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SPEAKERS


Piper, Josh, Thursday

J Josh 00:03
Friends and neighbors. You're listening to Portland from the left. My name is Josh and I use he and him pronouns.

P Piper 00:09
My name is Piper, I use she/ her pronouns. And today we're talking about the Portland city charter and the charter review process with our friend Thursday.

T Thursday 00:17
Yeah, I'm Thursday, I use she and they pronouns. I've lived in Portland for a while now. And I just am very interested in all of the ways that the city works or doesn't work. And I've written a couple of zines and explainers about what's going on and my opinions on what's going on.

J Josh 00:43
You might have seen Thursday's threads on things on the city council and local municipal politics. Thursday's written tons of stuff that I've shared over the last couple years, especially related to the uprising, or related to local municipal politics and stuff like that. Really appreciate Thursday's work in Portland. Thursday, I'm really glad you're here because when we ask people what they want to know about the city charter, I learned that people don't really know what it is. So I think we should start there. Um, could you tell us what is the city charter? You know, and how, where did ours come from?



T

Thursday 01:16

Absolutely. So start off with a city charter is kind of like a constitution for a country. It's a document that kind of explains what powers the city is claiming for itself. It can set some major policies, it can cover a whole host of things from, you know, how laws are enforced to how local elections run, all those sorts of nitty gritty details. So the city charter gets its power from a couple of places. So on paper, it gets its power from a couple of other documents in Oregon. The Oregon state constitution grants cities and towns the power to write their own charters. And other states have kind of similar situations, they may call the founding document for a city a "charter," they might call it a "statute." But it's it's a big piece of paper with some details in it. Now, the reason that states can basically just grant power to city charters is dependent on and this is this is very inside baseball. But just to make sure we all know where it's coming from. It's dependent on a court decision from the Iowa State Supreme Court in the 1860s. Well, it's called Dillon's rule for the judge who did it. And it basically is a court decision on the state level that says, When municipal governments can have certain powers and when they can use those powers. There's some further case law that's kind of built upon that. But basically, when Judge Dylan wrote this opinion in the 1860s, all the other states were like, Oh, we like that. We're just going to acquire this opinion and apply it to our things. So it's not a Supreme Court of the US granting this. It's not the US Constitution. It's kind of dependent on case law.

J

Josh 03:30

Okay. And in Portland, what are some of the things that are written and defined by our city charter?

T

Thursday 03:38

There's there's a few things in there that maybe aren't as relevant. So we do have like that the standard structure of the city government laid out that this is a commission form of government those sorts of things we've got That one seems important seems relevant. Um, local elections also pretty relevant. I think things like oversight for different agencies, public utilities commissions... those, those all feel like a good fit. But our city charter also currently includes a bunch of rules about the fire and police disability retirement and death benefit plan. Hmm, maybe maybe a little less relevant to the overall running of the city. There's also some other interesting things like a standing advertisement contract with whatever newspaper is currently determined to be the official city newspaper at the time.

J

Josh 04:39

Wait a second. Wait a second. Wait a second. Why don't you just say.

T

Thursday 04:44

So officially, this is like an advertising contract that covers things like public notices from the city. But it's basically a thing in the legal framework for the city that says, hey, we're just going to have a official newspaper that we do public notices for. And since they're official, we're just going to go ahead and do a standing advertising contract with them.

J Josh 05:10

Wow, that seems like a really weird thing to have in the charter. The charter. Yeah. Especially as the Constitution for the city, as you describe it, something that defines us defining us and like, including our relationship with the Oregonian, which I assume is the paper of record or whatever.

T Thursday 05:26

Yeah, I believe, I believe so. Um that the Oregonian is the paper of record. It's not entirely uncommon because of that public record. But the advertising contract part of it does, you know, introduce some reasons why the paper of record might be so closely tied to the existing power structure.

P Piper 05:53

Wow, this is kind of blowing my mind right now. I'm gonna need to take a second.

