolved by authorizing department heads to proceed with budgeted outlays as budgeted, but requiring them to notify the Commissioners a specified amount of time prior to doing so, such as two weeks (maybe more, considering the lead-time necessary to place orders for the item or service being purchased). This would provide the BOC and the county Budget Officer time to evaluate the proposed outlay, and only intervene if the current financial reports suggest intervention might be appropriate. If the notice to the BOC from a department Director specified order dates, last date to stop an order and the proposed delivery date, the BOC would have a better idea of the time frame in which they needed to respond.

It is tempting to suggest that if no intervention is made by the BOC by a certain time, then the department Directors can assume they have approval to proceed with the outlay. However, the Committee recommends a more positive process would provide less chance for “errors and misunderstanding”. Hence, once an approval is sought from the BOC by a department Director, the Committee recommends a decision be made by the BOC and a written notice of approval or denial be provided the department Director. Actually the BOC has adopted fiscal policies that address this issue. One of the policies is that any Department Director can without further

approval from the BOC make expenditures that are less than a certain specified amount, once they are budgeted.

7. **Budget Too Limiting**. The major concern of those who spoke before the Committee was that the county budget has become so limiting that most departments are feeling serious limitations on their capacity to accomplish their department mission, and maintain a competent staff. In general, the consensus among department Directors seems to be that budget constraints are the major cause of any current shortcoming in ability of departments to perform.

Recommendation: The Committee recommends that the county not expect departments to maintain the same service level as budget reductions are implemented, especially if the budget reductions result in reduced personnel numbers. While it is more than appropriate to ask personnel to improve productivity when faced with short-term budget reductions, if those reductions are going to be longer-term, it is less likely that productivity can be maintained if personnel numbers have been reduced.

Employees will likely do “double-duty” in “emergency” situations, but are not likely to continue doing so once it becomes more evident that the reduced employee numbers will be the new continuing reality.

Therefore, it is further recommended that the county keep the public informed about the practical reality of the current budget circumstances, so the public can adjust their service level expectations to better match the service delivery capability of county government. It might also be helpful to let the public know which time of day particular offices are usually less busy, so the departmental workload can be spread more evenly over a workday.

8. **Appoint a County Manager?** There is some continuing interest in appointing a County “Manager”. However, there is not a clear mandate to do so, even though there is some interest in the potential benefits of doing so. The primary reason to support this alternative seems to be the general interest in speeding up the authorization process for making budgeted outlays, and to speed up other management decisions now perceived to be delayed by the heavy burden of management responsibility carried by the BOC.

On the other hand, the employees in general voice a preference that no more levels in the chain of command be established. The employees want to maintain direct access to the “real decision maker/s”. This suggests that if a county manager is implemented in the future, it will be very, very important that the ongoing relationship between the BOC and the county Manager be defined in a manner that makes very clear who has what level of authority and decision making prerogatives. We should note that this was a recommendation of the last two charter review committees.

Recommendation. Do not appoint a County Manager at this time, but rather expand the role of the Executive Assistant to the Board of Commissioners to facilitate more timely decisions involving the BOC and the department Directors. One justification for having a county Manager is to assure consistency of supervision among departments. The Committee decided that the current system of government is adequate to this challenge. The benefits of having a county Manager under existing circumstances would not likely justify the additional costs.

Most likely the addition of a county Manager will involve considerable adaptation of county government relationships. In particular, a very careful defining of the relative roles and responsibilities of the county Manager and the county Board of Commissioners will be required. Considerable pre-planning should be accomplished if, and when such a transition is considered for actual implementation, in part because to a considerable extent it will likely involve re-defining some elements of county “politics”.

9. **The Executive Assistant Position**. The county department Directors voice universal support for the current position of Executive Assistant to the BOC now held by Connie Caplinger. Some of

the county staff see this as an exploration toward the possibility of eventually naming a County Manager. However, the Committee cautions that this position has considerable merit without assuming it has any particular "exploratory intent" relative to appointing a county Manager sometime in the future.

Most of the department Directors think the Executive Assistant position should be expanded to a full-time position. They do not believe this role should be carried by a person who is also a department Director. Both jobs are seen to be full-time positions. This is not meant to be a criticism of the person currently in this role, but rather to indicate that those commenting in favor of continuing this structural modification believe strongly that the Executive Assistant position should be a full-time position if it is to fully take advantage of the potential for the position.

