

**Citizen Budget Advisory Committee
Multnomah County Sheriff's Office
Fiscal Year 2011**

**Report to the Multnomah County Commissioners
March 15, 2009**

Introduction

The Citizen Budget Advisory Committee (CBAC) to the Sheriff's Office is a program of the 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, and well as being utilized by other officials in the County.

The Citizen Budget Advisory Committee to the Sheriff's Department meets ten months out of the year, twice a month, and is assisted by Budget and Finance Manager Wanda Yantis, Captain Drew Brosh, and Office Assistant Lynette Hanson. This year, we regularly met with and were advised by many knowledgeable members of the Sheriff's Office:

Sheriff Daniel Staton has met with us on a regular basis over the last few months, and has given us valuable insight into the budget management and structure of the Sheriff's Office, this year's Grand Jury Report, and other emerging issues.

We met at Inverness Jail with the Agency Training Unit, where we discussed the complexities of non-lethal and lethal weapons training for officers, and were given hands-on training in taser usage.

Former Sheriff Skipper and Undersheriff Tom Slyter briefed us on the changes brought about by last year's 12% budget cuts and their influence on services.

Fiscal Specialists Sharon Lowell and Brad Lynch gave us detailed insight into the budget and contract administration, and discussed how the Sheriff's Office bills and exacts payment from other County and Federal offices.

As a result of our regular interaction with a wide array of individuals essential to the functioning of the Sheriff's Office, we feel that both the Sheriff's Office and the Board of County Commissioners can greatly benefit from our perspective as informed members of the voting public.

Major Changes:

Under this year's 4% budget constraint exercise, 118 beds at Inverness Jail are out-of-target Program Offers. This brings the total to 1249 beds, which is half the number of beds that were open ten years ago. Last year's 12% cut to the Sheriff's Office budget meant that not only were ongoing services thinned, but many had to be simply eliminated. Last year's reduction of services coupled with this severe decline in beds signals a threat to public safety, so there really isn't room to cut 4% of the Sheriff's Office budget this year.

The course that last year's budget took may have a significant effect on this year's salary negotiations. Last year, 343 members of the MCSO took a pay freeze. These included 52 Exempt Staff and Managers, 91 members of the Deputy Sheriff's Association (DSA), and 200 MCSO members of Local 88. With the exception of the Special Investigations Unit (SIU) being restored to the DSA, none of the 1.7 million saved by these Sheriff's Office pay freezes went back to the Sheriff's Office for restoration of positions. This makes it much more difficult to request pay freezes for this year's budget, freezes which would likely eliminate the need to dangerously thin services by 4%.

Recommendations/Concerns/Praise:

Last year, as mentioned above, almost none of the money saved by Sheriff's Office pay freezes came back to the Sheriff's Office, and in fact went to restore cuts in Health and Human Services. While we wholeheartedly believe in the work done for the community by Health and Human Services, we are concerned that there is a lack of understanding of how essential the Sheriff's Office is to our community's well-being.

The Sheriff's Office is not an organization that hunts "bad guys" and locks them up, and is therefore a necessary evil; it is the fundamental social service provider—responsible for public safety--without which a society cannot function. The Sheriff's Office runs task forces to protect citizens from elder abuse, domestic violence, human trafficking, theft, violent crime, and many other social problems. It runs work crews to help keep inmates active, social, and productive, so that they might re-enter society at some point, and is responsible for keeping citizens safe on our numerous rivers and in urban areas.

The Sheriff's Office is a valuable social service, and dramatically constricting its budget over the past two years, after ten years of steady funding decreases, will have a negative effect on our community.

The Warrant Task Force was originally purchased in October 2007 with a General Fund Contingency. Under this year's 4% constraint exercise, it is one of the programs that unfortunately must be considered as out-of-target. This task force is essential to serving misdemeanor and felony warrants so that future crimes may be prevented. As of February 1, 2010, there are about 7,000 outstanding felony warrants, as a result of lack of resources to arrest wanted subjects. After ten years of declining Sheriff's Office funding, and after last year's 12% cuts, eliminating this program will exacerbate an already growing problem.

Other program offers that must be considered out-of-target to meet the 4% constraint include funding for elder abuse detectives, river patrol, patrol, and dorms 4 and 5 of Inverness Jail. Budget constraint exercises can be productive and helpful, but not when services as essential as these must be eliminated.

We feel strongly that the Sheriff's Office cannot suffer another cut this year. After almost all money saved by last year's Sheriff's Office COLA freezes did not come back to the MCSO, it will be difficult to approach employees for more pay freezes. We recommend that all bargaining units be approached for freezes this year, not just those within the MCSO, and that if the Sheriff's Office does agree to COLA freezes this year, that all money saved by these agreements be applied to MCSO programs.

Emerging Issues:

We discussed this year's Grand Jury Report at length, and were disturbed by certain key misunderstandings within it. The Report criticized the Sheriff for not choosing to opt out of SB1145, and for choosing expensive inmate health care within the Corrections division. It seems that those involved in the Grand Jury Report were unaware that in no way are decisions regarding SB1145 or inmate health care up to the Sheriff; even if he wanted to opt out of 1145 or choose a new health care system, he absolutely does not have the ability to do so.

We were also concerned by the math used in the Report to determine how expensive MCSO jails are to run, and whether the US Marshal's compensation of the Sheriff's Office for housing Federal prisoners was adequate. Essentially, the total cost of jail infrastructure and operations was tabulated, and divided by the number of beds. The conclusion was then reached that the US Marshal does not adequately compensate the MCSO for taking on its prisoners. This simple math does not differentiate between marginal and fixed costs (fixed costs being money that the Sheriff's Office must spend to operate the jails regardless of whether or not it houses US Marshal prisoners).

We all know that the same numbers can be shifted around to reach widely differing conclusions. Comparisons between MCSO costs and those of other Sheriff's Offices are far more difficult than the Report suggests. As Sheriff Staton pointed out in his response to the Grand Jury Report, some cost methodologies used by other area Sheriff's Offices do not include health services costs, transportation costs, or costs of treatment programs, to name a few. Including or excluding even one of these items in a cost assessment can make a difference in the millions of dollars.

In part because of this tabulation of costs, and because of attributing responsibility for SB1145 and Corrections health care incorrectly to the Sheriff, the County Chair has suggested that the running of Corrections should be taken away from the Sheriff's Office. This seems like a poorly-conceived decision to us-- a rash action in response to a not very clearly understood or articulated problem, and one that would create very expensive new layers of government. Training programs, uniforms, and certain infrastructure that is currently shared by the Sheriff's

Office and Corrections would have to be duplicated, and at great cost. Even just a uniform change could prove expensive. A few years ago, the Sheriff's Office had to undertake a change in uniforms, and the cost of this change approached \$300,000.

In addition, the Sheriff is statutorily charged with responsibility for Corrections. It would make no sense for the Board to run the Corrections division while responsibility for anything that occurred within the jails lay with the Sheriff.

Many have pointed out that the Grand Jury Report has made the same recommendations to the Sheriff's Office over the last few years, and that the Sheriff's Office has not listened. It is disturbing to us as well that the same faulty math cited above, coupled with the serious misunderstandings about the various responsibilities of the Board and the Sheriff, have been present in the last few Grand Jury Reports. We think that this may have to do with the fact that, though the citizen participants in the Report change yearly, the Grand Jury Report is run and written by the same two Deputy DAs year after year.

Members' Names:

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