J Josh 05:55

really, this specifically, I think you just I mean that we could do a couple hours probably on this. I was just commenting on, I think it was Shane Kavanaugh, it might have been one of the other people at the Oregonian, but they were real fussy about nobody at city council sharing a story they had recently done. I'm trying to remember I think was almost certainly about gun violence or something like that. And there's some kind of big headline, you know, Sunday story that they did, and nobody had commented on it or shared it in 24 hours, because this was the following Monday, this is like last week. And they were like real upset. They're like, for some reason nobody's City Council has shared or commented on this very important story about-- and of course, gun violence is very serious. I like to take it incredibly seriously that people are getting killed in my city. It is a problem that we need to sort out and help find solutions for. But the idea that like

P Piper 05:55

a specific news story needed to be shared

J Josh 06:04

yes, the city commissioners needed to share this story or comment on it or link to it or whatever, within 24 hours after it was published. It's just like such a foolish and like, ridiculous assertion. So now hearing that, well, there is an advertising contract in the city charter. So they were kind of like, you know, not that they were like legally obligated, but there certainly is a more thicker relationship weâ€™™ll say, thick like thieves

P Piper 07:09
cozy Wow.

T Thursday 07:11
Oh, absolutely.

P Piper 07:13
Okay, so that just blew my mind. But I also want to, I also want to understand a little bit like, Okay, so there's the city charter, and there's also legislation, and how those are different and like, who, how is the city charter enforced? Like what? Like, what does it mean to have something in the charter? And what do you do about that? If someone? What if they violated that standing contract or something like that? Who where does that go?

T Thursday 07:39
Absolutely. So let me preface I maybe should have said this earlier, but I am absolutely not a lawyer. Constitutional variety or any other.

J Josh 07:51
None of our disclaimers have made it into a podcast yet. So just to add our disclaimer that we are only amateurs looking desperately for solutions and know nothing about the city.

T Thursday 08:01
Yeah, so we talk about how things on paper work and how things in reality work because they're not exactly the same. The city charter itself is not a document that most people will interact with on a regular basis. The the mayor and the city commissioners are empowered to make laws and legislation that are basically based on the city chat Charter, which are then supposed to be enforced by Portland police. Maybe the city auditor, depending on what the law is covering a few bodies like that. The charter itself is is almost more of a policy document in some ways. And there's been things in it that have been technically illegal by the time they've been removed. There's some things that are unenforceable, things like that. Okay. And we can talk about that a little bit more as we get into like talking about the history of the charter review process. But one of the things about Dillon's rule and one of the reasons I think it's important to have all of this case law context is that Dillon's rule covers powers that are not specifically listed in the charter. It says that a municipal government gets a power that is implied by power specifically listed and a municipal government gets powers that are not granted or implied, but are considered essential to the objects and purposes of the charter.

J Josh 09:41

So So for non for non lawyers, could you help Could you do you know, like an example that could help us ground this like what what could that mean, right? Or what has it meant?

T Thursday 09:51

This is this is kind of a more of a broad example. But say that you have a city charter that's As the police are responsible for enforcing laws made by the mayor and city council, if the charter does not explicitly say that the police can arrest people in the city, the charter still implies that they have that power. Okay. Because otherwise, according to, you know, common thoughts around charters and the case law around them, in order to enforce a situation with police, the police have to be able to arrest people, theoretically, gotcha, I, I don't necessarily think that that should be an implied power. So we're talking about how the mayor and the city commissioners are empowered by the city charter. But there's not a lot within the city charter, about consequences of misuse of power and those sorts of things. So holding members of the municipal government or organizations under the municipal government accountable, using the charter usually means filing a lawsuit. So it's not just a easy, you broke the charter, you're going to have to do XY and Z to make up for situation.

J Josh 11:18

And if you file a lawsuit, and I'm assuming Maybe it's like a nonprofit files a lawsuit or something with the city, who defends the city, is that the city attorney?

T Thursday 11:27

Yeah, generally, it'll be the city attorney, though, if it's a specific organization within the city, there are some cases where it would be that organization, or it would be an outside lawyers brought in for their specialty.

P Piper 11:42

Like if you sue the police, like they have their own lawyer,

T Thursday 11:45

essentially,

J Josh 11:46

all of this is really blowing my mind, I guess. So I realized that there has to be some way to establish the city. And I think that most of my conversations about this kind of like what what comes first like what do you do initially to set up the environment and set up the boundaries

comes first, like what do you do initially to set up the environment and set up the boundaries and stuff have all been in like communities, mostly churches and stuff, but mostly like faith communities, or people were places where people were very close. So considering how people did the same thing for a whole city, where people are physically close, of course, but like, have no other relationship necessarily is very, like, it's kind of, I'm having a little bit of like a mind blown emoji moment over here.

