



Department of Community Services CBAC

TO: Chair Jessica Vega Pederson and Board of County Commissioners (5 pages)

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

DATE: March 5, 2026

SUBJECT: DCS Community Budget Advisory Committee Report & Recommendations

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Fiscal Year 2026-27 (FY27) represents another challenging year for the County's finances. In this difficult budget year, the DCS CBAC did its best to evaluate the Department of Community Services budget program offers with a lens focused on the County's core values and equity commitments, balanced against the need to sustain key programs, to meet basic legal obligations, and to minimize risks and harms from the unfortunate but necessary budget cuts across the county.

The CBAC recommends that the County's FY27 DCS budget prioritize our moral obligation to reduce harm through the work of the Animal Services Division, maintain positive momentum in the Land Use Division, and safeguard our electoral process through the work of the Elections Division. Specifically, the CBAC suggests priorities for restoration in these divisions, along with one ongoing addition and three one-time-only (OTO) additions.

The CBAC FY27 program offer priorities, by division, are:

Animal Services:

- Total or partial restoration of funding for Enrichment Program
(*Reduction-01, Program Offer 97007*)
- Total or partial restoration of funding for Client Services Support
(*Reduction-06, Program Offer 90005*)

Land Use:

- Total restoration of Planner 1 position
(*Reduction-02, Program Offer 90021*)
- One-Time-Only Addition - Zoning Code Improvement project
(*Addition-04-OTO, Program Offer 90021B*)

Members: Yume Delegato (Chair), Jim Abeles, John Barber, Peter Finley Fry, Kara Hall, Omatola Oladapo, Taylor Scott, Tim Wiepking

Staff: Denell Broncho, DCS CBAC Coordinator

Elections:

- One-Time-Only Addition - Ranked Choice Voting
(Addition-01-OTO, Program Offer 90010C)
- One-Time-Only Addition - Ranked Choice Voting Outreach
(Addition-02-OTO, Program Offer 90010D)
- Ongoing Addition - New position for GIS Support
(Addition-01-Ongoing, Program Offer 90010E)
- Total or partial restoration of Voter Pamphlet distribution
(Reduction-03, Program Offer 90010A)

PROCESS

The DCS CBAC was convened in November 2025 and met regularly from December 2025 through February 2026. With exemplary coordination by DCS staff and leadership, the CBAC was briefed by key staff in each of the DCS divisions and the DCS Director's office. The briefings provided CBAC members with frank, transparent, and informative overviews of the responsibilities and challenges in each division, and a framework for understanding the divisions' budgeting in this difficult budget year.

In a work session to develop our recommendations, the CBAC considered the Department's program offers, including constraints, ongoing additions, and one-time-only additions to the base budget. To evaluate each budget item, the CBAC looked to the County's core values and equity framework as their north star, prioritizing outcomes that equitably benefit the broadest array of community members. Because of the seriousness of this year's budget challenges, the CBAC gave special consideration to the survival of key programs, the County's obligation to meet basic legal obligations, and the need to minimize risks and harm to community services due to budget cuts.

EMERGING THEMES/TRENDS

The Cumulative Impact of Successive Constraint Years

As we contend with another difficult budget year, this CBAC has deep appreciation for DCS leadership's work to submit a prioritized 5% reduction package in alignment with the Chair's guidance.

Given the breadth of community services being delivered by the Department, it is challenging to weigh priorities for funding across the disparate divisions. Doing so requires considering reduced funding for services that will cease to function without personnel; for services at risk of legal consequences or inability to meet legal obligations; for impact to the overall viability of divisions; and implication of basic moral obligations to minimize harm, not only to staff but to County residents who rely on these services.

Our recommendations have attempted to hold these disparate and conflicting factors in balance. However, they also denote a more existential challenge for County services: the cumulative impact of successive constraint years is an exponential reduction in service delivery. There is a limit to how much a department can cut without threatening the viability of the entire enterprise.

Members: *Yume Delegato (Chair), Jim Abeles, John Barber, Peter Finley Fry, Kara Hall, Omatola Oladapo, Taylor Scott, Tim Wiepking*

Staff: *Denell Broncho, DCS CBAC Coordinator*

BUDGET/PROGRAM OFFERS FEEDBACK

Animal Services must continue to meet its moral obligations

In addition to its statutory obligations, the Animal Services Division has a moral obligation to provide the best standard of care feasible for the animals in its care and to responsibly steward the volunteer labor and donations that it receives from the community. Actions that will substantially reduce animal quality of life or adoptability present a substantial moral hazard and should be avoided.

Maintaining momentum in Land Use

By all accounts, there has been remarkable progress made by Land Use Planning to reduce permit wait times and improve service delivery. The CBAC believes that maintaining this forward momentum is absolutely necessary, especially as land use fees were increased substantially this fiscal year - it is unreasonable to ask ratepayers to pay higher costs and then reduce services.

Additionally, this CBAC believes that effective land use planning is critical to the County's economic recovery in outyears. Given the year-over-year limitations for increases to Maximum Assessed Value, it will take many years for revenue collection to recover based on increased tax increment to existing properties alone. To spur recovery, new assessed value must be added to our tax rolls. In order to do so, the County must remain an effective partner in planning and permitting new projects.

Trust in elections remains a priority

The Elections Division successfully implemented ranked choice voting in the City of Portland in 2024; it must now do so for the entire county in the coming fiscal year. The CBAC recognizes that transparency, equity, and integrity are central to ensuring trust in elections processes, but these values also need to be reflected in the voter's experience and understanding. This remains a challenging task in a constrained budget environment, as the County Auditor's recent audit of the Elections Division calls out.

