



Marissa Madrigal Multnomah County Chair

501 SE Hawthorne Blvd., Suite 600
Portland, Oregon 97214
Phone: (503) 988-3308
Email: mult.chair@multco.us

April 23, 2014

Multnomah County Executive Budget Message

Introduction

I am honored and pleased to submit the Fiscal Year 2015 Executive Budget to my board colleagues and the public for their consideration and approval.

Most of my nearly eight years at Multnomah County have been colored by scarcity and extreme economic instability. A decade of budget cuts, deferred capital spending and ripples from the Great Recession have forced county leaders to continually choose the least worst option from a menu of terrible choices.

So it has been my incredible honor and privilege to serve as Multnomah County Chair during a time of financial stability. Thanks to the careful work of past Boards of Commissioners and dedicated county staff, the executive budget affords us the opportunity to balance the budget and address some long unmet needs. While the outlook is generally positive, widespread racial disparities and uncertainty related to Healthcare Transformation present challenges that we can only begin to address next year. As a result, the budget proposes to fund the current service level for most county programs along with modest increases in some of the most critical, but underfunded areas.

This budget also proposes multiple ways in which the county can “do things that work, together.” From aligning the county and city budgets, to a cross-departmental effort to interrupt the return of mentally ill offenders to jail, my hope is that future county chairs and commissions will continue to work across boundaries for the whole of our community. The problems we face are too large and complex for a single government agency to address alone.

Public Engagement

Public officials routinely decide issues of vital importance on behalf of the people, but I believe there is no greater responsibility than that placed with government to spend public resources according to community priorities.

Because of that belief and as an appointed official, I sought additional public input prior to submitting the executive budget. In cooperation with the Office of Citizen Involvement, county departments, and county commissioners, we held four workshops at locations throughout the county to hear from county residents about their needs and priorities.

What I heard in these workshops reflected much of the earlier feedback I have received: Community members believe that government can and should invest its resources in ways that help people.

I was moved and concerned by residents who said that while many members of our community have recovered from the effects of the recession, others struggle in stubborn pockets of poverty. There is also a strong desire for meaningful and increased government transparency and accountability throughout our programs.

Citizen Budget Advisory Committees

The Citizen Budget Advisory Committees were instrumental in creating this budget. In-depth discussions with these informed, engaged citizens helped make the process accountable and transparent. These dedicated members of the public helped reinforce questions I had about proposed programs, and confirmed support for aligning with the city of Portland around the city's budget, SUN School expansion and the Mental Health Pilot Program.

Budget Goals

The Budget Director's message contains detailed lists of program changes and expansions.

Rather than repeat that list here, I will touch on broad themes and highlights of the proposed budget:

Financial Stability

- The executive budget balances the county budget for roughly three years and includes fully-funded reserves and contingencies. In addition to providing predictability for the future, the county's financial health positions it to maintain one of the highest credit ratings in Oregon government.
- The proposed spending also follows best practices:
 - Vital programs previously funded with one-time-only money have been stabilized with on-going funds. For instance, stopgap funding for SUN schools and senior centers have been converted to on-going funding.
 - One-time-only funds, with few exceptions, are limited to one-time-only services.
 - Other on-going funding was limited to one-time-only to prevent a shortfall and budget cuts in FY 2016.

Meeting Critical Needs and Expanding Services

The budget responds to community demands to stabilize critical services for children, seniors and people experiencing mental illness. Highlights include:

- Proposes expansion of SUN schools in partnership with the City of Portland and School Districts. Ten high-need schools have been identified.
- New investments to divert mentally ill from jail:
 - At the Crisis Assessment and Treatment Center, rapid medical screening and psychiatric assessments of people with mental illness who are at risk of returning to jail.
 - In Corrections, additional 24-hour support by mental health professionals who conduct mental health assessments, authorize releases and hospitalization recommendations.
 - 20 new supportive housing beds
 - Partnership of Department of Community Justice, Health Department and Department of County Human Services

Capital Investments

- Continues funding for Health Department Headquarters and Downtown Courthouse planning and pre-development
- Invests in upgrades to IT and Communications technology to ensure vital systems remain online in the event of local or regional disaster.
- Proposes targeted investments in aging county buildings and equipment:
 - Animal Services Renovation - Troutdale
 - Columbia River Boathouse and Portage Building
 - Elections Ballot tally system

I'd like to thank the Budget Director, Karyne Kieta, and her incredible team for their diligent and excellent work in assembling the budget. Thank you also to my Chief of Staff, Emerald Walker, for managing everything else while I poured my attention into the budget. Finally, thank you to our Department Directors and county staff for your work on the budget and every day. You make our world better.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marissa Madrigal". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Marissa Madrigal
Multnomah County Chair