T Thursday 12:27

I think it's really worth noting that we are the reason that this charter has power, like it's honestly it's a piece of paper, it's a list of things that some people thought would be a good idea. The the members of the city, the community, respecting the power of that charter is the real thing, enabling it to have power.

J Josh 12:50

So the city charter is like a constitution in that it defines the scene, it sets the boundaries, it documents the relationships, and it by in and of itself is just like any other contract needs, outside things to enforce it and or to agree to abide by it. You know, like if I had a contract with you, Piper and I said, Piper, I will always bring you 12 eggs. And one time I didn't bring you 12 eggs I gave you 11. Like, if you said that's fine, Josh, then it wouldn't really matter. But if he said, Hey, you said you bring 12, maybe you should bring 12, then we'd have to like, talk about it and resolve that conflict. I think maybe that's a good way to think about, you know, this contract that it's like an agreement. And so it requires that kind of external lawyers and, you know, apparatus to enforce it if it's going to be enforced.

T Thursday 13:46

Yeah, absolutely.

J Josh 13:47

Yeah. And Thursday, tell me if I'm full of shit.

T Thursday 13:50

I think that that is a very good way to put it. What I do know about the city charter is I think probably the most well known thing about it, I would assume is that it establishes the commission form of government. So if we could talk a little bit about what that is, I think that would be a good example. And I think that is good to relate it to the history from what I've seen you write about This is probably the part of the conversation where we're gonna start getting a little bit mad. Because we gotta talk about when and why Portland adopted the commission form of government.





Josh 14:23

Boo we don't know that it's a boo yet, Josh, how do you know why



Thursday 14:28

Oh it's a big boo, trust me. The current charter was adopted in 1913. And that's when the commission form of government went into effect for Portland. So let me let me set the scene a little bit



Josh 14:33

1913. Picture it.



Thursday 14:44

White women received the vote in Oregon in late 1912. In 1913, Black Oregonians couldn't own property or vote, but there had been some efforts to start talking about what it would take to get those rights.



Josh 14:59

[sarcastically] So great.



Thursday 15:02

So we're talking about a situation in which a lot of people who have had power are suddenly talking about, okay, how do I make sure I continue having power? At that point, the Commission form of government was, you know, the cool hip new thing. Galveston was one of the first cities to adopt it after Hurricane a bunch of wealthy business owners went around to everybody and said, so one of the reasons that recovery from this hurricane is so hard is because of, you know, graft and mismanagement by the city. And if we just, you know, slim down the city council and put some commissioners in charge of really specific things, especially if they already have some, you know, experience running businesses. This whole system will work a lot better.



Piper 15:58

I've heard that story.



Thursday 16:02

Portland, Oregon was listening and in 1913, rewrote the charter that took the city from 15 councilors to just four commissioners.

J Josh 16:14

Holy shit, we had 15. before.

T Thursday 16:16

We had 15 before. We also had a mix of districts and at large seats for how people were elected. And we had a mayor Council form of government rather than the commission form. So it concentrated the power into the hands of just a few people. It rewrote basically everything in terms of making it harder to update the system of government in the future. And it really was a response to what people with power wanted over everybody else, now would be an excellent time to say boo.

P Piper 17:00

that that doesn't sound good, other than just the number of people because clearly that you know, is a concentration of power. What are some other ways that it reinforces power the system that we currently have the commission system

T Thursday 17:13

Let's talk about at large seats first. Because everybody running for commissioner or mayor, well, Mayor is almost always going to be an out large seat. But the commissioners are elected by the entire city of Portland, because they're not using districts. That means that anybody who wants to run for commissioner has to work to campaign across the entire city, which is far more expensive than just a single district. It also means that smaller power blocks have a harder time electing what's called a candidate of choice, a candidate of choice is basically the person that you want elected. But it's not always a person from your community. A good example of this is that sometimes communities of color will rally around a white candidate, because that's the best candidate for what they need at that time. That's why we say candidate of choice rather than, you know, a candidate from the community or something like that.

