

Sheriff CBAC

Office of Citizen Involvement

To: Chair Deborah Kafoury and County Board of Commissioners 5 pages
FROM: Julie Cieloha & Phyllis Thiemann, Sheriff CBAC co-Chairs
DATE: April 27, 2015
SUBJECT: Sheriff Citizen Budget Advisory Committee (CBAC) Report & Recommendations

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We support addressing smaller problems now rather than larger problems later. Last year, we recommended using one-time-only money to increase personnel doing background checks on new hires. This has taken the number of vacant Corrections Deputy positions from twenty-five down to four, which will save significant overtime money down the road.

Funding five mental health counselor positions in the jails is already saving a lot of money; this caused an 88% drop in hours spent on 24-hour suicide watch (between December 2013 and December 2014).

The suicide watch problem, however, is far from over. Even after this 88% decrease, over 2,800 hours were devoted to suicide watch this December. The Oregonian wrote that 43% of inmates may be mentally ill. This problem is shockingly expensive, and cannot be ignored.

For years, we have advised the Sheriff to curb emergency population releases from the County jails. In 2014, there was not a single emergency population release. Apparently, this is the result of opening a dorm as-needed at a cost of \$3,000 per day, rather than spending over \$1,000,000 to keep it open year-round. We support this dynamic jail capacity management. It is fiscally efficient, and saves our community from hundreds of inmates roaming the streets.

We have long advised the Sheriff's Office to add another West Side Patrol to District 10. This district spans 65.9 miles, and includes Sauvie's Island, which receives over one million visitors annually. Currently, there is only one patrol car assigned to this area. With coverage this thin, a major incident is waiting to happen.

To address this sparse coverage, we support the new program offer for assigning a Community Resource Officer to District 10. This position would double the coverage in the area, and attend community meetings to better understand the concerns of residents. Residents of a tourist area with a million visitors like Sauvie's Island have very different concerns from those of Skyline and Dunthorpe, all of which are part of District 10.

We suggest placing Community Resource Officers in all districts in the future. Intertwining the MCSO with local communities is mutually beneficial.

The vents in the jails pose a suicide risk for inmates, and are filled with debris. They need to be replaced immediately. Currently, the Sheriff's Office has created separate program offers for each floor, so that the vents can be repaired in phases over years. Given the disturbingly high percentage of mentally unstable inmates, we think this project cannot wait years; it should happen as soon as possible. The vents are an expensive lawsuit waiting to happen.

INTRODUCTION

The Citizen Budget Advisory Committee to the Sheriff's Office is a program of the Multnomah County Citizen Involvement Committee (CIC), which is independent of the Sheriff's Office. Our focus is the cost effectiveness of programs and implementation of objectives. We spend the year evaluating the operations of the MCSO, and comparing them to the needs of the community.

PROCESS

The Citizen Budget Advisory Committee to the MCSO meets ten months out of the year, sometimes twice a month, and is staffed by Chief Deputy Linda Yankee, Fiscal Manager Wanda Yantis, and Office Assistant Senior Lynette Hanson. In addition to visits from Sheriff Dan Staton, we were regularly briefed by key staff from the Sheriff's Office:

- ✚ June 17, 2014 - Wapato Jail tour – Mark Gustafson, Facilities and Property Management Property Manager
- ✚ September 19, 2014 - Columbia River Patrol Office - River Patrol Ride a long – Lt. Travis Gullberg
- ✚ October 10, 2014 – Willamette River Patrol Office – River Patrol Ride a long – Sergeant Steve Dangler
- ✚ November 21, 2014 - MCIJ Video Visiting Implementation – Captain Mary Lindstrand, Sergeant Jon Mathews, CJIS Manager Andy Potter at the Inverness Jail; FY16 Budget Process – Fiscal Supervisor Michelle Rader
- ✚ December 18, 2014 Transitional School Holiday Party – Sheriff Staton and many others
- ✚ December 19, 2014 - Helping Immigrant Victims – Detective Keith Bickford
- ✚ January 23, 2015 - Sheriff's Budget Priorities – Sheriff Daniel Staton
- ✚ February 27, 2015 - Westside Community Resource Officer – Captain Monte Reiser; Suicide Watch Briefings to the Board - Chief Deputy Linda Yankee; FY16 Budget Books – Julia Porras Sheriff's Office Budget Analyst
- ✚ March 6, 2015 – Countywide Safety Initiative – Lieutenant Brent Ritchie
- ✚ March 13, 2015 – Budget Updates - Sheriff Daniel Staton
- ✚ March 27, 2015 - Rosewood Initiative Update – Shea Marshman, Director of Planning and Research
- ✚ Office Assistant Senior Lynette Hanson coordinated various ride-a-longs and jail visits for CBAC members throughout the year

MAJOR CHANGES

We have seen over the last seven years how across-the-board cuts can prove pricey down the road. In our last report, we expressed support for certain programs that would save the county money in the long term. This year, we are pleased to see progress in many of these areas, though there is still much work to be done.

Last year, we discussed at length the drastic cuts to programs for the mentally ill on both State and County levels. This significant erosion of programs continues to force the mentally unstable into the jail system, which is, of course, the priciest way to house them. On February 10th, The Oregonian wrote

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that the portion of inmates with mental health issues "could be as high as 43 percent" in Multnomah County, compared with a national average of 15 to 17 percent.

Though this is an ongoing, significant problem, we are pleased with the initial steps the Sheriff's Office--with the Board's approval--has taken to address it. Last year, we supported hiring additional mental health counselors in the jails, and the board approved funding for these positions. The result has been dramatic; the county saw an 88% drop in constant suicide watch hours between December 2013 and December 2014. Similarly, active suicide watch hours dropped from 6,088 in December 2013 to 2,827 in December 2014.

To be clear, that is still over 2,800 hours per month spent on suicide watch, and the problem with housing the mentally ill is only increasing. We support continuing to address this problem aggressively. Carefully-designed programs that provide an alternative to jail housing for the mentally ill are desperately needed.

Last year, saving money by having only two positions performing background checks on new hires slowed hiring to a snail's pace, costing money in overtime. We are pleased that the Board funded two additional backgrounders last year, using one-time-only money. As a result, the Sheriff's Office has gone from 25 vacant Corrections Deputy positions to only four.

For a number of years, we have voiced concern over disturbingly frequent emergency population releases from the jails. The current jail capacity--1,310 beds--is the lowest number the County has ever seen. The cost of this has been immeasurable; in 2012, 913 criminals were released from jail onto the street, with no connection to any sort of rehabilitation program. We have voiced concern over this trend to the Sheriff and to the Board for years, so we are pleased that in 2014, there were no emergency population releases whatsoever.

Dynamic jail capacity management is the reason there were no EPRs in 2014. The Sheriff's Office decided to temporarily open an unfunded dorm as needed instead of release criminals onto the street. This extra dorm was opened and closed a number of times in 2014, at a cost of \$3,000 per day. The cost of keeping an extra dorm open for an entire year is over one million dollars. We have recommended this type of jail capacity management for years, and approve of the Sheriff using it. The benefit to our community of keeping criminals off the streets is priceless.

EMERGING ISSUES

Last year, we recommended convening a panel to address the fast-growing, wildly expensive problem of the mentally unstable in jails. We advised that this panel be comprised of the experts who are responsible for dealing with the mentally ill on a daily basis. We have learned that the Sheriff is working with Corrections Health on submitting a MacArthur grant for \$150,000 to study how the mentally ill are handled in the Court and Corrections systems. The Sheriff, District Attorney, and Parole and Probation would participate in this panel. We strongly support this collaboration.

