

**Citizen Budget Advisory Committee  
Multnomah County Sheriff's Office  
Fiscal Year 2010**

**Report to the Multnomah County Commissioners  
April 10, 2009**

**Introduction**

The Citizen Budget Advisory Committee (CBAC) to the Sheriff's Office is a program of Multnomah County Citizen Involvement Committee (CIC). Both the CIC and CBAC are independent of the County and therefore are in a unique position to provide input to the Sheriff's Office and the Board of County Commissioners. We enjoy our opportunity to learn about the County budget process, how the Sheriff's Office manages its budget and the operations of the Sheriff's Office. We equally enjoy being able to share our independent and educated voice with the Sheriff and his staff as well as be utilized by other elected officials in the County.

We are pleased to offer the Chair and Commissioners this report. It summarizes our discussions, areas of concern and interests. The highlights of this report are:

**Major Changes:**

- The County Budget Process – A Much Smoother Ride!
- Defining Statutorily Driven Services
- Rebuilding, not just Tearing Apart the System

**Recommendations/Concerns/Praise:**

- Things Exist for a Reason
- Penny Wise and Pound Foolish
- Separating Good Guys and Bad Guys is part of the Core Services of the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office
- 24/7 Patrol Coverage
- Equity for Equity's Sake?
- Give Kudos where Kudos are Due – Increasing Revenues through the United States Marshal Revenue and Urban Renewal Advocacy

**Emerging Issues:**

- Wapato
- Don't Bail Out the State in FY 10
- Tourism and Safety
- Recession Proofing
- The Gap Between Costs and Revenues has to be Breached
- The Jail System
- Civil Audit
- Grants

## **Process:**

The CBAC meets 10 months out of the year. The CBAC is assisted by Chief of Staff Christine Kirk, Office Assistant Lynette Hanson and Budget and Finance Manager Wanda Yantis. The CBAC has four major areas of focus:

- touring Sheriff's Office facilities or functions in the summer and fall of each year,
- understanding and providing input into the Sheriff's Office process for developing its budget and also the implementation of operations dictated through the budget,
- learning, discussing and advising on policies and operational decisions which impact financial management and the budget, and
- using our independent voice through the CBAC with reports to the Chair and Commissioners and direct meetings as requested.

This year, the CBAC toured the Courthouse (court holding, the basement, transport, civil, security, and court functions). The Courthouse tour allowed the CBAC to interact with Chief Deputy Ron Bishop and Lieutenant Mary Lindstrand both of the Corrections Division. Seeing firsthand what the age and general problems mean for operations was eye opening. We were impressed with the efforts Lt Lindstrand has undertaken to develop workload data collection mechanisms for Court Services.

We toured Wapato. Captain Jay Heidenrich guided the tour and provided valuable insight in its history and development. Wapato is a beautiful facility waiting in the wings to be used. It is sad that this publicly built building sits unused. As more time passes the likelihood of it opening seems more and more unlikely.

The CBAC met with Sheriff Skipper and the Undersheriff when they arrived in June 2008 and will meet with them again prior to our summer break. In our meeting we learned of their goals, direction and how they view citizen engagement in government functions.

The CBAC was briefed by Chief Deputy Tim Moore of the Law Enforcement Division on the recent Civil Audit. The audit contradicted our personal observations of the Civil Unit through ride alongs and meetings over the years and asked the Chief for more information. Based on the audit, our observations and discussion with the Chief, we believe a blended unit of both civil and sworn law enforcement deputies is appropriate in the Civil Unit.

## **Major Changes:**

### The County Budget Process – A Much Smoother Ride!

Although things seemed late getting started, the budget process went much more smoothly than the previous year. The County budget process went as dictated through the Board's financial parameters, the budget manual and followed the timeline given.

The exception was the increased Internal Service Reimbursements (ISR) after the budget development process was underway. We hope that this continues until budget adoption in June 2009 and is representative of future budget processes for the County.

