



Department of County Management

MULTNOMAH COUNTY OREGON

Budget Office

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TO: Board of County Commissioners

FROM: Shannon Busby, Senior Budget Analyst

DATE: May 23rd, 2012

SUBJECT: Multnomah County Master Fee Schedule

For the second year, the Budget Office will be publishing to the County's website a Master Fee Schedule of the fees charged to the public by Multnomah County. The Master Fee Schedule was created to act as both a resource to the general public, as well as an informational source for internal management of revenue streams. Over the prior year the fee schedule has proven to be a valuable tool for accessing and monitoring the County's fees.

Overview

In FY 2012, the Budget Office created a Master Fee Schedule consolidating most of the fees and fines charged to the public by Multnomah County. Many of the fees included in the schedule are familiar, such as animal adoption fees through our shelter, or recording fees through the County Clerk, though also included are lesser known fees such as charges for a non-resident library card for people living outside the reciprocal agreement areas. The two notable areas of exception in the fee schedule are the building regulations fees for unincorporated Multnomah County and the fees for service in the Health Department's Clinical System. Fee amounts are determined by Department Directors for fees that are not set by other jurisdictions, such as the state or federal government. As stated in the county code (see appendix A), fee amounts are to be based upon actual costs of providing the service, though there are exceptions where fees amounts are determined by ability to pay. Fee amounts are also often evaluated and approved by a citizen board or council within departments and most are presented to the board for approval. Providing a schedule of fees is a recommended best practice by the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA), and is included in the County's Financial Policies (see appendix A).

Update

During FY 2012 several updates, additions and corrections were made to the county's fees. These include the bi-annual update of the environmental health fees, new Safety First program fees through Community Justice, and updates to the liquor license renewal fee to match state statute. Currently in process is an evaluation of Library fees that have

not been updated in recent years to determine whether fees should be changed to match current costs.

Going Forward

In the upcoming year the Budget Office will be working with departments to normalize fees for similar services across departments and to continue evaluating and potentially updating stale fees. In addition, the Budget Office is looking into creating a new administrative procedure for board approved fee changes to standardize the process of updating fees.

Appendix A- Fee Policy from the County Code and User Fees, Sales, and Service Charges from the FY 2013 Proposed Financial Policies.

County Code:

§ 11.001 POLICY AND PURPOSE OF FEES.

Because of the increasing costs to the county of providing services to the public and of discharging the legal responsibilities of the county, and because of the decreased availability of general county revenue to defray costs, the Board declares it to be in the interests of the people of the county for the fees established in this code of ordinances to be imposed and collected by the county from the persons directly served or affected by the provision of such services and the performance of such responsibilities.

(' 90 Code, § 5.10.005, 07/01/1998; Ord. 105, passed, 07/10/1975)

§ 11.002 FEES FOR PUBLICATIONS AND RECORDS.

The director of each department of the county shall establish a schedule of fees, which shall be conspicuously posted at appropriate locations, for publications and copies of records provided by the department. The fees for copies of records shall, where appropriate, differentiate between and specify fees for copies according to the method and format of reproduction. The fees authorized by this section shall be based upon actual cost as determined by the directors.

(' 90 Code, § 5.10.060, 07/01/1998; Ord. 157, passed, 12/29/1977)

User Fees, Sales, and Service Charges

Policy Statement

User fees are generally intended to cover all the costs or an agreed upon portion of the costs for providing services. Inflation or increased service delivery can erode the established user fees if the cost of service increases faster than revenue from fee increases.

It is the general policy of the Board that user fees and service charges be established at a level to recover the costs to provide services. Exceptions to this policy will be made depending on the benefit to the user of the service, the ability of the user to pay for the service, the benefit to County citizens, and the type of service provided.

As part of budget deliberations and during negotiations of Intergovernmental Agreements, departments will be responsible for informing the Chair of a fully-loaded cost analysis presenting the fee structure necessary to recover 100% of the cost of providing services. Departments will also recommend whether fees or charges in each area should be set to recover 100% of the costs or be set at a lower rate, such as a sliding scale fee. The recommendation to the Chair will consider the benefits to an individual or agency, the benefits to County citizens, and the ability of users to pay for the service. The Budget Office is responsible for ensuring that departments include all costs associated with providing the service.

User fees and service charges collected by County agencies will be periodically reviewed. Based on this review, the Chair will make recommendations to the Board regarding proposed changes to fee or service charge schedules.

Revenues generated from sales (and commissions on sales) of goods and services sold in County-owned or leased facilities are to be credited to the County's General Fund unless:

1. they are generated for inmate welfare commissary operations;
2. they are generated in Library facilities used for Library operations;
3. they are generated by internal service providers and offset rates charged to departments; or
4. the Board grants an exception.

Status

As part of FY 2012 budget process, the Budget Office provided a comprehensive review of fees and charges. Departments are generally responsible for ongoing review of fees and charges associated with their operations on an annual basis.