

CITY OF GRESHAM

Measure 26-141

BALLOT TITLE

GRESHAM CHARTER AMENDMENT: MAYOR ELECTED AT LARGE; COUNCILORS BY DISTRICT

QUESTION: Shall the Gresham Charter be amended to elect the mayor at large and councilors elected and residing in six districts?

SUMMARY: This measure was proposed by initiative petition. If approved, it would amend the Gresham Charter to provide that council shall consist of a mayor elected at large and one councilor elected and residing in each of six districts.

The voters of the City of Gresham currently elect the mayor and six councilors at large. All voters in the city can seek city elective office and all voters in the city may vote for each city elective office without regard to where in the city the voter resides.

This initiative measure would change the manner in which councilors are elected from at large to a district system. Six districts would be established within the city. The voters of each district would elect one councilor who resides within that district. Voters would not elect the councilors who reside in other districts. The mayor would continue to be elected at large.

This measure would take effect when approved by at least sixty percent (60%) of the votes cast for or against this measure.

If amended, Section 7 of the Gresham Charter would read:

CITY COUNCIL. The council shall consist of a mayor elected at large and ~~six one councilor councilors~~ elected and residing in each of six districts, ~~from the city-at-large~~. All elections for city offices must be nonpartisan.

(New text is underlined; Deleted text is strikethrough)

This measure would take effect when approved by at least sixty percent (60%) of the votes cast for or against this measure.

Submitted by
Susanjoy Baskoro
City Recorder
City of Gresham

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

The Gresham Charter is the constitution of the City of Gresham. The current Charter was adopted in 1978 and last amended by Gresham voters in May 2012.

This measure was proposed by initiative petition. If approved, it would amend the Gresham Charter to provide that the City Council shall consist of a mayor elected at large and one councilor elected and residing in each of six districts.

The voters of the City of Gresham currently elect the mayor and six councilors at large. All qualified voters in the city can seek city elective office and all voters in the city may vote for each city elective office without regard to where in the city the voter resides.

This initiative measure would change the manner in which councilors are elected from at large to a district system. Six districts would be established within the city. The voters of each district would elect one councilor who resides within that district. Voters would not elect the councilors who reside in other districts. The mayor would continue to be elected at large.

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ARGUMENT IN FAVOR

**Join your fellow Gresham citizens
Vote YES on Measure 26-141
Mayor Elected at Large;
Councilors by District**

Measure 26-141 is a grassroots, citizen's initiative to change how the Gresham City Council members are elected. Currently, the Mayor and all city Councilors are elected in city-wide, "at large" elections. A majority of councilors can all come from the same neighborhood.

Measure 26-141 would require the establishment of six voting districts throughout the City of Gresham; each District with equal population. **The voters of each District would elect one Councilor who lives within their District.**

Some reasons to support electing Councilors by District:

- Citizen in every neighborhood of Gresham will have a voice.
- Citizens will know which Councilor to contact for help solving District and City problems.
- Councilors will be accountable to citizens in their District.
- Citizens who know their District well, will be encouraged to run for City Council.
- Increase ethnic, economic, demographic diversity and geographic representation on Council.

Vote YES for equal representation in Gresham City government!

District representation is the way we elect our Metro, County Commissioners, State, and Federal representatives. District representation gives each citizen an equal voice in the democratic process. In current "at-large" elections a majority of Councilors can and do come from the same neighborhood resulting in unequal representation.

Councilors by District:

- Ends Councilor concentration in one city area
- Provides direct representation and accountability
- Eliminates costly city-wide campaigns
- Encourages fewer unopposed contests

**Vote for Change!
Vote YES on Measure 26-141!
Vote YES for equal representation!**

For more information please visit our web site: www.Gresham6Districts.org

Petitioners for Measure 26-141:
Charles J. Becker, Former Mayor, Gresham
Kenneth E. Stine, Gresham
Richard A. Strathern, Gresham

(This information furnished by Ken Stine, Committee for Restoration of District Representation)

The printing of this argument does not constitute an endorsement by Multnomah County, nor does the county warrant the accuracy or truth of any statements made in the argument.

ARGUMENT IN FAVOR

To Our Gresham Neighbors:

It is a privilege for us to serve you as Gresham City Councilors. Like you, we want to have a great place to live, work and enjoy recreational opportunities with our families, friends, and visitors. We volunteer to do our best to make wise policy decisions that affect our community, not only today, but for decades to come.

That is why we **strongly endorse re-establishing Districts.** At 107,500 residents, Gresham is a large community, growing by 2000 residents per year. The larger and more diverse we have grown, the more difficult it is for City Councilors to identify with the concerns of every area of the city. Requiring City Councilors to live in the neighborhoods they represent is really a simple concept, but it has far-reaching and profound effects.

