

## **NON-DEPARTMENTAL CITIZEN BUDGET ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**TO:** Chair Cogen and Commissioners

**FROM:** Multnomah County ND Citizens Budget Advisory Committee

**DATE:** May 1, 2011

**SUBJECT:** ND CBAC 11/12 Report

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### **PROCESS:**

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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); Information Technology Division; Office of Emergency Management; 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. The Office of Sustainability, the Office of Diversity and Equity and the Office of Government Relations were added to our areas of responsibility this year.

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 Chair's and Commission District Offices. We were updated on the progress of the Coraggio Report through our representative to the Central CBAC. The CBAC training provided us with information on how funding for the next fiscal year was shaping up.

The Non-Departmental CBAC is a diverse CBAC, consisting of new and returning citizen volunteers. Returning members include Alan Scally, Sherry Willmschen, and Pauline Duffy, with Brenda Ray Scott, Heather Pruess, Kristi Jo Lewis, and Tom Giese 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 its various agencies and offices that we monitor, and a desire to seek proactive actions that assist in

making things better for Non-Departmental functions and the community. As a committee, we are most thankful for the efforts of all who provided us with the materials needed to make well-informed recommendations regarding the use of county resources.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

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To summarize, the Non-Departmental CBAC concludes that:

1. **Fund the County First:** County mandated functions should be funded before nonessential functions such as afterschool programs, new policy - driven initiatives, or shared agencies like RACC are funded. The Committee values the responsiveness of the Commissioners and their staff in budgeting with the County's core mission and essential services as the priority in the budget. We strongly encourage Commissioners and department leaders to keep the expansion of services in programs or staffing levels in departments or offices in line with current resources. In other words, budget impact of an expansion is expected to be mitigated by adjustments i.e., reducing expenses or increasing revenue made to the budget to accommodate the change.
2. **Performance Measures:** Our Committee is pleased that county performance measures are being strengthened. Tangible performance measures are critical since they can provide an accurate picture to the public about their investment in government services. We also recognize the inherent challenge that long timeframes are frequently needed to achieve worthwhile goals. Consequently, we encourage the County to consider setting performance measures in a tiered manner which would promote accomplishing larger projects in smaller chunks. We also encourage additional training in this area focused on connecting performance measures to the function and work articulated in the budget offers. We are available to assist with suggestions that would considerably strengthen the County's current performance measures.
3. **Communications Office:** As a CBAC we are pleased to see the move toward a more centralized function for this office. The name change is a good start. We also encourage the selection of two of the performance measures outlined in the offer. Choose the most important and focus on those first and then move on to the others as the initial measures are in good order.

We continue to be concerned about multiple county departments continuing to use scarce resources to create their own public affairs functions. We feel strongly that centralizing these public affairs functions into one county-wide office not only saves resources but that it also ensures each and every department and office is "on message". We strongly encourage the County to implement this strategy.

4. **Office of Diversity and Equity:** Our Committee sees the expansion of the number of FTE's in any of the Non-Departmental Offices as problematic. All of our county entities and services are doing more with less and will be asked to continue doing so. We encourage the County to look at this closely and ask the

needed questions: Is this the best and most cost effective use of county resources; Are additional personnel need at this time; Are other resources available?

### **CONCERNS/EMERGING ISSUES:**

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1. **Lobbying vs. Advocacy :** It has come to our attention that the County contracts with a lobbyist firm, has created an Office of Government Relations and that County Commissioners also interact with the legislature on both the state and federal level. We assume that these efforts are coordinated with each other, reflect current county goals, are cost-effective, and provide maximum efficiencies. The results should be clearly communicated to all concerned parties, as well as the public.

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:**

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Sherry Willmschen, Chair  
Pauline Duffy  
Alan Scally  
Brenda Ray Scott  
Heather Pruess  
Tom Giese  
Kristi Jo Lewis