



Office of Community Involvement



## Department of County Assets and Department of County Management CBAC

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**TO:** Department Director, Chair Jessica Vega Pederson and Board of County Commissioners

**FROM:** Department of County Assets (DCA) and Department of County Management (DCM) Community Budget Advisory Committee (CBAC)

**DATE:** March 6, 2026

**SUBJECT:** DCA and DCM Community Budget Advisory Committee Report and Recommendations

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY** — The Department of County Assets (DCA) and Department of County Management (DCM) Citizen Budget Advisory Committee (CBAC) reviewed the FY2027 budgets during a period of significant fiscal constraint for Multnomah County. With the County facing an estimated budget deficit of approximately five percent, both departments have proposed reductions to funding and staffing while continuing to sustain the core operational services that support the functioning of the entire County.

Unlike many County departments that deliver direct public services, DCA and DCM primarily provide the operational backbone that enables those services to function. These departments support the priorities and program offers of other County departments by delivering essential internal services including information technology, facilities management, capital planning, fleet operations, human resources, finance, risk management, records management, and other administrative services. As such, reductions in these areas may not immediately appear as public-facing service changes but can have long-term impacts on reliability, infrastructure, and the County's operational capacity.

The CBAC conducted its review consistent with the County's Strategic Plan values of accountability, social and environmental justice, leading with race, equity and inclusion, and safety and well-being. In a constrained fiscal environment, the committee also considered the need to:

- Sustain essential County infrastructure and operational services;
- Meet legal and operational obligations;
- Minimize long-term risks created by deferred investments or reductions; and
- Preserve the County's ability to support program offers prioritized by other departments.

# DCA and DCM CBAC

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In this year of fiscal scarcity, the CBAC believes that DCA and DCM have brought forward a responsible and pragmatic set of program offers and carryover programs. Given the structural nature of many internal service costs and the limited flexibility available within internal service rate structures, the CBAC recognizes that meaningful reductions are difficult to achieve without impacting the County's operational backbone. With a few specific exceptions noted later in this report, the CBAC supports the general approach taken by both departments in balancing fiscal responsibility with operational continuity.

**PROCESS** — To develop this report, the CBAC conducted interviews with county staff and leadership from both departments. Each meeting included presentations from County staff and Q&A with both prepared (provided in advance by CBAC members) and spontaneous questions. Meetings were generally conducted in a hybrid format with most members and staff attending in person.

The list of interviews was developed jointly by CBAC members and DCA/DCM staff based both on previous years' presentations and specific questions and concerns highlighted by members for this fiscal year. This shared development was greatly improved by the new CBAC orientation led by the Office of Community Involvement for new and returning CBAC members in September 2025, which ensured all members had a baseline understanding of County operations and the budget process.

All interviews occurred prior to the release of FY2027 proposed department budgets, which meant that complete program offers for the upcoming fiscal year were not available for review. As a result, staff were only able to speak generally about their divisions and were unable to discuss specific program details. Moreover, CBAC members would note that to a large extent, both DCA and DCM's budgets were essentially fixed as part of the internal services rate setting in the fall before and while the CBAC was convened. Nonetheless, CBAC members appreciated that County staff and leadership were open, honest, and transparent about the current status of the County, areas of growth and concern, and the impact of potential reductions and preservations.

Below is a list of DCA/DCM CBAC meetings, including dates and the names and titles of county staff and leadership interviewed (where relevant).

- **September 2025 — CBAC Orientation (multiple meetings)**
- **October 27— Kick-off Meeting**
  - Tracey Massey — Interim Deputy COO and DCA Director
  - Michael Vaughn — County Assessor and Deputy DCM Director
- **November 17 — DCM Overview**
  - Chris Neal — Chief Operating Officer (COO) and DCM Director
  - Michael Vaughn — County Assessor and Deputy DCM Director

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- **December 8 — DCA Internal Service Rates**
  - Joel Juve — Senior Budget Analyst (IT and Capital)
  - Becky Zou — Senior Budget Analyst (FPM and Capital)
  - Chris Brower — Budget Analyst (Fleet, Motor Pool, Records and Distribution)
- **December 15 — County Budgeting Overview & Financial Forecast**
  - Christian Elkin — Chief Budget Officer
  - Jeff Renfro — County Economist
- **January 12, 2026 — Finance and Risk & Central Human Resources**
  - Eric Arellano — Chief Financial Officer
  - Cessa Diaz — Interim Chief Human Resources Officer
- **January 26 — Equity and Inclusion: Equity in the Budget Process**
  - Sophie Wilson — DCA Equity and Inclusion Manager
  - Estelle Norris — DCM Equity and Inclusion Manager
- **February 9 — Information Technology & Facilities and Property Management**
  - Sim Ogle — Chief Information Officer
  - Dan Zalkow — Facilities and Property Management Director
- **February 23 — County Administration, DCA, and DCM Budget Updates & Work Session #1**
  - Chris Neal — COO and DCM Director
  - Tracey Massey — Interim Deputy COO and DCA Director
- **March 2 — Work Session #2**

While CBAC members appreciate the significant time provided by County staff and leadership through these interviews, the short turnaround between the release of proposed program offers and the deadline for submitting this letter limited members' time to provide comprehensive feedback on all aspects of both departments' budgets. As a result, members wanted to note that the lack of feedback for any elements of the budget not discussed in the remainder of this recommendation does not indicate either support for or objection to these components.