Recommendation. The Committee recommends the position of Executive Assistant to the BOC be continued, but with a more precisely defined job description. The current situation leaves the Executive Assistant somewhat unsure of the limits of her authority and responsibility, and similarly for the department Directors who are expected to work through this position with some activities.

On the other hand, part of the success of this position seems to be its flexibility, its capacity to respond quickly to changes in circumstances and need. Therefore, while it appears further clarification of the role for this position would likely be helpful, the role should likely be defined with a good deal of flexibility.

The **Recommendation of the Committee** is that the position of Executive Assistant to the BOC be expanded into a full-time position as soon as the budget permits. Judging from the information provided the Committee, this position likely has greater potential to enhance the overall function and effectiveness of county government than does appointment of a county manager. It appears that this position permits the county to benefit from some of the advantages of having a county Manager, without sacrificing the advantages of continuing a strong management role for the Board of Commissioners.

10. **Strategic Planning.** A universal concern of department Directors is the need for increased attention to longer-term planning activity by county government. There appears to be increasing concern that the county would benefit significantly from a more purposeful effort designed to review status of pressures on county services, service opportunities and limitations, and alternative means by which various service needs might best and most economically be provided.

There seems to literally be a hunger among department Directors to invest more effort toward "strategic planning", to look further ahead and anticipate potential service needs for their department and for county government in general. The lack of such planning effort apparently leaves the Directors responsible for managing in turbulent times, with much perceived to be beyond their control. They would, it appears, feel considerably more secure in managing their departments if they had a better feel for a more purposeful long term sense of direction. One of the recommendations of a previous (1994) Charter Review Committee was that the county should develop and maintain a superior management information system to include year-end reporting by department. It is very difficult to do effective strategic planning if you don't know where you have been, and where you are at the present time.

Recommendation. The Committee recommends that at least once each two years, the county staff invest a significant block of time in accomplishing some meaningful strategic planning, looking ahead at least the 10-20 years required by the Oregon Land Use Planning Program. This would likely provide a greater sense of control over the longer-term destiny of the community, in so far as services provided by the county are concerned. In addition, this would provide an improved environment in which department Directors might manage their departmental activity, moving toward certain pre-determined longer-term goals, rather than

mostly just acting day-by-day without such “guidance” and sense of common direction and purpose.

- 11. Status of Financial Records.** A major improvement has been reported over the past few years in the steady upgrading of the accuracy and timeliness of financial reports to the departments and the BOC. These timely reports are apparently very much appreciated by department heads as a major tool enabling them to better manage their department personnel, services and budget status.

The previous Charter Review Committee recommended that a full-time Budget Officer be maintained by the county. This position was established and is now staffed and working to assure adequate accountability and timely reports to managers.

Recommendation. The Committee recommends the financial accounting and reporting activity continue to be a major priority of county government, providing timely and appropriately detailed reports to not only help manage budget but to manage the affairs of each department, to provide better information necessary to more accurately predict future financial needs and adequacy dept. by dept. The Committee believes strongly that the availability of comprehensive, accurate and timely financial reports is essential to managing county government at all times, but especially in times of budgetary stress and the need for careful reconsideration of appropriate spending priorities.

- 12. Sheriff’s Office – a Major Challenge.** The Committee has decided that the Sheriff’s office must somehow be better funded to enable the Sheriff to maintain a sufficient number of officers to be reasonably able to provide for the health and safety of the county citizenry. Drug abuse and the increases in crime often related to the drug problem, are not acceptable to the community at large.

The community can not function effectively if the populace acts in fear. Theft and burglary are very threatening, and costly, and contribute to a desire for retaliation from those victimized, thus further escalating the potential for violence in the community. Acting defensively all the time distracts attention and money from far more productive activity.

Drug availability and the violence often associated therewith, threatens the children and youth in the community especially, and contributes in a major way to family instability and abuse. Such problems exacerbate the problem of managing schools and assuring an appropriate education for community youth.