#### Defining Statutorily Driven Services

The cuts to the Sheriff's Office are large and it really is the worst year to date. However, our discussion of the cuts was noticeably different than in years past. For the most part the Sheriff's Office didn't "thin the soup." The Sheriff simply eliminated services. For previous years' cuts we discussed minimum staffing, impacts on overtime, ability to implement and safety concerns. This time we were surprised and possibly overwhelmed by the sheer loss of services. This was most noticeable on the law enforcement side. While we do not agree with eliminating the Special Investigations Unit, a focused Child Abuse Detective, or the gang Deputy, we understand how the Sheriff's Office reached the conclusion that those are not as close to core services as are civil, river and patrol.

#### Rebuilding, not just Tearing Apart the System

While the cut to jail beds is extensive, this year the Corrections leaders stepped back and rebuilt their jail system. They focused on the quality of what is retained, not just the losses. We find this approach refreshing and responsible. For years jail bed numbers have ebbed and flowed, leaving behind a system that may or may not be viable any longer. Rebuilding the system allowed the Sheriff's Office to address ongoing risk concerns. While there is a reduction in overall bed count, we support the single bunking of the Multnomah County Detention Center (MCDC) and return to direct supervision. This responds to many concerns raised about the management of MCDC, including a homicide in the jails, and provides a better foundation for rebuilding the classification system and dealing with higher risk offenders. It makes absolute sense to have all floors of MCDC full, so that the most expensive building in our system is put to its best and highest use.

### **Recommendations/Concerns/Praise:**

#### Things Exist for a Reason

An empty jail bed and jail emergency response (CERT) exist for a reason just as a Fire Department exists when there are no fires. Empty jail beds are a requirement to safely run a system and to respond to fluctuations in a demand. We were very concerned by the lack of knowledge shown by relying on average numbers of jail bed usage to determine daily demand or as an indicator of impact. A low callout rate for CERT shouldn't be a reason to eliminate the program. Careful planning and risk management dictates that some things will never if rarely be called upon.

#### Penny Wise and Pound Foolish

The Sheriff's Office had to make some tough decisions in this budget process. We understand why auxiliary services, such as Gresham Temporary Hold and the Turn Self In Courthouse Weekender program were eliminated. However, it borders on ridiculous

for the County to cut low cost programs that prevent demand on more expensive services. This is most notable for the TSI Courthouse Weekender program. Over 50 people spend time there every weekend instead of in a jail bed.

These cuts don't pass the common sense test. They are programs that save dollars. We understand that there is a struggle between cutting auxiliary and core services, such as the one between cutting jail beds and the Turn Self in Courthouse Weekender program. We wish, however, that very low cost programs that save jail beds would not be viewed as "auxiliary," as they absorb strain on core services. In times of recession, we should be especially careful of cutting both jail beds and programs that clearly keep people out of jail.

Task forces are cost effective. Pooling resources is cheaper than any one entity doing it on their own. Also, in particular in East County with so many cities in play, task forces allow cities and the Sheriff to overcome geographical boundaries that aid criminals and interfere with police efficiencies. As we try to protect patrol and first responder functions, police entities' pulling back from task forces is counter intuitive. By eliminating task forces police agencies will spend more time reacting to crimes than preventing them. This struggle either shows how bad the times are or that the County is not prioritizing its core services.

#### Separating Good Guys and Bad Guys is part of the Core Services of the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office

While we understand the logic applied by the Sheriff's Office to their cuts, and agree in how they have defined their basic services, patrol, river patrol, civil, booking and release, and care, custody and control of offenders, we believe that the Sheriff's Office has cut core services in this budget. The cut to jail beds is excessive. Drug investigations, focused efforts on child abuse, gang prevention and enforcement, and reducing cost effective or leveraging programs such as Gresham Temporary Hold and the Turn Self In Courthouse Weekender program are sensible, cost effective services that are part of the Sheriff's Office core statutory responsibilities and they should be retained.