**EMERGING THEMES/TRENDS** — The County's financial challenges are no longer an "emerging" issue; they are now an ongoing and central factor shaping both the DCA and DCM budgets. The FY2027 budget is neither the first nor likely the last in a continuing series of constrained budgets the County will face in the coming years.

The CBAC appreciates the departments' thoughtful approach to managing these constraints. Members recognize and value the continued commitment to the County's core values and the effort to maintain mission-critical services while implementing increasingly difficult budget reductions.

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However, in certain areas of both departments' budgets, the prospect of another constrained fiscal year in FY2028 remains a significant concern. While members understand that the risks and potential service reductions associated with constraints in internal processes and support services can be difficult to quantify, it will be critically important in future budget cycles to more clearly identify and communicate those impacts.

## Emerging Theme – Budget Pressures in DCA-IT

The CBAC notes that growth pressures in the DCA – IT Division are concerning. The Division is under ongoing pressure to service more County facilities, handle more data, manage more software, navigate the new AI landscape, and deal with more voluminous and more serious cyber threats. The Division has been necessarily proactive with work on data strategies, AI policies, and cyber defenses. Members support the program offers spanning the Division but would also note that doing this critical county-wide work in future constrained budgets will eventually be untenable. The CBAC suggests that future budget years may need to commit to increasing support to one or several of these key program areas.

## Emerging Theme – Centralized Services

The CBAC understands from several presenters that in the coming year, there will be substantial reorganization of common departmental services into a more centralized structure housed in DCM. Members strongly support this effort and hope that the County finds both effectiveness and efficiencies in the new system. At the same time, members have some preliminary concern that, as functions are consolidated, remaining staff may be required to absorb responsibilities previously performed by distributed teams within individual departments, potentially increasing workloads in a manner that could negatively affect employee morale and retention if not carefully managed. For the purposes of budgeting in FY2028, the CBAC hopes that transmittal letters and budget materials will provide transparency and clarity in the impacts of this centralization in all County departments.

**BUDGET/PROGRAM OFFERS FEEDBACK** — At a high level, the CBAC recognizes that both departments have developed their FY2027 budgets within significant fiscal constraints and in alignment with the Chair's guidance and County strategic priorities. Given this, the CBAC would like the Board and department leadership to continue its mission of sustaining core infrastructure and operational capacity that underpins all County services. DCA and DCM do not provide optional or easily deferred services; rather, they deliver foundational support that enable every other County department to function. Continued reductions in these essential internal services risk degrading reliability, increasing deferred maintenance liabilities, and creating greater long-term costs.

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In future years, we would like to learn more about the impacts of the planned centralization of common services within DCM. While the CBAC supports efforts to find efficiencies and improve coordination, it will be important for future budget materials to clearly articulate measurable outcomes, cost savings, service-level implications, and workforce impacts associated with this restructuring. In particular, we are cognizant of the potential cumulative impact of FTE reductions in both this fiscal year and in projected years. As functions are consolidated and staffing levels decline, there is a risk that remaining employees will absorb additional responsibilities, which may affect workload sustainability, morale, and long-term retention if not proactively managed.

The CBAC strongly prioritizes identifying efficiencies wherever possible, including through improved business processes, technology modernization, strategic capital planning, and thoughtful consolidation of services. However, we also recognize that both departments provide almost entirely essential services to the County. As such, it will become increasingly difficult in future years to identify meaningful reductions that do not materially impact service levels, infrastructure reliability, compliance obligations, or risk exposure.

If stronger investments become possible in future budget cycles, members would recommend prioritizing the following:

- Preventive maintenance and facilities lifecycle investments to avoid compounding deferred maintenance liabilities.
- Information Technology capacity, particularly in cybersecurity, data management, and system modernization, given increasing risk and regulatory demands.
- Workforce stabilization and succession planning within centralized and internal service functions to mitigate the impacts of ongoing reductions.

Overall, the CBAC encourages the Board and department leadership to balance short-term deficit solutions with long-term sustainability of the County's operational backbone. Continued transparency regarding trade-offs, service-level impacts, and workforce implications will be critical as the County navigates future constrained budget years.