The Committee does not think these problems can be contained without having a more adequate number of officers in the Sheriff’s department. As the Committee understands the current circumstances in the Sheriff’s office, some additional deputies have been added this past year. However, it appears the county may still be without an adequate patrol capability.

The Committee recognizes that money spent in the Sheriff’s department is money not available to other departments. Hence, regardless of any funding shortfall in the Sheriff’s office, there must still be a reasonable balance maintained in the funding among all county departments.

On the other hand, in spite of the need for balance, it is also recognized that public safety is a major priority, and should remain such.

Recommendation: The Committee strongly recommends that a) purposeful attention be given to establishing the minimum standards by which staffing for the Sheriff’s department be determined, and b) that a budget priority be given the Sheriff’s office that will assure the community that an appropriate number of deputies will be provided to deal effectively with the safety and security needs of the county. Furthermore, the Committee recommends that decisions concerning the staffing of the Sheriff’s department keep in mind the likely impact thereof on the DA’s office. An increased number of patrol officers will likely mean increased cost of prosecuting cases in the DA’s office.

13. **The Sheriff's Office Vs the Jail.** An issue that has been discussed at some length this past year in the county is whether the county jail is being appropriately utilized. Especially under current budgetary constraints, the Committee believes there is a trade-off between the number of deputies on patrol and the number of deputies (staff) assigned to operate the jail. Some citizens are not happy having convicted persons not serve their appropriate jail time, while others are concerned that we cannot adequately address county crime issues without an adequate number of deputies on patrol. The Committee understands that the current budgetary dilemma has been seriously considered when establishing relative priority between the jail operation and patrol officers, but believe further consideration might be appropriate. The Committee also understands that a citizen's committee has been looking into how improved financing might best be assured for the county law enforcement effort.

Recommendation. Since this issue of law enforcement is of such importance to the community, the Committee recommends that a public forum be conducted sometime "soon" so individual citizens have an opportunity to be presented the facts concerning the Sheriff's office and the jail, provided an opportunity to ask questions, and comment on the nature and extent of law enforcement services they think are most appropriate in the county, considering budgetary constraints as well as other concerns.

14. **The District Attorney's Office .** The District Attorney's office is sometimes overlooked as part of the overall Law Enforcement service package provided by county government. It appears that to most citizens, the District Attorney's office is not well understood nor appreciated as a major player in the overall law enforcement activity of the county. If there are not an adequate number of patrol officers in the Sheriff's office, citizens rather quickly note not seeing any Sheriff's vehicles on the country roads. On the other hand, there is no such immediate evidence available to the general public that the District Attorney's office is not able to keep up with the pressing case load in the county.

According to an email provided the Committee by the current District Attorney, Chris Brauer on March 15, 2004 the DA's office now has about half the number of deputy DA's necessary to carry the existing case load. As a result, some kind of prioritizing of cases must be done to reduce the number of cases prosecuted and/or less attention must be given to each case than it would otherwise receive with more adequate staffing.

Therefore, if the county wishes to maintain a more effective law enforcement capability, most likely a broadened review of law enforcement capability should be accomplished periodically, and long term plans made to maintain a more appropriate overall capability.

Recommendation. The Committee recommends that a significant element of the proposed every two year strategic planning effort of county government focus attention on the overall law enforcement capability of the county, considering the efforts and cooperation among local city police agencies, Tribal police, state and federal law enforcement agencies, the county Sheriff's office and the District Attorney's office. In addition, it would likely also be helpful to include consideration of the adequacy of the pertinent court system/s. The Committee suggests that if the every two-year cycle of review is too costly, that such a review be accomplished no less frequent than each five years.

15. **Frequency of Charter Review Process.** The Board of Commissioners suggested that since the county initially changed to the current Charter, there had been a Charter Review Committee appointed each two years. The Charter Committees have never recommended further fundamental changes in the current structure of county government. County government appears to be upgrading services and administrative procedures in an appropriate manner year by year. Therefore, it appears the review cycle can be extended. However, the Committee thinks a review should be more often than each five years.

Recommendation. The Committee recommends that the next Charter Review Committee be appointed in three years, with the subsequent Committee appointed four years later. After experiencing these two time periods, this Committee recommends the BOC establish what they believe to be the most appropriate regular review cycle. **The Committee further recommends** that the BOC reserve the privilege of appointing a review committee any time a substantial issue arises that might benefit from a formal review by a Charter Review Committee.

