

NON-DEPARTMENTAL CITIZEN BUDGET ADVISORY COMMITTEE

TO: Chair Cogen and Commissioners

FROM: Multnomah County ND Citizens Budget Advisory Committee

DATE: March 20, 2012

SUBJECT: ND CBAC 12/13 Report

PROCESS:

The Non-Departmental CBAC is responsible for reviewing the budgets of various offices and programs, including centralized administrative functions (e.g., the Chair and Commissioners' Offices, Auditor, County Attorney); Communications Office; Office of Diversity and Equity; Office of Emergency Management; Office of Government Relations; Office of Sustainability; independent agencies within the County (e.g., Citizen Involvement Committee, Tax Supervising and Conservation Council, Public Safety Coordinating Council); and some other areas in which the funding is essentially non-discretionary (e.g., the Business Income Tax pass through to the East County cities, facility costs for the State Courts, and accounting costs for various sinking funds outside the County's General Fund). The remainder of the non-departmental budget is composed of allocations to non-county agencies such as Multnomah County Schools and the Regional Arts and Culture Council.

During the course of our research, we reviewed and vigorously discussed goals, priorities, and plans for maintaining services in light of the County's continuing difficult budget situation. We studied the County's non-departmental services for both the current fiscal year and offers for the next budget cycle. We were also fortunate to receive feedback on our thoughts about cost savings during our committee sessions with representatives from the programs we cover, including the Chair's and Commissioners' Offices. Additionally, the CBAC training orientation provided us with information on how funding for the next fiscal year was shaping up.

The Non-Departmental CBAC is diverse, consisting of new and returning citizen volunteers. Returning members include Alan Scally, Sherry Willmschen, Pauline Duffy, Brenda Ray Scott, and Tom Giese, with Archie Washington and Steven Joiner joining our CBAC last Fall. What we have in common is a concern for the fiscal health of Multnomah County, a belief in the maintenance of fiscal responsibility among the county offices and agencies that we monitor, and a desire to seek proactive actions that improve non-departmental functions and benefit the community. As a committee, we very much appreciate the efforts of all who provided us with the information and materials needed to make well-informed recommendations regarding the use of county resources.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

To summarize, the Non-Departmental CBAC concludes:

1. **Emphasize collaboration intra-county and with outside partners:** Our Committee strongly encourages county offices and departments to actively seek out collaborations and partnerships, both with other county offices and departments, as well as with other government and community organizations. Community organizations include non-profit, faith-based, and other non-governmental organizations. The benefits of successful collaborations are undeniable, especially in a time of diminishing resources. They include conserving resources, strengthening relationships between collaborators, and broadening public knowledge and acceptance of county programs. One example of a recent internal collaborative effort is the County Auditor and the Office of Diversity & Equity sharing the costs for the Good Government Hotline reporting system. Another example is the Chair's Office, the Budget Office, and the Citizen Involvement Committee teaming up to host the Health System Transformation Forum in March.

During our research, we identified a number of potential new initiatives. These include assessing the value of and need for the County to create more internships (e.g., translating documents into foreign languages), as well as establishing a central location where licenses for external software applications reside and could be used by multiple county offices and departments (e.g., one survey application could be used by multiple offices). Increasing intra-county communication can also expand collaborations. One example is having the Office of Government Relations expand outreach to include smaller county offices when soliciting potential items for the County's legislative agenda.

2. **Performance measures:** Our Committee is extremely pleased that county performance measures continue to increase in strength and usefulness. Tangible performance measures reflecting the values of the County's different constituencies are critical since they can provide an accurate picture to the public about their investment in government services. We recognize the inherent challenge that long timeframes are needed to achieve worthwhile goals. We continue to encourage the County to consider setting performance measures in a tiered manner, which would promote accomplishing larger projects in smaller chunks. We strongly approve of the performance measure model offered by Commissioner Deborah Kafoury's Office, which sets tangible written project goals as well as milestones that lay out concrete steps by which each project can be measured. We would like to see other Non-Departmental offices consider similar models when setting their performance measures. Our Committee was extremely heartened to hear that a meeting is planned next Fall with the Commissioners' Offices, the County Auditor, and our CBAC to discuss ways to improve performance measures. In the meantime, we are available to provide feedback and suggestions concerning current performance measures.
3. **Identify and enable other funding sources:** Our Committee supports efforts to identify resources and pursue legislative changes that could provide additional funding for county programs and services. These efforts include the Business Advisory Council's attempts to locate new tax resources (noted by Commissioner Diane McKeel's Office), taxes

assessed on medical marijuana dispensaries, and lobbying the State Legislature to limit preemptions that prohibit it from instituting taxes on tobacco, wine, and beer.