P Piper 18:23

Yeah, that's it. I've heard a lot of people talk about how we, for a really long time, didn't have any city commissioners that were from the east side, like it was really rare to have anyone from the east side, it feels like that is one of the results of this form of government.

T Thursday 18:39

Absolutely. And like if you look at the backgrounds of a lot of past commissioners, I mean, there's a lot of inherited wealth. There's a lot of business owners, folks who can afford run these campaigns across the city.

P Piper 18:57
Boo

J Josh 18:58
Boo. We actually just in an episode that listeners maybe have heard, but you haven't heard Thursday, we were just talking about where Mingus mapps where Dan Ryan, where Carmen Rubio all come from that these are all people that have been in and around Portland politics for a long time been around the people that control all the money in town a long time. So these are not newcomers to politics at large and also are not people that are not attached to the existing power structures and the people making moves in the city mostly, you know, wealthy real estate investors. I guess

T Thursday 19:30
we recently adopted the public financing option a couple years back, and that is, in part supposed to mitigate all this.

P Piper 19:40
If it was enforced,

T Thursday 19:42
right, [both laughing] enforcing it is maybe the biggest..in this context

J Josh 19:50
It turns out Yeah, we mentioned enforcing it earlier. And now we have a really great example of course, listeners of the podcast will realize that Ted Wheeler stole last year's mayoral election for Portland with \$150,000 Self loan above the \$5,000 self loan limit that was set by these campaign contribution laws that were not defended by the city auditor city auditor, his role was to find him appropriately and stop him from doing this stop him from keeping his campaign alive with stolen money. I'll say he's a cheater, he stole it. And yeah, so we already have a pretty good example of a situation where something is defined, I suppose. I actually started this without confirming that it was defined in the charter. But it's something that wasn't being enforced by any kind of authority or people with any kind of actual teeth we say, but like, you know, any power

T Thursday 20:42

the city charter does say that the city auditor is responsible for enforcing certain rules. Interestingly, the city auditor has said some things about this charter review process, because the way that the city auditor gets their budget is that it has to be approved by all the city commissioners. So the city auditor, leaving aside feelings about the specific auditor and their work

P Piper 21:11
who will not be running for reelection. So

T Thursday 21:14
yeah, um, but the city auditor is arguably not that independent under the current charter.

J Josh 21:21
Sure. Right.

T Thursday 21:23
So all of these pieces connect in different ways.

P Piper 21:29
Yeah, that's an interesting example. Like, is that something that the charter commission or just Portlanders can push is like, the auditor having an independent budget?

T Thursday 21:41
So the charter Review Commission has basically said that they're only going to consider two questions at first, and everything else is going to be part of like a phase two. So could still be discussed, but is not on the table. Right this second. Okay. It is something that might be doable as an outside effort by voters here in the city, but city auditor and everything that goes along with it is kind of a little bit niche. Yeah, like explain, explaining what we're trying to accomplish. If we're trying to change anything about the city auditor's position is going to require a lot of public education. Yeah,

P Piper 22:31
yeah. Which we're attempting to do, but it's

P

J Josh 22:34
baby steps.

P Piper 22:35
You know, it's, it's kind of boring.

J Josh 22:37
We do have 100 listeners. So out of 650,000. Portlanders, that's like pretty good. Right. Talked about the auditor last time,

T Thursday 22:45
you'd be surprised, like, there's only been about 300 public comments on the charter review process so far.

P Piper 22:52
Wow. So if we could get all our listeners to write one in that's a percent,

T Thursday 22:57
hopefully 50 of those are people that I've personally nagged into sitting down and submitting a comment.

P Piper 23:05
Okay, so this brings us kind of to, um, I, from what I understand, the charter review thing is like, actually a new thing. So previously, the any changes to the city charter would have to be like an independent ballot initiative. Is that correct?

T Thursday 23:22
Yes. So prior to 2007, there were the the main way to change the charter was through ballot initiatives. There were a few other review commissions but we actually don't have great records on some stuff. In part, because anything that is available is paper. And going and getting paper records during COVID is a non trivial process. So this is an area that I would love to research more but haven't fully been able to, but I can I can talk about from 2007 forward pretty easy. Okay. 1917 was the first time voters said hey, this commission form is crap. And we should change it.