16. **Update Home Rule Charter.** The BOC suggested that since some of the language in the Charter related only to the transition period from the prior organizational structure of county government, and therefore no longer serves any purpose, it could be removed from the Charter. Subsequent discussion suggested that the overall Charter language be reviewed for possible updating, where appropriate.

Recommendation: The Committee recommends a) removal of any provisions in the Charter language that no longer serve any useful purpose, and b) that the Charter be reviewed to see if any other provisions might appropriately be updated to better reflect current and anticipated needs.

17. **Board of Commissioners' Compensation.** The Board of Commissioners voiced some concern over having the public members of the county budget committee be the persons who determine the compensation level for the BOC. These persons constitute a minority of the members of the budget committee, thus current practice means the decision concerning the BOC compensation level is made by a minority of the budget committee members.

Recommendation. The Committee recommends 1) that a separate independent Compensation Review Committee, acting in an advisory capacity to the budget committee, make an initial compensation review and recommendations to the whole budget committee, and 2) that the whole budget committee establish a consensus compensation recommendation for the BOC. This is similar to the recommendation of the 2000 Charter Review Committee.

18. **Economic Development.** Considerable discussion occurred from time to time in committee meetings about economic development, including some concern over the questions, "What exactly is economic development?", and "What kind of economic development best "fits" Umatilla County?" The Planning Dept. and the County Planning Commission have in recent months given some attention to how best to do some strategic thinking about the future development in the county, what best to promote, how best to modify and administer the Comprehensive plan to foster "economic development" in the county.

The Critical Groundwater Taskforce appointed by the BOC in January 2004 was charged with predicting the economic development that will take place through the year 2050 in west Umatilla County. A similar effort for the balance of the county would likely provide considerable insight into how county resources might best be managed over the next several years.

Recommendation. The county should engage in a major long range planning effort over the next 24 months, including a projection of likely development through the year 2050, and including a projection of resources needed to support that level of development (water needed, air shed capacity needed, land area needed, financial investment and county funds needed, etc.).

19. **Additions to Future Charter Review Committee's Agenda.** As the current Charter Review Committee deliberations reached a conclusion, the Committee decided that it might have been appropriate for them to have interviewed members of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) and the Hispanic community in the county. Both these groups increasingly play a significant role in the county. It seems appropriate to be more purposeful in this Charter Review process to involve them in the discussions, and better understand the

current and potential county services that might be directed toward these two elements of the county population. In addition, there are advisory committees and commissions that might provide unique insights into the overall operations of county government.

Recommendation: The proposed interview agenda outline for the next Charter Review Committee is the following.

1. Department Directors
 - a. Finance
 - b. Assessment and Taxation
 - c. Administrative Services
 - d. Health and Human Services
 - e. Public Works
 - f. Resource Services and Development
 - g. Sheriff's Office
 - h. District Attorney's office
2. County Employee Union Representatives
3. Members of Advisory Committees and Commissions
4. Tribal Representative/s (CTUIR)
5. Representative/s of the county Hispanic Population
6. Board of Commissioners

VI. CURRENT STATUS OF RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY PRIOR CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEES

1994 Charter Review Committee.

1. *Develop a county government organizational chart.*

Status. Accomplished.

2. *Develop detailed job descriptions for all county government position, especially those moving from elected to appointed status, including qualifications, responsibilities and supervision (position in organization chart).*

Status. Accomplished.

3. *County Administrator supervise certain positions.*

Status. No County Administrator has been appointed. County Board of Commissioners supervise all Dept. Directors, who in turn supervise all unit managers in their departments.

4. *Establish an "Administrative Services Team" supervised by the County Administrator.*

The purpose of this recommendation was to quickly improve the coordination and supervision of some positions that had previously been elected, and integrate their prior workload effectively into departments that would absorb that work.

Status. Accomplished, but without appointing a County Administrator. The Dept. of Administrative Services and the Finance Dept. absorbed most of these areas of concern.

5. *Establish a computerized, consolidated, comprehensive property book for all non-expendable assets owned or leased by the county.*

Status. Accomplished, or in the process of being completed.

