

NON-DEPARTMENTAL CITIZEN BUDGET ADVISORY COMMITTEE

TO: Chair Cogen and Commissioners
FROM: Multnomah County ND Citizens Budget Advisory Committee
DATE: May 5, 2010
SUBJECT: ND CBAC 10/11 Report

PROCESS:

Based on interviews with representatives the Non-Departmental Citizen Budget Advisory Committee (CBAC) learned about the programs and budget proposals of the County Attorney, Budget Office, County Auditor, Citizen Involvement Committee, Public Affairs Office, Information Technology Division, Regional Arts and Culture Council (RACC), Office of Emergency Management (OEM), and the offices of the Chair and the District Commissioners on the Board of County Commissioners.

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 from Chair Ted Wheeler during Central CBAC meetings and the CBAC training held in November.

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; 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 RACC. OEM and RACC were added to our areas of responsibility this year.

The Non-Departmental CBAC is a diverse CBAC, consisting of new and returning citizen volunteers. Returning members include Alan Scally, Tom Weldon, Sherry Willmschen, Wayne Boucher, with Pauline Duffy and Susan Novelli joining our CBAC in October. 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 will make these agencies and offices more efficient and “leaner.” 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:

To summarize, the Non-Departmental CBAC concludes that:

1. **Fund the County First:** County mandated functions should be funded before any other functions are considered. Other functions include school programs, initiatives, or non-county pass through agencies like RACC. The Committee realizes that this is unfortunate but the reality is 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 these programs and projects only provide services to select groups and not countywide.
2. **Memberships:** We were pleased to see the dues for belonging to the Association of Oregon Counties were reduced this fiscal year. The County should similarly examine and seek reductions in the costs of all its organizational memberships to determine where additional savings could occur.
3. **Good Government Hotline:** We support the Auditor’s decision to redesign this program and conduct it in-house at a considerable savings.
4. **Wage Freeze:** We commend county employees who supported a wage freeze for the current fiscal year. Their proactive response is much appreciated.
5. **Information Technology:** We are very excited about the intensive analysis and appropriate overhaul that the Information Technology (IT) Division is currently undergoing. We support making IT an autonomous department with a set budget, as opposed to the current charge back model, and appreciate the current pursuit of this process through the currently funded Business Process Re-engineering Offer. We also support initiatives that address needs for disposing outdated equipment, implementing backup systems, and standardizing software, as well as exploring less expensive email systems.
6. **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 are available to assist with suggestions that would considerably strengthen the County’s current performance measures.

7. **Public Affairs Office:** As a CBAC we are alarmed to see that multiple county departments continue to use scarce resources to create their own public affairs functions. We feel strongly that centralizing these public affairs functions into one countywide 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.
8. **Tax Supervising & Conservation Commission:** Our CBAC strongly supported the County’s successful legislative effort to change the state legislative mandate requiring the County to support this Commission alone which created a significant financial burden. We are pleased that the financial burden will now be shared by other cities and governmental entities, which also benefit from the Commission’s extensive review of the budgets of the 39 local governments within Multnomah County.
9. **Office of Emergency Management:** Stable and professional management are needed ingredients for any county function to thrive. The Committee is excited that after a few false starts OEM has finally found its footing with the installation of stable and professional management and commends and encourages current staff to keep up the good work.

CONCERNS/EMERGING ISSUES:

1. **Intergovernmental Agreements and Contracts:** The County should continue reviewing intergovernmental agreements and provider contracts on a rotating basis. The review should determine whether these agreements/contracts are in line with current county goals, are cost-effective, provide maximum efficiencies, and represent best practices. The results should be clearly communicated to all concerned parties, as well as the public.
2. **Offer Numbers:** The Committee welcomes the use of the same offer numbers from year to year. The use of different numbers each year made it very difficult to easily compare program offers.

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:

Sherry Willmschen, Chair
Tom Weldon
Wayne Boucher
Pauline Duffy
Susan Novelli
Alan Scally