P

Piper 24:10

That's not very long after it was put in place!

T

Thursday 24:14

Yeah, it's never been that popular. But because of the way the system is set up, there's been eight major attempts to change Portland away from a commission form of government. Eight times those efforts have failed. Because there's not just the the needing to get all the the voters to agree to it, but educating voters on why it's necessary. It's a very complicated system that's kind of difficult to grasp what parts are causing the most problems unless you have a lot of time and a lot of interest to throw at it?

J

Josh 24:55

Yes, yes, we we agree.

T

Thursday 24:59

So 2007 There was a charter Review Commission, because there were a bunch of things that different communities saw as problems with the charter. So the then Mayor convened a commission picked commissioners from a bunch of different places, including labor, business owners, you know, the the folks that they're generally going to listen to at least somewhat anyhow. For folks participating in that commission who weren't really part of existing power structures, it was apparently really frustrating. One commissioner even quit partway through because they didn't want their name on the the changes that were moving forward.

J

Josh 25:52

Oh, wow.

T

Thursday 25:54

Most of the commissioners refuse to even discuss things like moving to district seat, district seats over at large representation, that commission actually recommend giving the mayor more power. The main thing that came out of that 2007 commission that was, quote unquote, positive, was creating a process for the reviewing the charter every single decade, there were like four ballot initiatives that came out of 2007. And two of them were just like minor details. One of them was giving the mayor more power. And then the other was reviewing the charter. The housekeeping stuff happened and the charter Review Commission was established. The mayor power thing was voted down.

P

Piper 26:48

So Thursday, you're telling me that people that Mayor picked to propose changes wanted to give the mayor more power?

T Thursday 26:56

Yeah funny how that happens huh?

J Josh 26:58

That's for a wild. that's really wild that the people in power would want to concentrate more power to themselves?

T Thursday 27:03

Yeah, yeah.

P Piper 27:05

So how, how were the people chosen for this latest round of the charter review

T Thursday 27:10

for this latest round? There was an open application process that people could submit an application. And then each commissioner and the mayor essentially got to choose out of those batches.

P Piper 27:27

It was spread out among the commissioners?

T Thursday 27:29

Right. So it's not necessarily clear which Commissioner, you know, approved, which, well, Commissioner, because everybody gets the title of Commissioner around here. Um, but like, there's definitely some really interesting power dynamics, that would be great to map out. Yeah.

J Josh 27:54

Yeah, definitely. We're working on what hopefully, at some point in the future, we'll have a bit of a map that documents some of the relationships with power in town, but it's a it's a more of a long term project. So maybe someday

a long term project. So maybe someday.

T

Thursday 28:07

Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

P

Piper 28:08

So I have lived in Portland for like a decade. A little, a little more than that. And the whole time I've been here, I actually have heard people just say, like, we have a weak mayor, we have a weak mayor. No one wants to be the mayor, because it's a weak mayor. And to me, that sounds very, very bad. So just kind of like, it just hurts hurts me to hear, like, make someone like one person stronger. So is that still something that people are talking about? Like, what? Or are there other kinds of ways of reforming the city that are on people's minds?

T

Thursday 28:46

So that's kind of a complicated question. So I'm gonna I'm gonna tackle it in part. Um, so when I said that the charter Review Commission is only really considering two questions right now. Those two questions, one of them is reforming the commission style of government, and the other is reforming how people are elected in the city.

P

Piper 29:13

Okay.

T

Thursday 29:14

So with reforming the commission system of government, the charter Review Commission has been looking and talking to experts about a couple of different possibilities. So there's the strong mayor, weak Council system, there's the city manager system, there's the weak mayor system, these are all different ways of basically saying who is officially supposed to be able to do things. So with a weak mayor, officially, the whole council or the whole commission is supposed to be able to make decisions and sort of implement what's going on. I think that using the strong mayor or a weak mayor dichotomy to describe the commission system is maybe a little bit flawed, because it's usually used to describe city councils where the mayor can't just assign or unassign commissions from particular commissioners. So well, on paper, our mayor kind of seems weak to compared to some of these strong mayor Council systems. The reality is the the mayor can kind of upend anything with like one change of who's in charge,

P

Piper 30:41

like those Bureau assignments, specifically,

T Thursday 30:43
exactly

J Josh 30:43
presumably he could come in on Monday and say, okay, just kidding. Hardesty does run the police now.