6. *Maintain a consolidated, comprehensive set of county-wide policies and procedures.*

Status. Accomplished, or in the process of being completed.

7. *Implement a "Team Concept" into the operating structure of county government.* The purpose of this recommendation was to improve the level of communication and coordination among all functions of county government, to assure that staff in one dept. were aware of and might be supportive of efforts of other depts.

Status. Operationally accomplished. The BOC meets weekly with the Dept Directors to review workload and plans, and to coordinate activities. The "Senior Managers meet twice monthly. Each Dept. has one of the BOC designated as a liaison Commissioner for that dept. The unit structure within each dept. was determined to group units with similar or related responsibilities, thus furthering the Team Concept.

8. *Establish a General Ledger Accounting System, and Provide More Timely Reports.*

Status. Accomplished

9. *Combine Chief Accountant and Treasurer's Offices.*

Status. Accomplished

10. *Transfer the foreclosed property employee to the tax collection department.*

Status. Accomplished

11. *Transfer responsibility for writing receipts for money received to the Accounting Dept. from the Treasurers office.*

Status. Accomplished.

12. *Inventory assets, by department.*

Status. Accomplished.

12. *Develop and maintain a superior management information system.*

The purpose of this recommendation was to develop annual reports, by departments, so that information would be available for distribution to the public concerning the services delivered, the number of persons to whom delivered, etc. In addition, a purpose was to enhance the information available among dept. and for the BOC concerning service levels and where improvements might be made.

Status. Not yet developed. Annual reports by dept. Directors not yet common practice. Most likely, this is an area for further exploration and implementation.

13. *Develop and maintain an ongoing Strategic Planning effort.*

The purpose of this recommendation was to enhance the forward-looking efforts of all dept. personnel, to anticipate service needs and be timely in developing modified capabilities, providing necessary training and engaging in program development with sufficient lead time to minimize crisis situations.

Status. Some level of accomplishment, but not in a county-wide purposeful manner. This is an area of concern that most likely should, considering current budget constraints and the pace of change impacting the county, receive purposeful attention in the very near future.

14. *Implement a system of "Benchmarks" (Performance standards or "mile-posts") as a means of monitoring and implementing long range planning activities.*

Status. This Benchmark approach is being implemented in the current year. Most likely, this approach should be incorporated into a more purposeful Strategic Long Range Planning activity by all depts. in county government, including the BOC.

15. *Centralize and Modernize System for Storage and Retrieval of County Records.*
Status. Operationally accomplished, but it is an on-going necessity to keep current and fully functional.
16. *Evaluate physical space availability, and co-locate service units for better time and space utilization.*
Status. Accomplished, and is a continuing process.
17. *Develop a Continuing Employee Training and Education Program.*
Status. Elements are accomplished. Training materials are maintained in the Human Services Dept. offices for reference and study. Dept. Directors assess training needs for their staff, and recommend attendance at training events, as appropriate and as budget permits. Process could likely be more purposeful, and better coordinated. No specific staff development plan has been developed. Might be an area for more purposeful activity in the future.
18. *Maintain an on-going, coordinated, effective cooperative working relationship with other counties, cities and agencies.*
Status. Accomplished, but it is an ongoing challenge. County BOC have a purposeful planning program for coordinating liaison relationships with other entities.
19. *Assign duties of Public Relations Officer to the County Administrator.*
Status. No Public Relations Officer has been named. No County Administrator position has been established. Media contacts are maintained by the county, and news releases are arranged by "informal consultations" among affected personnel and the BOC.

2000 Charter Review Committee.

1. *Concluded that for the most part, the recommendations of the 1994 Committee had been, or were in the process of being implemented, and that the changes were working reasonably well.*
2. *Recommended that the compensation level for the Sheriff, the District Attorney and the Board of Commissioners be increased.*
Status. Accomplished
3. *Recommended that the county appoint a new Compensation Review Commission to review compensation for elected officials and county employees, and make recommendations concerning compensation levels to the county budget committee.*
Status. Compensation Review Commission was not appointed.

