

**District 3 Commissioner Julia Brim-Edwards**  
**Prepared remarks FY 2025 Budget**  
**June 6, 2024**

While this is my first budget with Multnomah County, it certainly isn't my first public budget process after decades of public service. Given the challenges facing the County, this process lacked adequate review, analysis and discussion by the commission about improved outcomes and what the Chair's budget was asking county staff and a network of providers to achieve on our community's behalf.

Throughout this process I have felt that the budget system and process as a whole is set up to protect the status quo by minimizing discussion about outcomes and instead focusing on activities or outputs. And, it started with the Commission being asked to "approve" the budget the day after we received it.

I am going channel my "eastsider-ness"

This is a time of record homelessness, with thousands of people in Multnomah County still living on our streets without shelter, basic services, or a path to housing.

It's a time when the livability and safety in some of our neighborhoods is dangerously compromised, property crimes are rampant, and gun violence is at elevated levels. Those neighborhoods include some areas of District 3, including Lents, Hazelwood, and Powellhurst-Gilbert. No amount of public pronouncements that things are better will convince many of my eastside neighbors that things are "better" until they actually are...on their street, in their neighborhood and at their local business.

It's a time when fentanyl deaths are at a record level – trending at nearly 36 deaths a month -- and when our neighborhoods and streets have community members in desperate need of mental health services as well as detox, sobering, treatment and recovery services.

It's a time when the County is seeing a decline in population and a reduction in our tax base which funds essential public services because of the conditions in our neighborhoods and downtown.

And, it's a time when the County has an unprecedented amount of funding to get after some of our biggest issues.

And, that is why it is disappointing that this proposed budget lacks strategic focus, misses opportunities for enhanced accountability, and is playing a game of inches instead of going for the big plays to get after our biggest challenges.

While it was billed as a “constraints budget” which means some departments were asked to make reductions as part of the budgeting process, in the end this budget adds more than 170 full-time positions in many different departments.

And, here are some examples of my concern about focus in the Chair’s original budget:

- Many of the program offers in the budget focus on activities versus measurable outcomes that are part of a larger strategic investment.
- There is not a comprehensive fentanyl strategy which will aim to dramatically lower the number of overdose deaths funded in this budget, and it isn’t clear that any of the strategies or tactics from the 90 day fentanyl emergency are being funded and replicated in East Portland.
- Public safety budgets, the DA and the Sheriff’s office were underfunded, while the COO’s budget was increased by more than \$2M for senior staff, consultants, retreats and meeting support.
- There was \$385,000 ongoing funds for enforcement and a public education program about the City’s new leaf blower ordinance, which is the City’s responsibility to fund.
- There was a million dollars in on-going funding to set up a public financing scheme for campaigns for County Commission seats; it was proposed as on-going funding for a program that has yet been designed, or even briefed to this board.
- The auditor’s office was given a constraint budget where an independent review of county operations can result in greater transparency and accelerate more effective and efficient delivery of services.
- And, staffing levels in the jails create a compromising safety situation for both staff and adults in custody and limit essential services. This is not the place the County should be when we have elevated levels of crime.

But, I also live the value that you fight for what you believe in during these moments and you make the best effort to lay out what you want to see accomplished and funded to help the community. That’s what I have tried to

do in my first county budget, and -- while I have reservations about the overall direction and a difference of opinion on some of the priorities -- I do have reasons to support this budget overall.

Here is what I am supportive of in this budget:

- I am supportive of the community sheltering strategy that is funded in this budget ---AND it needs to be bigger and more ambitious given we still have thousands of people on the streets without shelter, basic services or a path to housing. We should pursue more than the minimum numbers of shelter and transitional housing that is included in this plan.
- The 24/7 drop off receiving and sobering center funding is allocated in this budget, and I'm hopeful the implementation will now be accelerated given this is a desperately needed service for our community safety and that it will give those intoxicated on alcohol or drugs a safe place to sober up and access services related to withdrawal management, treatment and recovery. I want to thank the Core Group & Key Advisors who developed the Sobering Plan.
- The addition of deputies and detectives within the Sheriff's Office to specifically work on gun dispossession, child abuse cases, and gun violence crimes is an important funding addition to this budget. These types of crimes are inter-related and the impact on neighborhoods and families is tragic and we should have done more.
- The addition of more deputy district attorneys, victim advocate services, and investigation support add critical capacity to a district attorney's office that struggles to meet the needs of a community demanding improvements in our community safety and timely justice. These additions will allow more gun and drug cases to be prosecuted, more victims to be heard and supported, and more deliberate juvenile case involvement.
- There are no fee increases in this budget, which given the state of our economic climate and that many residents and local small businesses are still struggling economically , is the right position to be in.
- It continues to support improvements in animal services and maintains our worldclass library system.
- And, finally, the County has dedicated staff who are doing their best to serve this community and deserve support.

I am going to vote for this budget because we need to keep moving, and I'll be pushing for us this year to do the strategic work that needs to happen so that we are using our funding in a way that makes real, sustained progress on homelessness, improved access to mental health and drug treatment services, and safer neighborhoods....and not just downtown, or the westside or our more affluent neighborhoods. But that we actually see improvements on the eastside of Portland, in North Portland and across the County.

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