T Thursday 30:48
Yeah.

J Josh 30:49
And like people would have to figure out what that meant and scramble and whatever,

T Thursday 30:53
exactly.

P Piper 30:54
Or like, conceivably, he could assign somebody no bureaus, he just wouldn't be able to get their vote on the budget.

T Thursday 31:00
Right.

J Josh 31:01
I'm certainly imagining one city commissioner with just one, one Bureau and it's like the worst bureau the smallest one with no budget. It's like, Okay, have you been busy this week? And they're like, No, nothing to do.

T Thursday 31:11
That has happened in Portland's history that like, commission commissioners are handed different bureaus absolutely as a power move to give or take away power from the mayor's opponents.

J Josh 31:27

You're saying that Dan Ryan, who's now in charge of the housing Bureau, and has zero experience with housing at all? That wasn't like, because he's the most expert?

T Thursday 31:36

Exactly. This is why I say that the strong/ weak mayor comparison doesn't quite work for Portland.

J Josh 31:44

Ted Wheller probably does want us to think he's a weak mayor.

T Thursday 31:47

Oh, absolutely

J Josh 31:47

as far as his his autonomy and authority in the city. But Thursday, according to what you're saying, it sounds like he has a lot of flexibility. And maybe it helps his neoliberal project for us to, you know, assume he has less flexibility than he actually does.

T Thursday 32:01

And I would also add on top of that, that a lot of these structures are, you know, on paper. So if say, somebody wants to violate election law,

P Piper 32:18

for example,

J Josh 32:19

just as an example pulling out of the hat.

T Thursday 32:21

Right? Actually, you know, as hard as it should be on paper.

J Josh 32:27

So you can just loan yourself \$150,000 We just have one story we wanna tell on this podcast.

T Thursday 32:34

So yeah, there's there is a lot of difference between what's happening on paper and what's happening in reality. This is one of those places,

P Piper 32:47

I think that also contributes to the difficulty of Portlanders, like knowing what's going on. Because I'm thinking about, like, you know, everyone that I talked to that would like was, like, vaguely involved in politics would say that, Oh, the mayor can't do anything. It's his hands are tied. It's sort of like, the fact that it's so obscured. And the fact that what's on paper is different than what's actually happening, allows that sort of confusion to be manipulated to tell a certain story, which is in this case, you can't blame Ted Wheeler for anything.

J Josh 33:19

Yeah, it's not dissimilar from the problems we have with, say, national government where a lot of the agreements, a lot of the norms, quote, unquote, are things that are not documented, there's no one to enforce them. And if people don't kind of abide as, as people have been abiding, and like kind of continue in the same patterns, and you have a a wild one, who decides, decides, you know, well, it could be like a fascist, you know, capitalist dude grabbing for power or whatever, could be any number of things. But without some sort of enforcement, some sort of contract and some some sort of organization monitoring or paying attention to what's going on. It seems like there's a lot of room for well, for evil corporate profiteers to take advantage of the good people of Portland.

T Thursday 34:07

Even if somebody does follow all of the laws, it's still very easy to take advantage of the setup. And if somebody doesn't follow all the laws, the sky is perhaps the limit.

P Piper 34:23

I think he's been given me the heebie jeebies is that um, Mingus Mapps his PAC that he formed: Ulysses. He's saying that he doesn't care what form of government there is, unless it's different. It just has to be different. And that just doesn't pass the smell test for me. And so it has me wondering, so this is my question to you is, what could someone with sort of the goals that Mingus Mapps have be wanting to do? Like what are some like? What are some things that we should be worried about in this process that could make things even worse than now.

T Thursday 35:03

Okay, so a couple of quick caveats. A lot of there's not a lot of information about this PAC online, there's some, there's some basic information about who's involved. There's some goals. Their website is basically just a donation form. But--

P Piper 35:23

heebie jeebies!