VII. OVERALL FOCUS OF RECOMMENDATIONS PROVIDE BY PRIOR CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEES

1. **Re-organize For the Purpose of Improving Effectiveness.** Make the transition from elected officials to a Home Rule Charter as efficiently and as quickly as reasonable, and in the process a) re-organize service units and departments so that similar and mutually supportive units are housed together, and b) develop and operate on a "Team Concept" so that communications and cooperation among departments and service units is improved and maintained at a high level or performance.
Status. Accomplished and functioning without major complaints or shortcomings.

2. **Improve Accounting and Information Systems.** Improve accounting and financial management systems, plus associated financial reporting systems to enable BOC and Department heads to manage budget with greater accuracy and timeliness.
Status. Accomplished and functioning without major complaints or shortcomings. Additional development of this accounting and reporting system continues.
3. **Improve Compensation.** Improve Compensation Levels for both Elected Officials and Employees.
Status. Some improvement, but county still lags behind several comparable counties.
4. **Improve Employee Training.** Improve Employee Training and Education Opportunities, to Maintain a Highly Productive Staff.
Status. Each Department gives attention to this concern, but no formal county-wide employee development plan has been developed.
5. **Improve Public Awareness.** Improve public awareness of the services provided by county government, and the persons to whom that service is delivered.
Status. No formal plan for developing annual pertinent information by departments, and no formal plan has been established for delivering such information to the public.
6. **Improve Strategic Planning.** Invest more in Strategic Planning, looking into the future to identify trends and circumstances increasingly of importance to the county, so necessary adjustments and adaptations can be initiated to maintain appropriate and timely delivery of county services, and better assure appropriate budget funding.
Status. No regular, formal process has been established. However, department Directors do regularly (but “informally”) consider “developments” that might impact their area of responsibility.

VIII. GLOBAL CHANGES IMPACTING UMATILLA COUNTY

The Committee began their deliberations with a discussion of “Global Changes” affecting Umatilla County and local communities. The discussion included social, political and economic issues related to providing and financing county services.

Some of the Global Changes thought to be impacting Umatilla County now and into the next decade are the following:

1. *Increasing competition for limited natural resources and the potential effect upon Economic Development in the county, especially...*
 - a. Water (quantity and quality)
 - b. Air Shed Capacity (special focus on cumulative impacts on air quality of development, capacity for continued economic development activity)
2. *Species Protection and Habitat Enhancement* (the impact thereof on community activity and county government services), especially the potential impact of increasing acres of wildlife habitat in protected riparian corridors across the county and the state.
3. *Changing population dynamics, increasing cultural diversity and related factors* including the impacts of immigration, both legal and illegal
 - a. Crime, Drugs, Gangs and associated disruptions to the community
 - b. Voting (political impacts)
 - c. Financing county services
 - d. Public participation in debating and deciding affairs of county government

4. *Increasing globalization of state, national and world affairs and the impact thereof on local government, communities, institutions and individual people. This includes the dramatic changes in*
- a) the capacity for people to travel quickly to other nations and locations within the U.S.;
 - b) the ability to communicate instantaneously, via both electronics and hard copy plus real-time photography, all around the globe;
 - c) the ability of banks and other financial entities to transfer capital from one nation to another by the click of a computer key, and even by preprogrammed mechanisms (and thus adversely or positively impact currency values and economic development potential in significant fashion among nations and therefore, even among local areas); and
 - d) the capacity to be familiar with "history in the making" around the globe, in both isolated and populated areas, potential opportunities and challenges, literally hour-by-hour, day-by-day, including real-time war events, ethnic cleansing and other such media "entertainment", "education" and "public awareness".
4. *The increasingly effective use of electronic media for educational purposes, and the potential upheaval in education policy and delivery mechanisms as more and more educational material and programs, including credible university degree programs are delivered via Internet. "Teachers" ("marketers" of information and educational content) can already reach literally thousands of "learners" with a single lecture (or even interactive laboratory experiences) and the possibility already exists for them to literally reach millions of "students" on a time-flexible schedule.*

In addition, there are increasing numbers of "cohort" education programs which allow advanced in-depth educational degrees to be obtained without even taking temporary leave from a regular job. This subtle, but potentially massive change into educational delivery mechanisms promises to change dramatically not only how our youth learn, but also how we maintain on-the-job career upgrading and foster more intensive employee training programs.