With regard to DCM's reductions package, members did not feel they were qualified to provide detailed comments on reductions that include personnel matters. Evaluating staffing changes requires an intimate understanding of operational workflows, position-specific responsibilities, legal obligations, collective bargaining considerations, and service interdependencies across departments — knowledge that resides with department leadership and management. Without that depth of operational insight, the CBAC cannot reliably assess the full impact of personnel reductions on service delivery, compliance, risk exposure, or organizational effectiveness.

# DCA and DCM CBAC

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**DEPARTMENT BUDGET/PROGRAM OFFER RECOMMENDATIONS** — Members' specific recommendations and general comments are listed below, **in no particular order** of priority:

*DCA | Program #78202 - Facilities Operations and Maintenance*

*DCA | Program #78203 - Facilities Client & Support Services*

*DCA | Program #78208 - Facilities Utilities*

DCA's "Other Funds Reductions" in facilities program offers rely heavily on incremental reductions to basic maintenance: HVAC preventive maintenance (25%), electrical systems preventive maintenance (30%), roof inspections and sidewalk repairs (25%), elevator inspections (50%), groundwater monitoring at Vance (50%), interior repair and upkeep (50%), pressure washing, parking lot maintenance and striping (50%), and window washing (50%). With future budget years projected to be no better than this year, these maintenance reductions will become the new normal. Unfortunately, the CBAC has no way of evaluating the severity of these cuts or the risks resulting from them, as indicators in the County's new Strategic Plan are insufficient for this purpose.

*DCA | Program #78249 - Sobering and Crisis Intervention Center*

The CBAC concurs with the need for this [long-awaited and necessary facility](#), and members support the one-time-only capital add request, especially as there is significant state funding involved. But the CBAC would also note that the facility is over a year late and is now budgeted at [more than double the original estimated cost](#). Meanwhile, the temporary deflection center is [not being utilized to its full potential](#). Members understand the Board is voting on Construction Approval on March 12, 2026, and support approval, but also urge the Board to insist on tighter management controls.

*DCA | Program #78234 - New Animal Services Facility - Design Phase*

As the CBAC wrote in last year's recommendation, members support the design phase funding for the long-delayed, much-needed New Animal Services Facility. But the CBAC would also ask that the County act more urgently in determining the financing mechanism for the facility that puts it on a clear path for construction.

***One-Time-Only FY 2027 Add Package Requests Capital***

The CBAC supports the full slate of one-time-only capital requests but decided to decline offering any prioritization. Members do not have the benefit of the detailed rationale and justification for requests coming from Departments other than DCA and DCM, and without that context have no way to prioritize them. Nevertheless, the CBAC would generally support prioritization of existing projects over new ones, and definite and immediate needs over projected or contingent ones.

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Of the items more squarely in the CBAC's purview, some additional comments are noted below:

*Program #78240 - Hansen Complex Deconstruction Project, \$4.3M*

In the absence of complete knowledge of the specific safety and liability concerns surrounding this property, some members of the CBAC were hesitant to support this project during the first of several constraint years, particularly with direct service cuts on the horizon. Other CBAC members expressed support for this project for workforce development reasons, public safety reasons, liability reasons, redevelopment reasons, and simply to remove the blight on the community.

*Program #78235 Walnut Park Redevelopment, \$250,000*

This is a request for "managing consultant services" to "assess options" and associated project management staffing. But this is a project with numerous county-funded development studies already – in 2022, 2023, 2024, and the solicitation of more options in FY 2026. The CBAC supports the development of the property, but members are concerned about the lack of concrete progress.

*New - Vehicle Electrification Pilot, \$500,000*

The CBAC strongly supports the County's overarching effort to electrify the County fleet as a way to reduce our reliance on fossil fuels. In light of the County's fiscal constraints, however, we encourage the County to structure this program around replacing vehicles at the end of their useful life with electric alternatives.

*New - Vector Control Relocation Project, \$3.5M*

*New - FPM Prophet Center Relocation, \$7M*

The CBAC strongly supports both of these necessary projects to relocate current County operations from current locations. Based on presentations to the CBAC, the Vector Control relocation is lease-limited and imminent, while the Prophet Center relocation depends on a Portland Public Schools decision. For this reason, members concur with the higher priority for the Vector Control project, but urge funding for both.

*New - DCS Shelter Buddy System Replacement*

While replacing the end-of-life animal shelter management software may not rise to the level of a top priority in the current fiscal year, the CBAC cautions against allowing critical systems to accumulate technical debt to the point of operational failure. We recommend that replacement be planned and prioritized as soon as fiscally prudent but not at the expense of more critical services.

# DCA and DCM CBAC

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**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS** — CBAC members would like to give special thanks to Nancy Artmann and Beverly Ford for their support, coordination, facilitation, responsiveness, and enthusiasm. They were essential to the organization and scheduling of our discussions and provided excellent perspective on all of the budget requests discussed. We would also like to acknowledge and extend our gratitude to all County staff and leadership guests/presenters for their time, informative presentations, and responsiveness to our many questions.

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