



Office of Community Involvement



Multnomah County Charter Review Subcommittee Recommendation Form

Subcommittee name:	Safety & Justice Subcommittee
Summary of recommendation:	We recommend that each member of the board of commissioners be required to inspect the county jail facilities a minimum of four times a year. Each commissioner's office is charged with convening a group of at least 3 constituents to join these visits. The constituents will document their observations on the conditions of the jail after each visit and write a year-end report on the conditions to be shared with their commissioner and published for the public. Constituents will be reasonably compensated for their time.
What section(s) of the Charter is this recommendation likely to impact?	This would be a new provision in the Charter and is not expected to change existing Charter provisions
What does this recommendation aim to accomplish?	<p>More transparency in the jails. This is an incremental pathway for the County's decision-makers to have greater contact with one of the most hidden parts of society, the jails, which coincidentally are its largest operating investment.</p> <p>State law currently requires the board of commissioners to inspect local correctional facilities. The board adopted a resolution that it will inspect each county correctional facility annually.</p> <p>This recommendation will ensure the County is making more than their required once a year inspection and add more accountability to their constituents by having some of them join in the visits. By making final reports about the jail conditions that are public, each commissioner is held to a higher standard for the jail conditions and the public has more information about the regular workings of the jails.</p> <p>The jails are also one of the County's biggest sources of inequity:</p> <p>While Black folks are 5% of the County's population, they make up about one third of the County jail's population.</p> <p>Portland, both the state and county's largest city, has the fifth worst racial arrest disparities in the nation.</p> <p>"Total jail disparities increased for Black adults by five percent, Latino adults by 24 percent, Asian and Pacific Islander adults by 29 percent, and Native American adults by 73 percent. Arrest proxy disparities increased for Black adults by 17 percent, Latino adults by nine percent and Native American adults by 350 percent." via Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Multnomah County Nov. 2019 report: https://multco-web7-psh-files-usw2.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/Multnomah_R.E.D.%20Analysis%202019_Final%20November%2019%202019_0.pdf</p>

	<p>“The share of Portland arrests made of homeless people has remained above 50% in the ensuing years. And jail bookings for homeless people have skyrocketed. Homeless people represented about 15% of jail bookings in 2017 but represented nearly 40% in 2019, the analysis found. Portland police arrest about 2/3 of the people booked into Multnomah County Jail. Gresham police, the sheriff’s office and federal agencies that make arrests in the county also book arrestees in the jail.”</p> <p>https://www.oregonlive.com/crime/2020/10/booking-homeless-portlanders-into-jail-is-endless-expensive-cycle-that-arrests-dont-curb-but-housing-does.html?outputType=amp</p> <p>These disparities are continuations of policies at the state, county and city levels across Oregon which have been perpetuated intentionally and subversively for 150+ years.</p>
<p>What MCCRC values is this recommendation grounded in?</p>	<p>Justice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healing and justice are central to Multnomah County’s government • Justice extends to all people, and especially people who have been historically marginalized. • Leading with race is important because of the inequities embedded in governance, with the understanding that it will help create an intersectional approach to this work. <p>Inclusive democracy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multnomah County’s government depends on active participation and representation of the communities people live in. <p>Access and belonging:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People know how to access their leaders and decision-makers. • People feel that they (and their communities) are a part of decision-making. <p>Transparency:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People understand how their county government works. • People are able to be heard by their government, and influence decision-making. • Communication with the public by the government is clear, and communities are sought out for their input.
<p>What are the potential fiscal impacts of this recommendation?</p>	<p>“Reasonable compensation” for the constituents joining the commissioners during visits has not been fiscally defined.</p>
<p>What potential negative impacts could result from this recommendation? What are potential obstacles to implementation?</p>	<p>The method in which the minimum of three constituents are chosen is important. Because commissioner offices would select the constituents accompanying them, it is possible that they could choose people who are not invested in improving jail conditions.</p> <p>Uniform tours by the sheriff could also lead to normalization of jail conditions/standards, especially without the option to randomize these visits.</p>

	<p>Scheduling for multiple calendars is always an obstacle and the same constituents may not be available for all of the jail visits in a year.</p> <p>Constituents who visit the jails may encounter administrative requirements, like the passage of a background check, which they may or may not be able to meet.</p>
<p>What resources did the subcommittee rely on in making this recommendation?</p> <p>(Link or cite documents)</p>	<p>The subcommittee was interested in pursuing ideas for improving county jail conditions. These reports informed that interest:</p> <p>An Accreditor Has Placed the Downtown Multnomah County Jail on Probation, Willamette Week, Jan 19, 2022: https://www.wweek.com/news/2022/01/19/an-accreditor-has-placed-the-downtown-multnomah-county-jail-on-probation/</p> <p>Multnomah County jails fail to establish recommended communication for people in custody, OPB, Oct 5, 2021: https://www.opb.org/article/2021/10/05/multnomah-county-audit-jails-covid-19-communication-isolation/?outputType=amp</p> <p>Blacks overrepresented in every part of Multnomah County's criminal justice system, report finds: Oregonlive, Feb.10, 2016: https://www.oregonlive.com/portland/2016/02/blacks_overrepresented_in_ever.html</p> <p>A written public comment was submitted by Thomas Busse that led the subcommittee to explore the idea of mandated jail visits by the board of commissioners.</p> <p>The subcommittee learned from Katherine Thomas that state law requires the board of commissioners to inspect local correctional facilities (169.040). The Multnomah County board of commissioners passed a resolution to inspect local correctional facilities annually.</p>

Multnomah County Charter Review Committee

Shared Values

Justice:

- Healing and justice are central to Multnomah County's government
- Justice extends to all people, and especially people who have been historically marginalized.
- Leading with race is important because of the inequities embedded in governance, with the understanding that it will help create an intersectional approach to this work.

Inclusive democracy:

- Multnomah County's government depends on active participation and representation of the communities people live in.
- People can access and participate in government using their preferred language.
- Outreach is a key value of democracy:
 - Decisions are informed by culturally-specific research and outreach.
 - Relationships should be an authentic, long lasting partnership; they should not be transactional in nature.

Access and belonging:

- People know how to access their leaders and decision-makers.

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- People feel that they (and their communities) are a part of decision-making.
 - Government reflects the communities it represents.

Transparency:

- People understand how their county government works.
- People are able to be heard by their government, and influence decision-making.
- Communication with the public by the government is clear, and communities are sought out for their input.

Innovation:

- Government is able to change and adapt to address historic and persistent problems.
 - Change is embraced as a way to better serve communities.
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