



**Multnomah County District Attorney's
Citizen Budget Advisory Committee
Fiscal Year 2014**

To: Jeff Cogan, Multnomah County Chair

From: Bob Pung, Chairman of the District Attorney's Citizen Budget Advisory Committee

Members of the Committee: Bob Pung, Mike Delman, Cliff Wamacks, Dick Wegner, Mike Greenlick, Allison Rhodes, Charles Wilhoite

Introduction

Over the course of the last five years, since the economic downturn of 2008 & 2009, the District Attorney's Office has relied on tremendous fiscal stewardship to preserve essential criminal justice services in a strained budgetary environment. Given the critical role the District Attorney's Office plays in keeping our community safe, the people of Multnomah County would be proud to know how efficiently and effectively the office carries out its duties. The District Attorney's budget, however, has reached a point where further reductions will translate directly into cuts to important programs.

Currently, the DA is facing funding pressure at the federal, state, county, and city level. While we understand this reality to be nearly universal for municipalities across the country, we are reticent to see how further cuts might impact the safety of our community. For that reason, we strongly advocate for Multnomah County's Central Budget Office to do everything it can to accommodate the budget the District Attorney has put forth for FY2014.

Process

The District Attorney's Citizen's Budget Advisory Committee (CBAC) has met with the District Attorney (DA) and his budget staff on three occasions during the FY14 budget season. The goal of these meetings was to learn about the budgetary environment the DA is facing and provide him with input on the ways in which we, as Multnomah County residents, would prioritize under those conditions. Given the retirement of Michael Schrunk, we have had a unique opportunity this year to shape the new face of the DA's Office.

Our first meeting covered Multnomah County's budgeting process, the general fund outlook, and potential external (Fed/State/City) revenue decreases. When compared with

recent years, we were pleased to learn that the County was only putting a 1% constraint on departmental budgets. Our second meeting covered the District Attorney's approach to meeting the general fund constraint and his plans for addressing cuts to external revenue, specifically those coming from the City of Portland. At our most recent meeting, we debriefed on the DA's meeting with the Chair and his submitted budget.

Major Changes

The District Attorney's Office is facing budgetary pressure at the federal, state, county, and city levels. To triage the pressure, the DA proposed potential cuts in two tiers. Tier 1 cuts represented near certain funding losses, while Tier 2 cuts represented likely, yet unsecured funding. Because the DA's budget is over 80% personnel costs, the only viable option for reducing the budget in a sizable way is to cut personnel. Accordingly, the cuts listed in Tier 1 and Tier 2 represent personnel, all of whom are performing necessary functions in an already strained budgetary environment. We focused most of our efforts on the Tier 1 cuts, which are as follows:

- To meet the County's 1% general fund constraint, which for the DA amounts to just over \$200,000, he proposed cutting a level 3 Deputy District Attorney (DDA3) from MDT, the child abuse unit.
- Based on information available, the City of Portland appears to be eliminating funding for two positions: the Gateway Center Victim Advocate and the Prostitution Neighborhood Deputy District Attorney.

In addition to detailing his requested backfill of potential cuts, the District Attorney also shared with us his request for permanent funding for a Mental Health Deputy District Attorney. In September of 2012, in response to increased justice-system-focus on mental health, the DA shifted existing resources to pilot this idea. Permanent funding for this position would allow him to shift resources back to his strained Misdemeanor Trial Unit.

The District Attorney also requested one-time funding for the following technology-related projects:

- DA Tablet Project – To equip DDAs with tablet computers for use in the courtroom and on-the-go.
- DA Wireless Project – To outfit the Multnomah County Courthouse with secure wireless internet access.
- DA Conference Room Tech Upgrade – To outfit the DA's Kelly Bacon Conference Room with modern technology.

Recommendations

- MDT Child Abuse DDA – While we understand and agree with the DA’s assessment that a cut to MDT makes the most operational sense in terms of reduced caseloads, etc., we would be displeased to see this cut happen. This unit plays a priceless role in prosecuting some of our community’s most dangerous offenders and working to prevent cycles of abuse. We request that the County grant the DA’s request to backfill the general fund cut.
- Mental Health DDA (MHDDA) – Permanent funding for a MHDDA is not just the right thing to do to appropriately address shortcomings in the justice systems coordination of mental health resources, it also has the potential to pay for itself by making the system more efficient and effective. Funding for this position will help to ensure mental health affected individuals gain access to the treatment they need, potentially reducing costs associated with prosecution, the courts, jail, and probation. We request that the County permanently fund this position.
- Gateway Center Victim Advocate (VA) – The cuts being proposed by the City of Portland are poised to have a significant negative impact on our community. The Gateway Center for Domestic Violence provides services to some of the most vulnerable members of our community, and the DA’s VA plays an important role in that process. We request that the County backfill this City cut.
- Prostitution Neighborhood DDA (PNDDA) – Over the course of the last few years, in coordination with local police and social service agencies, the PNDDA has played an important role in addressing the problems of prostitution and the commercial sexual exploitation of children. This work has improved the livability of our community and the lives of those resorting to prostitution. We request that the County backfill this City cut.
- DA Technology Projects – The District Attorney has put forth sensible and appropriate uses of County one-time money. The County requests that departments submit one-time-only proposals which are technologically innovative and won’t expose the County or the department to substantial ongoing costs. These requests meet those standards. Through the use of tablets and courtroom internet access, DDAs will be more efficient and effective in carrying out their duties. These tools are also necessary in order for DDAs to keep pace with the resources available to judges and defense counsel. We request that the county fund the DA’s one-time-only requests.

Conclusion

The District Attorney has put forth three out-of-target budget proposals to backfill pending cuts and one to dedicate funding for a Mental Health Deputy DA, along with three one-time-only requests. It is our opinion that backfilling cuts to the Gateway Victim Advocate, Prostitution Deputy DA, and the MDT Deputy DA position is necessary to ensure a service level consistent with the needs of our community. Those cuts cannot be absorbed through increases in efficiency or redeployment of other resources. We also feel that funding for the Mental Health Deputy DA should be a priority for the county not just to address the trending interaction between mental health affected individuals and the justice system, but also because that funding will likely pay for itself through system efficiencies. Lastly, the District Attorney has put forth three appropriate and sensible requests for one-time-only projects, and we encourage the County to help the District Attorney keep pace with technological innovation.