

NON-DEPARTMENTAL CITIZEN BUDGET ADVISORY COMMITTEE

TO: Chair Wheeler and Commissioners
FROM: Multnomah County ND Citizens Budget Advisory Committee
DATE: April 1, 2009
SUBJECT: ND CBAC 09/10 Report

PROCESS:

The Non-Departmental CBAC interviewed and learned from representatives of the Commission on Children and Families, the County Attorney, the Budget Office, the County Auditor and Tax Supervising Commission, the Citizen Involvement Committee, the Chief Operations Officer from the Chair's Office, the Office of Diversity and Equality, the Office of the Board Clerk, the Public Affairs Office, Information Technology Division, and representatives of the offices of District Commissioners on the Board of County Commissioners.

During the course of our research we reviewed and vigorously discussed goals, priorities, and plans for maintaining services in light of the County's difficult budget issues. We studied the non-departmental offers for both the current fiscal year and offers for the next budget cycle. We were also fortunate to have received feedback on our thoughts on cost savings from Chair Ted Wheeler during Central CBAC meetings.

The Non-Departmental CBAC is responsible for reviewing the budgets of various offices and programs, including centralized administrative functions of the County, e.g., the Chair and Commissioners' Offices, the Auditor, the County Attorney; independent agencies within the County (the Citizen Involvement Committee, the Tax Supervising and Conservation Council, the 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, facilities costs for the State Courts, and accounting costs for various sinking funds outside the County's General Fund. Information Technology was added to our areas of responsibility this year. The remainder of the Non-Departmental Budget is in the form of allocations to non-County Agencies such as Multnomah County Schools.

The Non-Departmental CBAC is a diverse CBAC, consisting of new and continuing citizen volunteers. Returning members include Alan Scally and Tom Weldon with Sherry Willmschen, Wayne Boucher, and Sharon Williams joining our CBAC in October. 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 various offices and divisions we monitor, and a desire to see proactive actions to make agencies and offices more efficient and “leaner.” As a committee, we are most thankful for the efforts of all who provided us with all the materials needed to make well-informed recommendations regarding the use of County resources.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

To summarize, the Non-Departmental CBAC concludes that:

1. **Fund the County First:** County mandated functions should be funded before any other functions are considered. These include school programs, initiatives, or non-county pass through agencies. The Committee realizes that this is unfortunate but the reality is that the County does not have the funds to continue funding programs and projects that are not directly in line with its core mission particularly if such programs only provide services for select groups and not County wide.
2. **Association of Oregon Counties:** We were pleased to see the reduction of dues for belonging to the Association of Oregon Counties. The County should consider re-examining the County’s continued membership in the Association of Oregon Counties.
3. **Good Government Hot Line:** The Good Government Hotline should not be funded. County employees and the public will find other less expensive ways to report suspected wrongdoing.
4. **Wage Freeze:** A wage freeze should be put in place for all County employees—we commend County employees belonging to Local 88 for their proactive approach to this difficult issue.
5. **Information Technology:** Information Technology needs to undergo an intensive analysis and appropriate overhaul—we support making IT an autonomous department with a set budget, as opposed to the current charge back model—we appreciate the start of this process through the Business Process Re-Engineering Offer.

6. **Commissioner's Performance Measures:** The performance measures for the County Commissioner's need to be strengthened to highlight goals and accomplishments countywide. Tangible measurements provide an accurate picture to the public on their investment in government services. We are available to assist with suggestions that would strengthen these measures considerably.
7. **Public Affairs Office:** As a CBAC we are alarmed to note that other departments have used additional resources to create their own public affairs functions—we feel strongly that the centralizing of the Public Affairs office as a County-wide function ensures that each and every department or office is “on message”. The Public Affairs Office should increase the use of outsourcing where it will result in cost savings and efficiency
8. **Tax Supervising & Conservation Commission:** Our CBAC strongly supports the County's legislative efforts to mitigate the financial burden placed on Multnomah County alone by the legislative mandate that the County support this Commission. In the alternative, the financial burden should be shared by other counties and governmental entities, which benefit from Multnomah County's providing an extensive review of the budgets of the 39 local governments within its jurisdiction.
9. **Use of Outsourcing :** The County Attorney's Office and the Public Affairs Office should consider increasing their use of outsourcing where possible. It could result in cost savings and efficiency, specifically in the area of legal support services.

CONCERNS/EMERGING ISSUES:

1. **County Attorney's Office:** We realize that funding for this office is contained in the Risk Management Fund. Shouldn't this office shrink in some way as the number of County programs and employees shrinks?
2. **Intergovernmental Agreements and Contracts:** The County should continue reviewing intergovernmental agreements and provider contracts on a rotating basis. There should be transparency in communicating with all shareholders whether or not these agreements/contracts are in line with current County goals, are cost effective, provide maximum efficiencies, and represent best practices.
3. **Offer Numbers:** Unless there is a compelling reason for changing the offer numbers please use the same numbers from year to year. The use of different numbers each year makes it very difficult to easily compare program offers.

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 of their time to meet with us in this budget process during this difficult economic time.

MEMBERS:

Tom Weldon
Sherry Willmschen
Wayne Boucher
Sharon Williams
Alan Scally, Chair