

Submitted by Thomas Busse on April 5, 2022

I urge the addition of this clause or something to its effect:

4.20 (4) "Upon taking office and thereafter no less than annually, all County Officers shall make an inspection of all jails and places of involuntary detention in the county both private and public, excepting facilities operated by the Federal government or the Oregon Department of Corrections."

This or something to its effect is a common provision in charters and state constitutions in the Western United States. It has the impact of exposing commissioners to the consequences of passing ordinances imposing jail time as well as reminding them that the commissioners are responsible for ensuring jail's humane conditions, capital/capacity needs, and adequate budgeting. Detention facilities extend to inpatient psychiatric centers, quarantine facilities, and juvenile detention facilities. Cities and some special districts have the legal right to establish detention facilities, but the county officers as agents of the state have the duty to ensure the general welfare of City-run and privately-run facilities. In addition, sometimes involuntary mental health holds take place in privately-run institutions of varying standards of operations. I myself had to take a constitutionally-mandated jail tour as a civil grand juror in California, and during a tour, we were approached by a whistleblower, and this led to the exposure and conviction of a group of rogue sheriff deputies who were deliberately setting up "fight club" duels between inmates for gambling purposes.

In Multnomah, this practice would have exposed the problematic involuntary sobering Center operated under a county health dept contract run through the City of Portland by Central City Concern where the walls were covered with blood and feces. The county has also settled to significant taxpayer expense a number of lawsuits related to inmate abuse, wrongful inmate death, and substandard jail healthcare. Personal familiarity with these facilities will allow county commissioners to make more informed decisions when accepting legal settlement or choosing to defend claims against the county.