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Charter opinions are divided

By CHARLES PATTON
Pasco Times Staff Writer

NEW PORT RICHEY

Members of the West Pasco Democratic Club listened enthusiastically Wednesday night during a spirited discussion of the proposed Pasco County charter.

Major topics discussed included the elected executive, method for election of county commissioners and millage ceiling and rollback provisions.

Of the more than a dozen persons expressing views, opinion appeared fairly evenly split on the three major questions.

"I'M NOT TRYING to sell you on whether the charter is good or bad," County Commissioner Robert K. Rees said. "I'll let you decide for yourself."

He said he is concerned that the powers of home rule outlined in the charter can apply only if not in conflict with state law.

"Those home rule powers may not be as broad as you think," he said,

Rees said he is also concerned about the proposed 8-mill ad valorem tax ceiling.

"It sounds good, but I don't know whether the county can always live with only 8 mills," he said. "The county is already 10 years behind in road building. A new courthouse is needed. Countywide ambulance service and other projects need to be expanded."

Richard Anci, said he has no strong opinion on the overall charter.

HE SAID HE is concerned that the proposed \$6,000 annual salary for commissioners may be a bit low, asking who would run for the office at that rate of compensation.

Anci said he also is concerned that a one-year residency requirement is included as a condition for candidates for the elected executive candidacy.

"That might leave out a lot of qualified people," Anci said. "With the best possible candidate."

SUPERVISOR OF Elections Mary Morgan maintained a middle-of-the-road position, telling club members

only that the basic functions of her office would remain the same with the charter. Changes proposed in the charter for her office probably will be enacted eventually by the Legislature if the charter is not approved, she said.

Circuit Clerk Miller Newton, while skirting a full-fledged recommendation that the charter be approved, said he likes the expansion of the County Commission from five to seven members. He declined comment on a proposal to elect commissioners by district only rather than by countywide voting.

He said opponents contending that the district-only method will produce a ward system have no basis for that claim.

"TO HAVE A WARD system, you have to have patronage, jobs to offer, favors to give," Newton said. Those elements do not exist, he said.

He said claims that the elected executive would be a dictator are "nonsense."

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Newton said the major questions that should determine how an individual will vote on the charter involve whether the charter will better unite the county, provide better services and correct current problems.

HE SAID HE IS concerned about the emotionalism building up around the charter question. He urged that fact, not emotion, be the determining factor.

"We must think of what is best for Pasco County in the years down-the road in making the decision," Newton said.

Somewhat similar views were expressed by Thomas L. Costello.

"There is nothing in this charter that doesn't deserve a

try," Costello said. "For a start, it's a good document, one I believe deserves our support.

DAVE BOATWRIGHT, said he favors charter government, but would like to see it extended to include consolidated, metropolitan-type government.

Others such as Frank Janczlik, Mr. and Mrs. Maxwell Pollard and County Commissioner Mathew Prahasky Jr. expressed strong reservations about charter government.

Janczlik said the charter solves none of Pasco's problems. The Pollards said they are opposed to the charter because it creates a "dictatorship" and additional expenses in governmental operations. Prahasky objected to individual provisions such as district-only election of commissioners and the proposed commission salary. He said he prefers an appointed administrator.

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