Our CBAC is concerned about the funding challenge to the Office of Emergency Management in regards to the lack of a state funding formula reflective of the county's population size. There also seems to be an overall lack of state support for emergency management services. The CBAC will be paying special attention to this issue and encourages its addition to our county's legislative agenda.

4. **Reach out to populations not typically engaged with county government:** Our Committee was enthused to hear that the Chair's Office is conducting outreach to groups of people who don't typically attend county meetings (i.e., working parents, nightshift workers) to find out what priorities they have for county services. We look forward to hearing more about the feedback that was collected.

Additionally, when doing outreach we encourage the County to always consider ways to overcome technological divides that may be pertinent to specific populations. For example, the CIC is offering the online budget survey it's conducting on paper upon request. Additionally, the CIC is noting this option exists as it publicizes the survey.

5. **Give special consideration to programs that leverage resources:** Our Committee heard about a number of programs that successfully leveraged county resources to either acquire much higher amounts of funding from other government and private sources or that multiplied the returns on the county's invested resources. These included programs offered by the Regional Arts and Culture Council, micro-lending programs to businesses by organizations like MercyCorps (noted by Commissioner Loretta Smith's Office), and the CROPS program which uses county land to produce food for those in need and allows juvenile offenders to pay restitution through their work (noted by Commissioner Judy Shiprack's Office). When these programs are effective, the County is likely to receive a much higher rate of return per dollar spent. Programs like CROPS offer additional benefits that should also be considered. These benefits may include financial savings gained from reducing demand for county programs and quality of life benefits. In the instance of CROPS which seeks to reduce recidivism, financial savings come from reducing future demands on the community justice system and quality of life benefits from reduced crime rates.
6. **Office of Sustainability:** We were excited to hear about the progress of the Office of Sustainability's initiatives over the last year. We were very impressed by the Office's efforts to clearly document the financial benefits of its initiatives and look forward to the launch of the Sustainability Index. We encourage other Non-Departmental offices to similarly estimate the financial benefits of their programs and initiatives as much as possible. Additionally, we encourage the Office of Sustainability to contact Gresham and smaller cities about becoming partners on the Climate Action Plan.
7. **Office of Diversity and Equity (ODE):** Our Committee remains unclear about whether some of ODE's initiatives, committees, and complaint processes overlap and duplicate existing ones. We encourage ODE to undertake a comprehensive assessment of all existing county policies and procedures relating to diversity and equity issues in order to

ensure that overlap and duplication isn't occurring. We also emphasize that ODE's programs and actions should robustly advance a concept of diversity that encompasses a broad range of elements, including age and gender. Additionally, we believe that ODE should consider applying current resources to establish mediation and conflict resolution processes to directly resolve hostile workplace situations.

8. **Communications Office:** Our Committee encourages the Communications Office to adopt as broad a strategy as possible for utilizing multiple communication mediums to convey information about county services. This includes emphasizing electronic and graphic mediums at levels similar to television and video mediums. Employing this strategy is crucial— it ensures the County maximizes the delivery of its information to the broadest audience possible given that members of public now receive information through more communication mediums than ever, ranging from social media to newspapers.

Public outreach and communication efforts are an essential element for county departments and offices to maximize the success of many of their programs. It is critical that the Communications Office support and be seen as an asset internally. We are concerned that county departments and offices may not be taking full advantage of the capabilities of the Communications Office due to lack of knowledge and insufficient intra-county communication about policies and procedures. Examples include lack of knowledge about support offered for graphic design projects and how announcements can be posted on the social media accounts maintained by the Communications Office. Potential ways to increase knowledge about these policies and procedures include holding meetings and posting them in the Wednesday Wire.

Additionally, we encourage the Communications Office to adopt “long-term benefit to the public” as one of the factors it uses to decide which county information and events to focus on communicating. This means considering whether certain information and events may have a lasting benefit to the public in terms of being able to access them long-term.

In conclusion, the Non-Departmental CBAC appreciates the opportunity to be of service to Multnomah County, and we are grateful to all county employees who gave their time to meet with us about the budget process during this difficult economic time.

MEMBERS:

Sherry Willmschen, Chair

Pauline Duffy

Alan Scally

Brenda Ray Scott

Archie Washington

Tom Giese

Steven Joiner (leave of absence as of 3/22/2012)