District representation is not divisive. In fact, electing Councilors by District creates a city council that is transparent and accountable to its neighborhoods. Councilors master the skills of consensus-building and compromise. District representation requires our Mayor and City Councilors to have a balanced conversation regarding critical issues that affect, not only the entire city, but each of us wherever we live.

Would you like to know your City Councilor? Would you feel better represented if you knew who to approach with concerns about: city finances, parks and recreation, city roads and sidewalks, street lighting, natural resources, sustainability, code violations, on-going and future development and public safety? While all of these might affect the entire city, sooner than later they could affect only you and your neighborhood.

Re-establishing Districts provides an advocacy for each citizen that is currently missing. Electing Councilors by District balances representation throughout the City and opens the door of opportunity for the next generation of leaders.

Measure 26-141, Mayor at Large; Councilors by District is the right measure at the right time for the City of Gresham. Vote YES on Measure 26-141.

Respectfully,
John H. Kilian, Gresham Councilor
Paul Warr-King, Gresham Councilor

(This information furnished by John H. Kilian)

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ARGUMENT IN OPPOSITION

VOTE NO 26-141

Dear Gresham resident,

Six years ago when I first sought the office of mayor, I promised you that I would always "call them as I see them," and that you would never have to guess where I stood on an issue. I have worked very hard to do just that and to keep an open door for you, the people I represent.

Under my administration we have increased citizen involvement and have worked hard to be responsive to ALL of Gresham. Nearly everyone who calls or emails my office gets a response. This is how it should be.

The proponents of this measure would have you believe that no one is being represented and that everyone is disenfranchised. You know better. We have worked too hard on too many issues to believe this. The best part about being YOUR mayor is that we often work together to solve issues that affect you and your family.

Right now you have six councilors that work for the common good of all of Gresham. You get to vote for ALL six of them. Under the districts measure, you would only be able to vote for one councilor even though ALL six of them can affect you. I think it is crazy to give up your right to vote.

Right now you elect, from the entire city, people you believe to be the best candidates to serve. Under the districts measure you would have to vote for ONE person from some imaginary or gerrymandered line.

I agree with the Citizen Charter Review Committee who studied this issue and did not recommend a change. They got it right.

We have worked too hard to go backwards. Do not let Chicago style politics infiltrate your city government. We are better than political horse trading and false lines on a map!

Thank you for the great honor of serving as your mayor.

Shane Bemis

Mayor of Gresham

(This information furnished by Shane Bemis)

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ARGUMENT IN OPPOSITION

Council Argument in Opposition

Measure 26-141 asks Gresham voters to sacrifice your right to vote for all of the city councilors who set policy for the city. We believe this is a bad idea, and here's why:

- **Districts would reduce your voice in Gresham elections.** Under the current at-large system, you get to vote for three councilors every two years. Under districts, you'd get to vote for just one every four years. Your voice will be diminished.
- **Districts would limit the community's ability to be represented by the very best candidates from across the city.** Councilors are unpaid volunteers, making it difficult to attract candidates. Finding candidates to run in a limited area such as a district would create an even greater challenge with a smaller pool of candidates to choose from. The quality of the city's leadership will suffer.
- **The Outlook Editorial Board agrees: "The members of the Gresham City Council obviously approach their duties with deep conviction for the entire city. We have no sense that any neighborhood benefits at the expense of another... Gresham's history supports the decision that led to the election of councilors to at-large positions... put us down for a "no" vote." Outlook Editorial, The Outlook, 3/24/12**
- **Citizen engagement is strong under an at-large system:** We're still a small city, and there are many ways for citizens to serve the community. In 2011, 2,800 residents volunteered over 14,000 hours of their time in neighborhood associations and citizen committees, making Gresham a stronger, more engaged community.

It's time to focus on the issues Gresham really cares about: public safety, supporting local businesses, creating jobs, and enhancing Gresham's high quality of life. With limited resources, we have to come together as a community to solve our common challenges. This measure would pull us apart.

Vote NO on 26-141.

Gresham Council President Karylinn Echols
Councilor Josh Fuhrer
Councilor Lori Stegmann

(This information furnished by Joan Albertson, One Gresham)

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ARGUMENT IN OPPOSITION

We believe you should have a say in electing all of your city councilors. Your voice is important to the direction of our community, and some are trying to stifle it. We think that's wrong.