Many schools now "just play" with computer training. When computerized education really "mainstreams", it will likely change the world's educational system, at all levels of the economic and social system, in every institution very dramatically (only one of which will be "regular schools").

IX. ADAPTING TO THE 21ST CENTURY

STRATEGIC AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS.

The Committee preferred to focus attention on positive approaches to the structure and function of county government, to be optimistic about the means by which county government might continue striving to enhance the overall well being of county citizenry. On the other hand, the Committee also considered that part of this task of being positive included considering how best to protect the ability of county government to continue providing essential services in the event of major unforeseen impacts, such as a courthouse fire, a local terrorism action, or some unforeseen natural or economic "disaster".

The Committee recommends that county government continue, and possibly expand its efforts to identify and prioritize essential public services and provide for their continuation in the advent of some high impact local disaster. This includes considering means of financing Emergency Preparedness activity in the county when the CSEPP program ends.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

Another major focus of the Committee was to consider how best to define the outcomes expected and preferred from what is commonly referred to as "Economic Development". The central

questions addressed was “How will we know Economic Development when we see it?”, or “What specific outcomes will / should be pursued in the name of Economic Development in Umatilla County over the next decade, or longer?”

This question will be addressed very directly by the Umatilla County Critical Groundwater Taskforce appointed in December 2003, but its efforts at least in the next 18 months, will be focused in west Umatilla County. The county now employs a full time economic development person, who consults with local communities and corporations potentially interested in Umatilla County locations. If economic development is a bit more broadly defined, then a great deal of the work of county government and various other agencies is in fact “economic development work”.

This Committee recommends that the effort to project likely and/or preferred economic development through the year 2050 be expanded to the county as a whole, including consideration of likely impacts upon the county’s natural resource base when encouraging new economic activity in the county, especially demands upon water quantity and quality and air quality, as well as land and county service infrastructure.

The Committee further recommends that the county consider carefully the kinds of financial and other incentives they might provide to encourage job creation and economic activity in general in the county, including such possibilities as assuring high speed Internet connection capability; and resource planning activity that does not unduly limit or restrict innovation and creativity in development, nor impose unreasonable costs upon applicants, including mitigation burdens.

The Committee cautions the county to avoid providing short term financial development incentives that too easily result in the county encouraging short term development that results in the county assuming longer term burdens, such as providing tax incentives that allow the direct beneficiary to “bail out” at a time favorable to themselves but leaves the county unable in the longer term to recover the cost of the incentives provided.

COUNTY BUDGET CONCERNS.

The Committee reviewed the current Umatilla County Budget, with particular attention to those departments and functions that are dependent upon local financial support. The particular departments / services especially dependent upon local financing (“general fund” dollars) are the following (from the 2003 – 2004 county budget):

Board of County Commissioners	99% percent of departmental budget
Finance Department	100%
Assessment & Taxation Dept.	56%
Administrative Services Dept.	53%
Health & Human Services Dept.:	
Juvenile Services	73%
Public Health	29%
Veterans’ Services	89%
Other Services	10% or less
Resource Services & Development	26%
Sheriff & Community Corrections:	
Law Enforcement Division	77%
District Attorney	57%

The county budget has long been, and will likely always be an ongoing matter of significant concern. However, at the present time, it appears that the budget has become particularly limiting. It appears likely that if the county budget continues to be so limited relative to the perceived need for services and infrastructure that additional attention may need to be given the manner in which budget priorities are established and funding allocated among the priorities. In order to protect

funding for key priorities, some services may simply need to be eliminated, or even possibly “privatized” (fees increased to make them self-supporting, and/or the service spun off into private ownership and delivery).

This Committee recommends the county a) focus additional attention on the manner in which county priorities are debated and established; b) attempt to involve a wider audience in this process; and c) increase efforts to explore alternative funding mechanisms to support some county services (i.e., increase reliance on grants and other funds from non-local sources and/or develop alternative tax and fee systems to support at least a greater proportion of the cost of “less essential” county services). This Committee believes “essential services” should, to the extent possible, continue to be primarily supported by “normal” revenue sources.

PRIORITY COUNTY FUNCTIONS AND SERVICES.

