



Office of Community Involvement



## Department of Community Services CBAC

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TO: Chair Deborah Kafoury and Board of County Commissioners 3 pages

FROM: Department of Community Services Community Budget Advisory Committee (CBAC)

DATE: April 29, 2022

SUBJECT: DCS Community Budget Advisory Committee Report & Recommendations

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The members of the DCS CBAC appreciate the opportunity to support the county budget process. Following a comprehensive review of Elections, Land Use Planning, Transportation, and Animal Services divisions' practices and needs we identify three (3) priority, out-of-target program offers. These address critical needs but are not exclusive. In our judgement, all DCS out-of-target program requests are urgent and essential to insuring DCS divisions' capacity to continue delivering essential services.

### PROCESS

At presentations arranged by DCS staff, directors explained the work of their divisions, rationales for their budget appeals, and future plans. In evaluating program offers we applied two criteria.

1. Prioritize funding for services that equitably benefit the broadest array of community members.
2. Prioritize funding for repair of structural issues in existing division operations so that expected services can be reliably provided without reoccurring dependence on employee's crisis-level efforts.

### EMERGING ISSUES & CHANGES

Presentations were informative, evidence-based, and stimulating. We listened, asked questions, and came away with unanimous admiration for staff innovations and commitment. The restrictions of this report allow only brief commentary and nominal ranking of out-of-target program offers. However, we note other issues continue to stress DCS divisions. To address

these, we recommend ongoing effort to increase funding sources for county infrastructure & election services. We also encourage expansion of the CBAC process, and county-wide broadening community engagement. Finally, CBACs should have opportunities for advocacy on behalf of their divisions beyond nominal budget parsing. We need venues for activism, opportunities to share and affirm our divisions' achievements both within these reports and to the public at large.

## **PROGRAM OFFER RECOMMENDATIONS**

DCS has for years seen its budgets cut, at times with only heroic staff work holding our divisions together. During our review we learned of numerous instances where services at times barely meet public expectations. All DCS out-of-target program offers are important and should be funded. However, if difficult choices must be made, we ask consideration of the following three (3) prioritized recommendations.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1. 90010B AND 90010D: Basic Staffing for Elections Program (\$464,975 Ongoing) AND Voter Education & Outreach Position (\$123,593 One-Time Only).**

Elections are the beacon of democracy. Multnomah County has a national reputation for fair, accessible, and accurate voting. Yet, while in the past decade our county has seen a 50% increase in registered voters, division staffing shrank from 15 FTE to 11. Additional staff and resources are needed to meet these expanded general demands, cover costs of a anticipated two-page ballots, and prepare for a potential change in voting systems. Along with an increase in voter registration and participation, the Elections division has also seen a recent increase in intentional dissemination of elections-related misinformation, disinformation, and mal-information, with the potential for decreasing public trust and diminishing departmental morale. Expanded education and outreach programs are necessary to ensure our elections remain valued, trusted, and understood, and encourage equitable participation.

### **2. 90018B Construction of Tier 1 ADA Ramps (\$1,450,000 One-Time Only)**

The 1990 American Disabilities Act has proven pivotal in protecting some of our most vulnerable citizens. Unfortunately, Multnomah County is behind in meeting basic ADA stipulations, especially in providing Tier 1 ADA Ramps. The County currently has 890 ramps which fail to meet requirements. Work will be prioritized by those ramps in the worst condition that are also close to services such as stores, hospitals, schools, and transportation. This project is long overdue and essential to providing an equitable basic human service for those most in need.

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**Members:** Christina Avila, Julia Delgado, Richard Mitchell, Mary Stuart, Matt Tucker, Chuck Woods

**Staff:** Tom Hansell, Hoa Vu

### **3. 90021B Land Use Planning Code Equity Analysis and Update: (\$500,000 One-Time Only).**

The division of Land Use Planning provides critical zoning, planning, education, and compliance enforcement affecting business and residents throughout Multnomah County's 466 square miles. Central to the division's work is a core document, the Land Use Code. Unfortunately, that code is significantly outdated. Originally drafted in 1962, with minor revisions in 1982, this fundamental guide is now riven with contradictions, outmoded practices, conflicts, and cumbersome procedures that make land use guidance difficult at best, and at times nearly impossible. Clients face frustration and delay; division staff morale plummets as they are unable to provide timely and accurate service despite conscientious efforts. Recent partial audits found glaring equity issues throughout. The equity audit and code revision will provide an updated Land Use Code that is comprehensive and practical, understandable, and accessible to all members of our community. Systemic barriers to marginalized groups will be removed and opportunities for economic prosperity increased, while balancing the preservation of our natural resources and addressing the root cause of many of the division's core issues. Land Use Planning has been underinvested for many years. This update is critical.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

We offer our sincere thanks to DCS staff Tom Hansell, Hoa Vu, Cary Stacey, and Karin Garber. Our special appreciation goes to DCS Department Directors for their time, presentations, and willingness to listen and answer our many questions. Above all, we laud and affirm the committed and creative DCS professionals who at every level work together to provide services for our community, especially during this time of economic, social, and health crises: Jamie Waltz, Department Director of DCS, Wade Sadler, Division Director of Animal Service, Jon Henrichsen, County Engineer, Carol Johnson, Land Use Planning Director, and Tim Scott, Elections Manager.

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