- **Districts limit voters' choice:** The current at-large system allows you to vote for all city councilors. Districts would only allow you to vote for one councilor every four years.
- **A recent poll showed that 77% of Gresham residents are satisfied with their city government.** Despite limited resources, we have competent leadership on the city council that engages the community and stretches your tax dollars further than any of the 10 largest cities in Oregon. The city council works together to create jobs, provide top-notch police and fire services, and make Gresham the most livable community possible. Districts would jeopardize their ability to work as a unified council to solve our community's challenges.
- Districts would limit you to electing just one councilor instead of all six, even though all six have a significant impact on the direction of the community. We believe in accountability in government, which means that all council members should be accountable to all citizens of the city they represent.
- "They shouldn't try to fix what isn't broken. The current six members of the council and the mayor are elected on a citywide basis, and we've seen no evidence over the past three decades to indicate that there's anything wrong with the at-large system. We believe it's much better to draw from the larger pool of candidates that will be available citywide. We fear that the [districting] proposal could be a distraction from the important business the council is dealing with today." -The Outlook, 6-22-12

Don't throw away your right to vote for 80% of those who represent you.

Please join us, and **vote NO on 26-141**. Keep your right to vote for your entire city council.

Learn more at www.onegresham.org.

(This information furnished by Joan Albertson, One Gresham)

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ARGUMENT IN OPPOSITION

-*Supporters Argument in Opposition

Please join your friends and neighbors in voting **NO on 26-141**. We believe in One Gresham.

Shane T. Bemis, Mayor of Gresham
 Karylinn Echols, Gresham Council President
 Josh Fuhrer, Gresham City Councilor
 Lori Stegmann, Gresham City Councilor
 David Widmark, Gresham City Councilor
 Carol Nielsen-Hood, Former Gresham City Councilor
 Dave Shields, former Gresham City Councilor
 Thomas Griffith, Former City Councilor
 Greg Matthews, State Representative
 Brian Lessler, President/CEO, PDG Construction Services, Inc.
 Carla C. Piluso, Gresham Police Chief, retired
 Joan Albertson, Charter Review Committee
 Harrison Braaksma, Charter Review Committee
 Chris Lyons, Charter Review Committee
 Travis Stovall
 John Sage
 Bess R. Wills
 Jim Hood
 Michael Patrick
 Sue Piazza
 Sherrill Widmark
 Kirk French
 Stan Morris
 Sue O'Halloran
 Michael McClintic
 Mardella Stevens (Mardy)
 Joyce E. Miller
 Timothy M. Welch
 Matthew Norquist
 Martin L. Stone
 Tom Hughes, Metro Council President

"**They shouldn't try to fix what isn't broken.** With all the economic and budgetary issues Gresham has in front of it right now, this does not strike us as the best time to bring up the question of whether city councilors should be elected by district in this city. It's hard enough already to find people who are willing to spend many, many hours each week in an unpaid position that also has a tendency to invite criticism and personal attacks from those who disagree with council decisions." *Outlook Editorial, The Outlook, 6/22/12*

We believe in OneGresham ... United.
 Learn more at www.onegresham.org.

(This information furnished by Joan Albertson, One Gresham)

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ARGUMENT IN OPPOSITION

Revising the structure of Gresham's city council around the parochial, district concept presented in Ballot Measure 26-141 is a bad idea for our community. Webster defines parochialism as "*the state of being parochial: especially: selfish pettiness or narrowness (as of interests, opinions or views)*". Under this six district structure, government decision making will grind to recurring stalemates as new districts' councilors, behold to their local constituency, will lose perspective on city-wide and regional goals and economic development.

Our current city council structure is a highly effective body of representation at large. It allows dedicated leaders from throughout the community to serve governance needs. The current council structure is very accessible and responsive to ALL individual residents, neighborhood associations and the business community. Under their leadership Gresham has achieved an unprecedented level of cooperation with our 3 neighboring cities resulting in the first regional, joint transportation study, funded by Metro. The outcome is an East County transportation plan, addressing the critical north south corridor improvements required to keep our region livable over future decades. District representation would be a giant step backwards, resulting in a council focused inwardly on small aspects of the community rather than forward thinking, big picture governance for the benefit of the entire community.

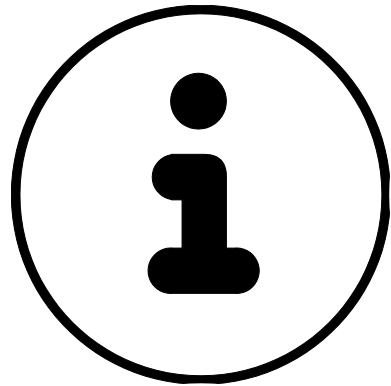
Creation of new district boundaries will obliterate current neighborhood associations' influence and ability to affect planning commission and city council decisions. Who or what interests will determine the boundaries of these 6 new districts? The formulation of these 6 districts have no assurance of increasing ethnic, economic, or demographic representation in city government. Presently all members of the community have an opportunity to vote for all council positions, not just a roster of candidates from an arbitrary district boundary.

Maintaining the current council structure is critical to the business environment and economic vitality of Gresham. District representation will negatively impact our ongoing ability to stimulate economic development and create new jobs in this local economy.

Brian Lessler

(This information furnished by Brian Lessler, PDG Construction Services, Inc)

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