

NON-DEPARTMENTAL CITIZEN BUDGET ADVISORY COMMITTEE

TO: Chair Linn & Commissioners

FROM: Multnomah County ND Citizens Budget Advisory Committee

DATE: March 15, 2006

SUBJECT: ND CBAC 06/07 Report

PROCESS:

The Non-Departmental Budget Advisory Committee (NDCBAC) gained two new members this year and has met twice a month since October. 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. Helen Williams from the Accountability Outcome Team got us up to speed on the new accountability map, strategies, and criteria for offers. We also met with: Auditor Suzanne Flynn to discuss how her office approaches performance measures; Julie Neburka from the Budget Office to get a handle on how the Centralized Board Expenses offer is put together; and Gina Matteoda, Public Affairs, and Brad Mclean, Citizen Involvement Committee to determine the relationship between the internal county voice and external citizen voice. We also reviewed FY 05/05 funded offers and the 06/07 submitted offers for the department.

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 nondiscretionary, 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. The remainder of the Non-Departmental Budget is in the form of allocations to the following non-County Agencies: The Portland Multnomah Progress Board, Elders in Action, The Regional Arts and Culture Council, The Food Stamp Program, and the Portland Business Alliance.

As a committee, we are again 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:

1. **Fund the County First:** County mandated functions should be funded before all others including school programs, initiatives, or non-county pass through agencies such as Elders in Action or RACC. 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. **New Programs:** With the exception of those that are actually restorations of previously cut staffing levels, or that will generate additional revenue, we are not in favor of any new programs that are not counterbalanced by program cuts elsewhere.
3. **Staffing Levels:** ND offices range from 20 FTEs in the County Attorneys Office to 1 FTE in the CIC's Office of Citizen Involvement. The larger offices typically provide internal services to the County Departments while the smaller offices are avenues of direct contact for the public into County government. Our recommendations are
 - a. that the current level of staffing in the smallest of these offices is considered inadequate to insure strong and informed citizen participation in County government. Therefore we are strongly recommending the approval of both the CIC's offers which will bring the staffing level back to 2 FTEs, and
 - b. as the County organization contracts these larger offices should also contract in size accordingly.
4. **Boardroom Expenses:** Facilities and internal expenses need to be taken out of this offer and placed where they are used. With the current method of accounting the public cannot see what the individual commissioner's offices and chair's office are really costing. This is a small adjustment that will illustrate that the county is truly embracing transparency in government.
5. **Ombudsman in Auditor's Office:** We do not see the need for this program at this time. Is there a demonstrated need for this function? The staff in the commissioner's offices as well as the Chair's Office, PAO and the CIC currently deal with complaints that are not resolved at the department level.
6. **County Attorney:** We encourage this office to develop performance measures. For example one might use the number of consultations with departments/divisions/offices to lower the risk to the county. Another possibility might be the number of cases settled or the number of particular type of cases handled.

7. **5 Million \$ for Schools**: Before we can consider supporting this we need to know what this is purchasing. How many school days will this purchase? Is this part of a larger package that is agreed upon by others? We believe that the County should not be in the business of education especially in this current budget environment --- we do not have the capacity to fund important county services let alone continue to “Band-Aid” the school system.

CONCERNS/EMERGING ISSUES:

- **Imbalance of Citizen Voice vs. Internal County Voice**: The County should increase the capacity for additional citizen involvement. Over the past several years we have observed that the resource imbalance for citizen participation vs. the internal county voice has continued to grow. The PAO was very clear when she met with us that her office does not overlap the program or services that the CIC provides. The PAO provides public involvement that is project specific where the CIC provides avenues for citizens to be heard in a much broader and ongoing way. We are concerned that if this imbalance is allowed to continue at the current rate many more opportunities for the public to participate in policy roles and in general will be lost, which is contrary to the County Charter.
- **Intergovernmental Agreements**: The County should review intergovernmental agreements on a rotating basis. Some of these agreements have been in place for quite some time. Are all of these agreements in line with current County goals and are they saving money or providing the best efficiencies?
- **Ratio of Paralegals to Attorneys**: For a number of years it has been the practice in the County Attorney’s office for the ratio of paralegals to attorneys to be one paralegal to four or five attorneys. Is this the most efficient use of attorneys’ time? Please note that V. Chen “Amer Law 200” in The AMERICAN LAWYER, 08/01/05 reports 3:1 para-to-lawyer ratio in top firms.
- **Risk Management**: This function of the County should be re-evaluated to determine if the current structure is reducing the County’s liability levels.

MEMBERS:

Len Freiser, Chair
Helen Ellison
Kate Hummel
Dr. Ron Schutz
Tom Weldon