The MCSO Citizen Patrol is partnering with the Springdale Job Corps. The Job Corps trains young people 16 to 24 years old in security or law enforcement. These volunteers must pass an MCSO background check and an exam to qualify. We support this project, as it is a no-cost way to expand the scope and community involvement of the Sheriff's Office, and positively influence the young people it trains.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Most of our recommendations this year focus on prevention. The Sheriff's Office is highly skilled at dealing with crimes after they occur, but there is room for improvement in crime deterrence. Prevention is not only good for the community, it also saves the County money.

1. **Program Offer # 60051A-F Vent Replacements** - Keeping our jails safe saves lives and saves the County from expensive litigation. We recommended last year that the vents in the jails be replaced using one-time-only money. These vents may seem like a minor issue, but they could become a major problem. Eight years ago, the County had to completely redo the railings in the jails because of a suicide attempt. If this suicide had been successful, the County could have paid millions in litigation. The current vents pose a suicide risk because an inmate could easily attach a bed sheet to the vent and hang him/herself.

There are other benefits to replacing the vents besides suicide prevention. One vent was replaced this year, and behind it was found over five pounds of trash that various inmates had placed there due to the vent's large openings. We wonder how much energy in heating and cooling the building would be saved if these vents were not usable as trash cans.

Currently, there is a facilities grant to clean the ducts behind the vent covers, if the Sheriff's Office will pay to have them removed. This is an added incentive to replace them.

The Sheriff's Office has created separate vent replacement program offers for each floor. This is so that the vents can be replaced in phases, extending the project over years. We think that this project cannot be extended over the long term, and must be addressed immediately. The large population of mentally ill inmates makes this situation a lawsuit-in-waiting.

2. **Law Enforcement Sergeant** - Over the last few years, County employees have increasingly requested that the Sheriff's Office provide security at public events. Since there is not a budgeted position for this activity, security is provided on an ad hoc, as-needed basis using overtime.

This year, the Sheriff's Office has submitted a program offer to fund this requested security. This new Law Enforcement Sergeant position would conduct threat assessments for public events involving County employees; would organize security for these events; would identify those in the community who are mentally ill and hostile towards County business; and would act as a single point of contact for all information regarding individuals who pose a threat to County employees.

Currently, an individual who has information regarding criminal intent towards the County has no clear point of contact for this information. If two people call County government with valuable information, these people might speak to two different employees who would have no one to direct them to. We might only find out after a crime occurs that multiple people had called with information regarding that crime. The proposed Sergeant position would allow the County to proactively synthesize intelligence. This security work is currently being requested by County employees, and it should be funded.

3. **Community Resource Officer** - We are concerned that there is only one patrol car assigned to a 65.9 square mile area scattered between Dunthorpe and Sauvie's Island. Sauvie's Island alone sees well over one million visitors annually (The Oregonian, Jan. 7, 2014). If the one patrol car assigned to this area is tied up in Dunthorpe, and receives an emergency call from one of Sauvie's Island's million annual visitors, it could take a dangerously long time to respond. This incorporation of so much land under the jurisdiction of one deputy is based on the census population--an extremely deceptive number. From a census standpoint, Sauvie's Island has only 1,300 residents to worry about. The program offer for this position is for a Community Resource Officer, which we strongly support. In such a vast area with frequent tensions between residents and visitors, a deputy who is involved in community meetings and organizations is needed.
4. **MCSO Training** - We recommend bringing the training of MCSO employees up to State requirements. The State of Oregon mandates 40 hours of training for all Corrections Deputies. This year, there is an out-of-target program offer to bring Corrections Deputies up to 30 hours of training, which is still short of State requirements. The State also requires all Law Enforcement Deputies to receive 28 hours of annual training, and this program offer would provide these Deputies with 16 to 24 hours of training for the year. In light of recent events in Ferguson, Missouri, the fact that MCSO Deputies are falling short in State-mandated training hours could become a lawsuit liability. We recommend providing this training as soon as possible.