

Public can assist City Charter effort

A panel will review government activities and find ways to make Honolulu run better

By **Gordon Y.K. Pang**
gordonpang@staradvertiser.com

Oahu residents interested in making the government of the City and County of Honolulu operate better are asked to participate in the work of the 2015 Honolulu Charter Commission.

The 13-person commission is tasked with studying and reviewing the core operations of the city government as spelled out in the City Charter, find ways Honolulu Hale can run better and then put those proposed changes before voters in the form of charter amendments in the 2016 general election.

The Charter, which acts as the city's constitution and forms the basis for the way the government is run, mandates that a commission be formed every 10 years to review the document. Six members of the all-volunteer commission are selected by the mayor, six are chosen by the City Council and a 13th member is appointed by the mayor and requires approval by the Council.

This week is a critical one for the commission. On Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, the leaders of a majority of the city's agencies are scheduled to make presentations about what they do and suggest improvements that can be made by revising the charter, said Jesse Souki, commission chairman.



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Jesse Souki:
Panel chairman wants to hear ideas from Oahu residents

"I want to hear from them about what they see as maybe in need of changes," Souki said. "And then maybe that will help foment some ideas and give the public some ideas as well."

So it's also an opportune

week for those who want to make changes to start getting involved or at least begin paying attention, Souki said.

Using the "quality over quantity" philosophy, "I hope we get pretty good proposals that are based on good research and good information," Souki said. "Part of that learning process is understanding how and what the agencies are doing now so if they come to the meetings (this) week, they'll hear firsthand what the agencies are doing. We hope that the discussion will be open and free-flowing."

The last commission, which convened in 2005, also sought input from the agencies.

The 2015 commission has set for itself an Oct. 31 deadline for charter amendment

proposals to be submitted by government agencies and the public. From there a style committee will review them, organize them into categories and then determine "what moves forward and what might need more work," Souki said. Ten years ago roughly 180 proposals were submitted for review, he said.

The commission has until Sept. 1, 2016, to submit charter amendment proposals to the city clerk in advance of the Nov. 8 election.

The 2005 commission ended up submitting 12 proposals to the voters, who approved eight and rejected four of them in November 2006. Among the key amendments that were approved:

requiring a portion of property taxes collected be set aside for land conservation and affordable housing; mandating the creation of a curbside recycling program; making **bikeway** systems a priority for the Department of Transportation Services; and authorizing the Ethics Commission to impose civil fines on elected officers for ethics violations.

To find out more, go to the commission website at honoluluchartercommission.org. The public can also submit proposals, testimony or comments there.

Information and hard copies of the submission form can also be attained by calling the commission office at 768-5093.

KOKUA LINE:

The column will return in August.