#### 24/7 Patrol Coverage

Patrol coverage is a basic part of the Sheriff's responsibilities in the unincorporated areas. Provision of this service has been under attack continually - we believe based on ignorance. We fully support a 24/7 law enforcement function for the unincorporated areas and commend the Sheriff for drawing the line around this service even though in some circles it is politically not popular or understood. We agree, and have for years, that the Corbett Community Resource Office is a valuable resource to the Sheriff's patrol responsibilities.

We support the fact that the Civil Unit and River Patrol have been continued at current levels and commend the Sheriff for the same reason as cited above.

Due to a cancelation letter sent to Wood Village, there is considerable concern and confusion that the third car/district on the East Side is being eliminated. We strongly disagree with the elimination of this district at any time. Wood Village does not demand and therefore should not pay for a 24-7 patrol district. The revenue from Wood Village allows the County to have a third car/district for less expense than if the general fund paid for it alone. A third car aiding unincorporated County is needed and we strongly encourage that those reviewing the contract keep in mind that if the Wood Village contract goes away, the County must backfill that loss of revenue to maintain a third district/car on the East Side. While we strongly feel that the Wood Village contract is of benefit to the County, we do agree with the business need for the County to review all contracts given the Auditors reports on issues with contracting. However, the County should prioritize looking at contracts where it is paying for County services over revenue contracts.

#### Equity for Equity's Sake?

The County has certain statutory responsibilities. Statutory programs should be prioritized over those that are not. While we understand that employees and departments are looking to see that they do not take more of a cut than others, it is the responsibility of leaders to make tough and unpopular choices.

#### Give Kudos where Kudos are Due:

##### Increasing Revenues through the United States Marshal Revenue

The CBAC was briefed on the last proposal to open Wapato which was to increase the United States Marshal (USM) count from 125 to 200. This would have allowed the County to cut in half (from \$3 million to \$1.5) the new money needed to open Wapato. The Sheriff should be commended for leveraging another partner in the opening of Wapato and for continually trying to find ways to open the building.

With the USM revenue, we see that the Sheriff is trying to find creative ways, leveraging other resources to pay for County services. Yet at every turn the Sheriff has not been rewarded for that effort. We support the Sheriff in these efforts and believe that the County Chair and Board do so as well. We are concerned about some previous decisions where the Sheriff was not rewarded for that effort:

The Sheriff raised money by increasing the USM count, approximately 1.5 million by year's end. This will help the County with its revenue shortfall as USM funds go to the general fund. While the Sheriff was keeping the USM count high to the benefit of the County, he was unable to save money as he couldn't close posts. While the Sheriff's actions limited his ability to meet a 4% current spending target, we agree with his efforts to bring in revenue.

The Sheriff's office asked for the increased USM revenue to be used as part of its 4% target. The answer was no.

The Sheriff then asked for this revenue to be used to purchase 126 jail beds for 5 months, leaving the funding set aside for jail beds in contingency. The Sheriff's actions left the County with double the expected monies to purchase jail beds than

was originally planned. The Sheriff also showed through action and indicated he would close beds if they were not needed, increasing money returned to the County at the end of the year. Again the answer was no.

As the money for the 126 jail beds was not already allocated to the Sheriff's budget, when the beds were closed, the Sheriff could not count that decreased expenditure as part of the 4% target. Every other agency/department that cut services was able to count those cuts towards their 4%.

The CBAC is concerned as it seems that no other County Department/Agency would be treated this way by its funding source, nor has to deal with such managerial or programmatic instability created by these struggles.

We were discouraged that when the Sheriff developed his FY 2010 budget and he was asked to include an increased amount of USM revenue, saving 236 jail beds from being closed, that he was not allowed to do so. However, we are encouraged by initial conversations with the Chair which conveyed his interest in increasing the USM contract so as to save local jail beds. We hope that the Board will vote to accept the USM revenue.

#### Urban Renewal Advocacy

The Chair and Board of County Commissioners deserve kudos for their stance on urban renewal. We appreciated Chair Wheeler's comments at the Portland City Council and subsequent discussions on the issue. We could not agree more that there are benefits to urban renewal, but that the County must have a seat at the table and the risks/benefits of each renewal area and extension must be carefully weighed. The County must hold the line and continue to advocate for its revenue as should the schools. Thank you and good job.