While the Committee believes all departments of Umatilla County government provide services demanded by one or more “significant interest groups” in the county, the Committee also considered priorities among the departments in terms of whether the departmental activity functioned under statutory mandate and/or might be considered to provide “Essential Services” with respect to which departments and functions might literally be “the last to terminate” in the event of dire financial circumstances or some “disaster” situation.

This Committee recommends that the county initiate a high priority Strategic Planning effort over the next 24 months, and include a) prioritizing essential services as part of that effort, considering financial concerns and “natural” or “terrorist sponsored” disasters, and b) productive economic development possibilities, plus the necessary county services and resources to support such development.

SERVING THE NEEDS OF A CULTURALLY DIVERSE COMMUNITY. This Committee, prior to adjourning our deliberations for the current review, considered interviewing representatives of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and representatives of the increasing Hispanic population in the county. However, the Committee concluded two things: a) that doing so would likely “complicate” this current review considerably and delay completion beyond our mandated reporting deadline, and b) that doing so in the future should likely be a significant part of the next Charter review process.

The local Blue Mountain Community College has a well-established service relationship established with the Hispanic population, and the county could likely learn much from this experience of BMCC.

The CTUIR is presently working to establish a Charter School, which will incorporate education concerning their historic languages and culture. The CTUIR now generates funds to invest in “catching-up” with the technology in use by the rest of the community, and will most likely become increasingly interested in becoming a more involved “interest group” in Umatilla County. The CTUIR’s increasingly sophisticated involvement in county water issues and hydrogeologic characterization of the Umatilla Basin assure their continued involvement in county economic development activity.

This Committee recommends a) that over the next 24 months, purposeful actions be taken by the county to identify and establish means of fostering increasingly meaningful, mutually beneficial contact with the CTUIR and the county’s Hispanic population, as well as other minority groups in the county; and b) plan to involve them in the next Charter Review process, if not in some manner before that time, to assess potential county service delivery adaptations to meet the needs of these elements of the county’s population.

**X. IN CONCLUSION:
COUNTY BUDGET, DEMAND FOR SERVICES, THE CHALLENGE OF PRIORITIZING
AND THE NECESSITY OF GOOD MANAGEMENT**


Nothing in this report is intended to be critical of the current Board of Commissioners. Tight current county budget circumstances pose a very challenging dilemma for the BOC, who must ultimately decide priorities among county services, liaison activity and cooperative activity with state, federal and private institutions. It is a daunting task, this job of prioritizing and deciding in the face of severely restricted budgets and rising demand for services... in a county with increasingly complex local demographic and cultural realities, in a world with increasingly pressing and complex global pressures forcing economic changes and social adaptations right down to local counties and communities.


Over the past several years, all of us on this Committee have had the privilege of serving in a wide range of volunteer involvements with Umatilla County government. We are awed by the range of challenges the BOC and county department Directors and service unit managers face day-by-day, and the manner in which, somehow, they manage to keep "loose ends together", and maintain order in what otherwise could rather easily become a chaotic mix of agencies and service delivery mechanisms.

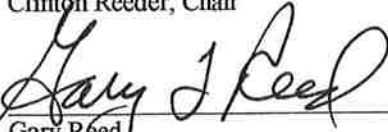
It has been a very serious challenge to manage the county government through the transition from mostly elected officials, a circumstances in which the BOC was held accountable, but in reality had only limited control, to the current much better organized, more productive, better controlled system of government. Financial accountability has improved markedly, and managers now have much more reliable and timely financial reports, enabling them to more precisely manage budgets and outlays with less chance of "surprises" putting the county into dire cash flow circumstances.


There will continue to be challenges in organizing and managing Umatilla County government offices and personnel, and the relationships with other agencies and institutions. There will be continuing challenges in maintaining general support and financing for county government by the citizens of the county. However, this Committee is very encouraged by the evidence provided by county government over recent years in how committed effort and focused attention and competent management can upgrade circumstances to better serve the needs of the county.

Respectfully submitted,
by the members of the 2003 - 2004 Umatilla County Charter Review Committee.


Clinton Reeder, Chair


Carolyn McBee


Gary Reed


Richard Winter


Lewis Key


Connie Caplinger, Recorder and Facilitator