One-Time-Only Offers Are Not Always Optional

Understanding the budget pressures, this CBAC would traditionally be reluctant to advocate for Ongoing Additions or One-Time-Only Additions in a constraint year. However, given the resources that must be allocated in an election year, several of this year's offerings are essentially mandatory. Mindful of this, we have attempted to limit our recommendations to offerings that are either obligatory (such as a well-run election) or will have an immediate return on investment. While this body is keen to ameliorate longer-term risks for the County, those items must be a lower priority in a constraint year.

DEPARTMENT BUDGET/PROGRAM OFFER RECOMMENDATIONS

*Our top priorities for **Restoration**, by Division:*

Animal Services:

1. Total or partial restoration of funding for Enrichment Program
(Reduction-01, Program Offer 97007)
2. Total or partial restoration of funding for Client Services Support
(Reduction-06, Program Offer 90005)

Total or partial restoration of funding for the Enrichment Program was the CBAC's number one identified restoration for this fiscal year. Not only does the County have a moral obligation to uphold quality-of-life for the animals in its care, but elimination of the Enrichment Program would detrimentally impact animal

Members: *Yume Delegato (Chair), Jim Abeles, John Barber, Peter Finley Fry, Kara Hall, Omatola Oladapo, Taylor Scott, Tim Wiepking*

Staff: *Denell Broncho, DCS CBAC Coordinator*

adoptability, leading to longer, more costly stays and a reduction in live release rates. It would also impede Animal Services's ability to effectively leverage volunteer hours and donated toys and blankets.

Similarly, while the CBAC agreed with the DCS's identification of Client Services Support as a slightly lower priority for restoration, maintaining front-line support for members of the public remains crucial. The CBAC chose not to recommend restoration for any programs where there was an existing vacancy.

Land Use Planning:

1. Total restoration of Planner 1 position
(Reduction-02, Program Offer 90021)

Retention of the Planner 1 position is another priority for this CBAC. Retaining this position will allow the Land Use Planning division to maintain the improvements they've made to service delivery. Given the recent increase in land use fees, it is important that the ratepayer continue to see a return on investment for that additional cost, especially in an environment where it is in the County's best interest that we remove barriers to the creation of new assessable value on the tax roll.

Elections:

1. Total or partial restoration of Voter Pamphlet distribution
(Reduction-03, Program Offer 90010A)

While the CBAC acknowledges that many voters may have access to this information online, total elimination of physical Voter Pamphlets could have a disproportionate impact on marginalized communities, including those with unreliable access to the internet, individuals who are homebound, and those experiencing homelessness. This is an especially salient consideration as the County implements ranked choice voting for the first time at a countywide level. At a minimum, this CBAC would recommend that the Chair consider allocating resources for on-demand printing or other measures that would ameliorate the impact to marginalized communities.

Our priorities for **Ongoing Addition Program Offers**, by Division:

Elections:

1. Ongoing Addition - New position for GIS Support
(Addition-01-Ongoing, Program Offer 90010E)

While this CBAC does not relish contemplating new ongoing expenses in a constrained budget environment, prior mapping errors have proven quite expensive, both in terms of labor and reputational cost. It is reasonable to assume that if this need remains unaddressed, we will continue to periodically encounter these issues and incur costs that may very well be greater in aggregate than the year-over-year cost of funding this position. For this reason, the CBAC has chosen to put this addition forward for consideration.

Our priorities for **One-Time-Only Program Offers**, by Division:

Elections:

1. One-Time-Only Addition - Ranked Choice Voting
(Addition-01-OTO, Program Offer 90010C)

Members: Yume Delegato (Chair), Jim Abeles, John Barber, Peter Finley Fry, Kara Hall, Omatola Oladapo, Taylor Scott, Tim Wiepking

Staff: Denell Broncho, DCS CBAC Coordinator

2. One-Time-Only Addition - Ranked Choice Voting Outreach
(Addition-02-OTO, Program Offer 90010D)

While One-Time-Only Additions are often thought of as “nice to haves,” the implementation of Ranked Choice Voting is perhaps a notable exception in this year’s budget cycle. At a time when maintaining public trust in elections remains critical, the County must be able to successfully and safely implement Ranked Choice Voting countywide. To do so effectively and minimize voting errors will also require outreach and education, especially given that the County lacks an institutional partner of the City of Portland’s size (as they had for the implementation of Ranked Choice Voting in Portland).

Land Use:

1. One-Time-Only Addition - Zoning Code Improvement project
(Addition-04-OTO, Program Offer 90021B)

This is the final year of the Zoning Code Improvement project. Successful completion of this project at a relatively nominal cost will provide efficiencies through easier to follow rules and quality-of-life improvements for both County staff and the public that will continue to pay ongoing dividends in outyears.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The committee would like to give special thanks to Denell Broncho, Department Deputy Director and CBAC coordinator, for her essential assistance to CBAC throughout this process, along with Tina LeFebvre and Tawnni Simon for assisting with meeting coordination and logistics.

The committee would also like to particularly thank the Department and Division leadership for meeting with us and providing us with excellent information and an important perspective into the Department and its work:

- Margi Bradway, Department Director
- Megan Gibb, Land Use Planning Director
- Tim Scott, Elections Director
- Erin Grahek, Animal Services Director
- Jon Henrichsen, Transportation Director
- Britta Schinske, Senior Finance Manager
- D’Metri Mattocks, Equity & Inclusion Manager
- Amara Perez, Director of the Office of Community Involvement