#### **Emerging Issues:**

##### Wapato

The County needs to clearly and publicly talk about its plans for Wapato. It needs to create a plan that matches the original intent as presented to the voters. It adopted a budget with a plan to open Wapato then never talked about it when the plan didn't come to fruition. The public has a right to know where this priority, and 59 million dollar deteriorating asset, falls amongst all of the other priorities on the table.

We are glad that MCSO submitted a program offer for Wapato so that costs could be updated and known. The Board should consider this offer amongst all the other County priorities.

##### Don't Bail Out the State in FY 10

We are concerned that the County will bail out the state cuts. If the County chooses to further backfill state cuts, they will have to do so at the expense of the County's core responsibilities and that is not appropriate.

### Tourism and Safety

Tourism plays a vital role in the economy. The County should recognize that its law enforcement and corrections resources are important to leveraging and ensuring tourism dollars which impact the entire community. In particular, patrol in the Gorge and Sauvie's Island are important to the County's financial well being, and even more so in the economic climate.

### Recession Proofing

A recession will increase crime and needs. The County needs to be prepared to respond and help people in this time of need. However, the County needs capacity to deal with the effects of the bad economy. Again the County must look at what it is required to do and protect those services. Not everything in the County can or should be cut. For example we can reasonably predict an increase in foreclosures and evictions which will impact the Sheriff's Civil Unit. The Unit needs to be prepared and staffed to take care of a surge.

### The Gap Between County Costs and Revenues has to be Breached

We continue to be concerned by the ongoing gap between revenues and increased personnel costs. Why does government continue to increase salaries and contracts without an eye to the ability to pay for those services?

### The Jail System

The County will soon face a time where it can no longer cut certain services. It is close to that point with jail beds. If the Chair and Board decide not to use the USM revenue to purchase jail beds, we are essentially at that point. A cut will be given that cannot be implemented. There are limits to who the Sheriff can release from the jail. Once those limits are reached, the Sheriff has little choice but to house people without the money for staffing, food, and medical care required. This spells disaster for the County and its Commissioners. We are very concerned, that with current demand, even the cut assuming the USM is purchased, that the County will not be able to house most pre-trial offenders. The lack of use of the jail for pre-trial has always been a concern, but now the possibility of not holding person to person crimes is alarming. Jail beds are the single most expensive general fund expense in this County. What will the County do when it can no longer dip into the Sheriff's pool to cut funds?

### Civil Audit

Again we applaud the Sheriff for not further cutting the Civil Unit. We do not fully agree with the Auditors report, in particular that the work does not have dangers requiring a trained deputy sheriff. We strongly believe that some sort of combination of sworn and non sworn staffing for the Unit is appropriate. Discussions on the staffing should be on the blend of staff not on eliminating all the sworn or non sworn staff. The unit must be flexible to the unpredictable work load.

## Grants

We hope that the County does all it can to access federal stimulus and other grants. While we do not believe that the County should cut into its core services and continue funding things that are not within its core services, we do believe that any funding is better than no funding. We hope that the County doesn't struggle over matching funds for grants when the grant is for a core service area. If the County has to cut other programs to sustain core services that is a policy issue that should be tackled. If there are general fund requirements relating to these grants, the County should set aside funds to responsibly plan for these requirements as opposed to getting hit with the funding needs all at once.

## **In Closing:**

We request the County Commissioners:

- Fund statutorily required - County core services – of the Sheriff's Office and other County entities.
- Protect the Sheriff's statutorily required core services such as patrol, river patrol, civil and care, control and custody of inmates.
- Eliminate not just trim noncore programs even though they might be popular.
- Have a public hearing and Commissioner vote on the future of fate of Wapato.

## **Members' Names**

Ethan Atkinson  
Julie Cieloha  
Ray Davenport  
Jim Lasher  
Phyllis Thiemann  
Ron Saroff