T Thursday 35:24

right, there are some things that we know. So to start with, I want to say that Mingus Mapps, like, was previously a political science professor. He's been involved in city government for quite a while he knows the system and he knows what parts system he can work with. It

P Piper 35:45

seems weird for him to say he doesn't care about an outcome. Given that background.

J Josh 35:49

He has a PhD in government from Cornell, I mean,

T Thursday 35:52

well, this is a very narrow difference. But he's he said specifically that the PAC will not support one form of government over another, ah, supporting anything cites the current system. Personally, he said that he's in favor of a mayor or a city manager able to manage situations, I have a specific quote from an interview with KP TV that I wrote down, where he was talking about how addressing an issue like a homeless camp is hard in Portland. And Mapps said, in the city of Portland to address that problem, you have to get the commissioner in charge of the police department to work with the commissioner in charge of Homeless Services, to work with the Commission Commissioner in charge of parks in order to address camping in some public space. And this honestly, bothers me a lot, because it can easily be interpreted as the mayor should be able to just do anything without checking in with counselors or getting buy in from the rest of municipal government.

P Piper 37:01

Yeah, it sounds like a strong man argument to me like that we like,

J Josh 37:05
yeah, just let us get out of the way and do the thing. We're just gonna fix stuff.

T Thursday 37:09
Absolutely. And when you combine that with Mapps' support around police and kind of an approach that I would say is less focused on building community support for a solution. I find this to be easily interpreted as an argument for a strong mayor over another system of government.

P Piper 37:38
And I'll say this, so you don't have to. I think that Mingus Mapps overall is dismissive of criticism from the people of Portland, like his attitude overall. So I, I think that he would want people to have less power and be reducing the levers that we can use to affect what the mayor does, for instance.

T Thursday 38:02
Yeah, I think that that's a very realistic concern. Hmm.

P Piper 38:08
I don't like that.

J Josh 38:09
Yeah. Mingus Mapps.

T Thursday 38:10
Oh, one of the things about the Ulysses pack that I think is really important to know, is that while it's planning to use money to support changing the system of government, one of the things that it has agreed or announced that it may be doing is supporting specific candidates standing for election in 2022. Now, the Ulysses PAC is currently run by Mapps' campaign managers from 2020. That's Robert Dobrich and Jessica Elkan.

P Piper 38:49
This is the campaign that took money from the Portland Police Association, then said they were going to give it back and then did not so that campaign, right?

T Thursday 38:56

Correct. Dobrich and Elkan are also they have a public relations firm together. They're also already working with some candidates for 2022 including Vadim Mozyrsky

J Josh 39:10

Dun dun dun

T Thursday 39:11

right, who, in addition to having already announced that he's running against Jo Ann Hardesty for her seat is a commissioner on the Charter Review Commission.

P Piper 39:23

Cozy

T Thursday 39:24

Which, if anybody asked me, since, you know, city commissioners aren't supposed to sit on the charter Review Commission, I feel that candidates for city commissioners should also should not sit on the charter review commission.

J Josh 39:39

It seems pretty reasonable. Yeah, yeah.

T Thursday 39:42

This feels a little, a little icky,

P Piper 39:45

it feels like a conflict of interest.

T Thursday 39:47

And when you factor in that Vadim is very supportive of police that Vadim has, you know, been involved in a few other city Commissions it's it feels like at least on the surface level Manns

involved in a few other city commissions... it's, it feels like, at least on the surface level Mapps is making sure that candidates who will support him will have the resources to run. Right. And while, you know, I would never want to accuse the Ulysses PAC of doing anything sketchy since there's so little information to even judge on it. It feels super sketchy.

J

Josh 40:34

Yeah, I feel confident that bad feels no thanks. [musical break] Okay, so that's the first half of our two part episode with Thursday about the charter review process. We're going to have a second episode about the rest of things we talked about coming out shortly, probably later this week. And if you wanted to use your newfound knowledge, we've got links in the show notes, both to the place where you can submit comments for public review, or the charter review council. And then also, there are a couple of community listening events that are happening in November. Yeah, there's links to all of that in the show notes or you can just Google Portland charter review. They've got actually a really detailed website with all the information available. Thanks a ton for listening and we'll be back soon.