

City charter changes could make '04 municipal ballot

By P.J. LASSEK
World Staff Writer

Tulsa voters are likely to consider several charter changes during the municipal elections next spring.

City councilors will decide next month which amendments to place on the general ballot in March. The council considers charter amendments every two years during the municipal election cycle. Charter changes can be suggested by officials or by members of the public.

The amendments that appear to be drawing support from a majority of the councilors include changing the city auditor to an appointed position, changing the election cycle to allow officials time to get familiar with their jobs before approving a budget and eliminating contradictory charter language involving resolutions.

Last week, the council directed the Legal Department to draft a total of eight charter amendments that cover four separate issues — the auditor's post, the election cycle, the resolutions and lengthening council terms.

The amendments will be the subject of a public hearing Nov. 6.

At Thursday's regular meeting, Councilor David Patrick announced a new amendment scenario by the mayor's office concerning the election cycle. Patrick said the proposal would

move the city's fiscal year to the calendar year instead of moving the elections from the spring to fall. Currently, the city's fiscal year starts July 1.

Council Attorney Drew Rees said he is researching whether the city can legally change its fiscal year. He said so far in his research he hasn't found anything that addresses a specific date a municipal fiscal year must begin.

Patrick has proposed changing the election cycle from the spring to the fall so that new councilors are not faced with approving a budget four weeks after taking office.

Currently, councilors are elected in March and seated the first Tuesday in April. The charter requires the mayor to present a balanced budget to the council by May 1, and the council must act on it by June 30.

Whether the council passes the decision on moving the election cycle or the fiscal year on to voters, Rees said the amendment will include extending the time between the primary election and general election to 60 days.

Rees said the 60-day spread would align the city's election with any action the state Legislature takes on requiring "provisional balloting" for state elections.

Provisional ballots are a new concept resulting from the Help America Vote Act of 2002. Pre-

cinct officials are required to provide special ballots for voters whose eligibility is in question. The act also requires 60 days between the primary and general elections. The city has four weeks between elections.

City Auditor Phil Wood proposed making the auditor's job an appointed position. He has recommended the creation of a nine-member committee that would appoint an unclassified city auditor with required certified internal auditor or certified public accountant qualifications.

Each councilor would appoint one member of the committee. The auditor would serve at the pleasure of the audit committee and be subject to removal by a majority vote with the concurrence of a simple majority of the council.

Councilors also are likely to place on the ballot an amendment that would eliminate contradictory language that required resolutions to be published in a legal newspaper under certain conditions.

The only proposed amendment that has not received much support is one suggested by Councilor Sam Roop to extend council terms to four years from two years. Councilors Joe Williams, Art Justis and Bill Christiansen have said they don't support that change.

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POLITICAL NOTEBOOK

Democratic presidential hopeful Dick Gephardt has named Julie Gibson as state director of his campaign in Oklahoma.

Gibson most recently served as chief of staff to Missouri Lt. Gov. Joe Maxwell and held the same position for Missouri Gov. Bob Holden.

She has been active in Democratic political campaigns in Missouri for 10 years.

"With her help and leadership, we will organize a winning grassroots effort based on the bold ideas I've offered to get our economy moving again, create jobs and get every American covered with quality health insurance," Gephardt said.

Edwards talks with state lawmakers: Rural Oklahoma legislators joined Sen. John Edwards, D-N.C.,

on a conference call Thursday to hear his plan for strengthening rural communities.

Edwards said when he is president he will "invest in our rural areas and small towns to create jobs, create economic revitalization zones to bring new jobs to them."

He also said he would invest in new technologies for alternative energy and to bring broadband technology to underserved regions, in addition to funding and supporting education and health care in rural areas.

"I want to represent small-town America and rural America for the sake of the basic American values that flourish here - honesty and hard work, faith and fairness, patriotism and price," Edwards said.

More than 20 Oklahoma legislators have endorsed Edwards.

Peters named to Energy Council: State Rep. Ron Peters, R-Tulsa, has been named to an organization that monitors political, economic and environmental issues arising from national and international energy policies.

Peters was appointed to the Energy Council by state House Speaker Larry Adair, D-Stillwell.

The council is a legislative organization made up of energy-producing states, including Alaska, Alabama, Arkansas, Colorado, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas and Wyoming, along with international affiliates like Venezuela and Alberta, Canada.

Peters is a member of the House Committee of Energy and Utility Regulation and the former director of public and governmental affairs for International Oil and Gas Co.

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Wheels Up Award

Mollie Williford is Chairwoman of The Williford Companies. She participates in many Tulsa organizations including the Tulsa Mental Health Association, the Tulsa Community College Foundation and the Oklahoma Chapter of the National M.S. Society. She was honorary chair of 2003 Wild Brew, benefiting the Nature Conservancy. Mollie received the March of Dimes Great Spirits Award in 2000.

The Great Plains "Wheels Up" Award periodically recognizes good deeds done by Oklahomans who set an example for others to follow.

SCHEDULE

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 28

11:00 AM **EXHIBIT HALLS OPEN**
OPENING CEREMONY

12:00 PM **LUNCH**

2:00 PM **FREE SEMINAR**
"IS YOUR NETWORKING NOT WORKING?"
RANDY CLAY, PRESIDENT OF THE RANDY CLAY COMPANIES

3:00 PM **FREE SEMINAR**
"GUERRILLA MARKETING"
PAUL WHEELER, PRESIDENT/OWNER
ACCENT REALTORS

5:30 PM **EXHIBIT HALLS CLOSE**

5:30-7 PM **EXHIBIT AFTER HOURS**

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 29

8:00-10 AM **POWER NETWORKING BREAKFAST**
\$20 members / \$30 non-members

11:00 AM **EXHIBIT HALLS OPEN**
FREE SEMINAR
Presented by: Bank of Oklahoma & Stingray

12:00 PM "GROWING YOUR SMALL BUSINESS"

1:00 PM "BANKING FOR BUSINESS"

3:00 PM **EXHIBIT HALLS CLOSE**

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