



Commissioner Julia Brim-Edwards
FY 2026 Budget Approval Prepared Statement
May 8, 2025

Commissioner Julia Brim-Edwards voted against approving the Chair's proposed budget in a 4-1 vote during today's Commission meeting and released the following statement:

Adopting an annual budget for the County is one of the most significant responsibilities we have as the County Commission. The budget is a reflection of our shared values and it should represent the priorities and needs of the communities we serve.

We develop an annual budget through the following actions:

- *Reviewing the Chair's submitted budget*
- *Receiving Department presentations*
- *Asking the community for their input through public budget hearings*
- *Digging deeper into the budget and discussing the elements of the proposed budget in public meetings*
- *Proposing and discussing budget amendments*

This is a \$4 Billion budget, including about \$800 Million in General Fund. The Commission should have ample time to hear from Department staff, County residents, and community partners on the impacts of the budget options before us. This is especially true in years when the Chair's budget proposes cuts and layoffs.

Multnomah County is unique in contrast to our neighboring counties and cities in how the budget process is structured and overseen by the Multnomah County Tax Supervising & Conservation Commission.

Last year, I raised the concern that we were asked to approve the budget just one day after the Commission received it and it was released publicly. A small amount of time has been added this year, but again, the Commission is being asked to approve the proposed budget just a few weeks after receiving the Chair's proposal.

Given the complexity and scale of the budget, the timeline does not give the Commission time to thoroughly review the Chair's proposed budget and gather information of the impacts of program or staffing changes, let alone receive budget presentations from Departments or hold public hearings and receive feedback from County residents.

"Approval" and "Adoption" of the Budget are formal actions taken by local governments in Oregon. This is not just a transmittal action; instead, it is a formal part of the budget process.

The purpose of Oregon's Local Budgeting Process is designed to, "Establish standard procedures for preparing, presenting, and administering the budgets of Oregon's local governments..."

The Oregon Department of Revenue Local Budget Manual, which is linked to State statute says the following about Budget approval:

"The budget committee considers the budget proposed by the budget officer and comments made by the public and may make additions or deletions. When the budget committee is satisfied, it approves the budget. The budget approved by the committee specifies the amount or rate of each ad valorem tax levy."

Transparency and accountability are cornerstones of good governance. Approving the budget today, without having sufficient time to understand and evaluate its impacts, limits my ability to make a fully informed decision. For example, the Chair's budget proposed cuts to school-based mental health therapists, homeless outreach services, employment programs and public safety, and at the same time, the budget adds new positions.

In the interest of transparency and responsible governance, I will continue to advocate for adjusting our process and timeline or have the Tax Supervising Commission adjust their process to allow for a more substantial review of the Chair's proposed budget before the Commission is asked to officially approve the budget. I want to acknowledge that this process creates a challenging position for our budget staff.

Speaking only for myself, a revised process will better align with the Commission's commitment and work to improve transparency and accountability in County decision-making. It will also ensure that the County Commission is empowered to perform our responsibility to approve and adopt an annual County budget that truly reflects our values and meets the needs of County residents.