

MULTNOMAH COUNTY CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE: RECOMMENDATION ON JAIL INSPECTIONS

The Charter Review Committee is currently considering a recommendation that would amend the county Charter to require that each member of the Board of County Commissioners inspect county jail facilities a minimum of four times a year. For the inspections, each commissioner's office would convene a group of at least three constituents to accompany them. The constituents would be charged with documenting their observations of jail conditions, including conducting interviews with people who are incarcerated, and writing a year-end report on their findings, to be shared with their commissioner and the public.

The committee is interested in hearing from members of the Board of Commissioners about their experiences and thoughts on jail inspections. The committee hopes members of the board can provide a written response to committee members questions in advance of their next meeting on June 28th. The committee is particularly interested in learning:

1. How would the commissioner/chair describe the purpose of the current inspections of county correctional facilities?
 - a. The Board of County Commissioners is required to visit the local correctional facilities (ORS 169.040). That statute reads:
 - i. The county court or board of county commissioners of each county is the inspector of the local correctional facilities in the county. The court or board shall visit local correctional facilities operated by the county at least once in each regular term and may visit local correctional facilities within the county that are not operated by the county. When the court or board visits a local correctional facility, it shall examine fully into the local correctional facility, including, but not limited to, the cleanliness of the facility and the health and discipline of the persons confined. If it appears to the court or board that any provisions of law have been violated or neglected, it shall immediately give notice of the violation or neglect to the district attorney of the district.
2. What information is typically provided to the board during these inspections?
 - a. The inspections usually take anywhere from 4 to 6 hours. They involve visits to the Multnomah County Detention Center (MCDC) and Inverness Jail (IJ). Regardless of starting location, Multnomah County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) leadership provides an agenda for the day, an overview of the applicable laws governing jail facilities, and various information regarding programs and operations.
 - b. The tour of MCDC includes inspection of the booking and holding areas; control centers; the fourth floor which houses the medical unit and corrections health office, administrative holding cells, disciplinary cells, and mental health cells; and at least two dorms. Staff are available at any point to answer questions.

Interactions with any adults in custody are extremely limited.

- c. Inspection of IJ usually involves talking with senior facility staff. This is followed by a tour of a control center, at least two dorms, and kitchen and laundry facilities. Brief interactions with adults in custody usually occurs, and conversations have been organized for people in the treatment readiness dorm.
3. Is there a report or some other form of public communication that happens after the board inspects correctional facilities to educate the public about the board's observations?
 - a. No
4. Does the commissioner/chair think the inspections could be improved or expanded? If so, how?
 - a. Potentially. Currently, there are a number of official inspections of the Multnomah County correctional facilities. They include a state audit, an audit done by the Oregon State Sheriff's Association, a state mandated "Corrections Grand Jury" convened by the local District Attorney, and the inspection by the Board of County Commissioners. Each has their own distinct requirements, but are united in an overall effort to ensure transparency in the respective institutions. Another option for meeting that goal is to arrange an additional visit by the Board of County Commissioners, allowing each to focus on a single facility at a time.
5. What does the commissioner/chair think about the requirement to do four inspections a year with three constituents?
 - a. There are a number of complexities that come with implementing the proposal. Without more specifics on the process, it's challenging to understand what this would look like. For example, are the four inspections by the four commissioners done at separate times for 16 visits, or are they all coordinated? There is also no clarity on selection criteria for the constituents or how their report should be produced, or how the report would differ from the yearly report produced by the Corrections Grand Jury.
6. The committee would also welcome any additional information members of the board think would be valuable for the committee to consider in its decision-making process.
 - a. The County has a Central Community Budget Advisory Committee (CBAC) and an MCSO specific Community Budget Advisory Committee. They are composed of individuals who apply to our Office of Community Involvement. Successful applicants are referred to the Board of County Commissioners for their approval. We believe you could alternatively charge the CBAC with undertaking these tours, as there is an appointment process already in place and they could flesh out the additional details as part of their charge.