

2007-2008 Fiscal Year Budget Recommendations

Central Citizens Budget Advisory Committee

April 24, 2007

The Central Citizen's Budget Advisory Committee (CCBAC) has members from each of the department Citizen's Budget Advisory Committees (CBACs) and is chaired by a member of the Multnomah County Citizen Involvement Committee.

The following comments and recommendations represent a consensus opinion for all members of the committee.

We are happy to see that the priority-based budget process has continued to improve with better information presented in the offers and a greater focus on providing good success measurements for the offers.

We also applaud the Chair for obtaining input from the Department Heads regarding their opinions on priorities within their own departments. We are concerned that asking each department for a 6% reduction puts more of the focus back on department budgets rather than on prioritizing programs across all departments.

We understand that the purpose is to encourage the departments to find savings within the department and to obtain their valuable input on the highest priority programs as they see it. Our fear is that this may simply lead to continued 'watering-down' of needed programs.

As Chair Wheeler stated in his letters, this input would be even better at the front end of the process; although, we would hate to see 'constraints' limit innovative ways to meet the needs of the county's citizens. The danger we see is that the focus will become how to keep all old programs intact without considering potentially new and better 'replacement' programs.

The CCBAC asks the Board to encourage lateral integration between departments where it makes sense and facilitates providing the best service at the lowest cost. The joint offer by the Health Department and the Human Services Department is a step in the right direction. We believe there are still a number of unexplored opportunities to do this in the county.

Other opportunities for partnerships outside the county government should also be explored wherever possible. The public safety study proposed in the Chair's budget with participation of other jurisdictions is a good example this and one that we support. An active effort to look for positive and advantageous partnerships should be made by all.

Having the county's budget priorities is a good start. It is now time to more closely define the county's core services, and to fund those services. Funding core services includes funding the county's infrastructure. In times of plenty, which may be a long time coming, other 'nice to have' or 'good thing to do' programs can be funded. We support the chair's efforts in defining our role in patrol services, and the possibility of creating a regional transportation authority. The County does not have the funds to do everything.

Funding core services also includes keeping faith with the voters especially in regards to promised programs and funding through levies approved by the voters.

This year, we are once again supporting the second offer from the Citizen Involvement Committee (CIC) to add one additional staff person to the Office of Citizen Involvement. The comparatively small investment to be made can go a long way to more effective citizen involvement in county decision-making. It would also create an “open door” to the county for its citizens by opening the Office of Citizen Involvement to regular business hours. If true independent citizen involvement is desired from all county constituencies, support for CIC is required.

Another recommendation involves information systems at the county. We support the upgrade to the SAP system as updated systems can create opportunities for greater efficiency, improved services, and raise employee morale. Another system we highly recommend is the MultStat system.

One of the pieces that has been missing from the priority-based budget process is tracking and accountability to the performance measures of each program. Generally, the measures are simply entered into the program offer each year without any formal accountability.

We have recommended better performance measures each year of this process, and we are seeing improvement. While further improvement is needed in this area, it is also time to start truly measuring the performance of the programs funded each year. This is an important piece of the process that will provide for better decision-making when it comes to the budget process each year.

Regarding better performance measures, we would like to see the Chair and the Commissioners take the lead in using meaningful, measurable, objective performance measures.

Thank you for considering our comments and recommendations as you make your budget decisions for yet another difficult year.

Respectfully submitted,

Central Citizens Budget Advisory Committee

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Jim Lasher, Sheriff's Dept. CBAC

Bob Pung, District Attorney CBAC

Joe Marrone, Department of Community Justice CBAC

Steve Weiss, Department of County Human Services CBAC

Alice Meyer, Library Advisory Board CBAC

Len Freiser, Non-Departmental CBAC

Michele Biehler, Business and Community Services CBAC

Jay Theimeyer, Health Department CBAC