

Multnomah County 2020-21 Hearing Minutes

Monday, June 22, 2020

11:00 p.m.

Multnomah Building
501 SE Hawthorne Blvd.
Portland, Oregon
Via Webex

Present:

TSCC:

Chair David Barringer, Vice Chair James Ofsink, Commissioner Margo Norton, Commissioner Mark Wubbold, Commissioner Harmony Quiroz, Executive Director Craig Gibons and Budget Analyst Tunie Betschart.

Absent: None

Multnomah County:

Multnomah County Board of Commissioners: Chair Deborah Kafoury, Commissioner Susheela Jayapal, Commissioner Sharon Meieran, Commissioner Jessica Vega Pederson and Commissioner Lori Stegmann
Staff: Budget Director Christian Elkin

Chair David Barringer opened the public hearing and asked the Commissioners and staff to introduce themselves. He then asked if any of the Commissioners have business relationships with the district that could be perceived as a conflict of interest. There were none. Chair Barringer asked the district representatives to introduce themselves.

Following introductions he explained that following the hearing on June 9, the County was considering budget expenditure to increase greater than 10% at adoption. This second hearing is required in order to follow budget law when adopting the budget (ORS 294.456). He concluded by stating this might be a historic first for TSCC. It is certainly the first, second hearing he has participated in, in his many years of being on the commission.

Budget Director Christian Elkin explained that the reason why there was a need for the second hearing was in order to increase the CARES fund by more than 10%. She said the County wanted to ensure that that was part of the adopted budget process so that they could communicate that plan to the community.

Chair Deborah Kafoury thanked the Commissioner for holding the second hearing. She then gave a brief explanation for the changes in the budget, She said it seem appropriate that we are having the very first, second hearing considering the unprecedented times. She praised staff at Multnomah County for their quick response to all the changing conditions. She added that without a vaccine or a cure, we are going to be living with this virus or at the very least next fiscal year. She explained that the budget was put together quickly; but with extensive input from various communities. It represents what is needed at this point in time.

With that that commissioners moved to the prepared questions.

TSCC questions:

Chair Barringer asked the following questions:

What portion of these expenditures are required to meet the standards for Phase 2 reopening of the County?

Multnomah County Chair Kafoury responded saying:

We just opened up Multnomah County with a careful and cautious phased reopening on Friday. And we are we are not at this point preparing or planning for phase two for, at the very least 21 days, which is what the governor has outlined. The standards for meeting phase two, we really believe are the same for meeting phase one in terms of our preparation, which is contact tracing, testing, isolation, and self-quarantine programs., They're all required for phase one. The plan that we have before you is what is going to be the plan throughout, regardless of the phase we're in. I don't know that there's a portion of these expenditures that are specifically dedicated to phase two. We believe this is the plan for the entire year, regardless of phase one, phase two or phase three.

Commissioner Norton asked these follow-up questions:

This is the question the public wants to know: What is the anticipated reopening schedule 21 days potentially, for phase two? What do you see happening next? How do you see the full reopening folding out?

County Chair Kafoury answered saying:

It is really too early to say. Our public health department has been involved in helping the governor and staff craft the phasing of the reopening. The first thought was that it might be two weeks between phases. Realizing that there's really no way that you can have time to see the effects of phase one with people getting seen; how many people are contracting the disease and then how fast it's spreading; and whether you're able to do the contact tracing; that's really not quite possible in a two week period. So we extended it. We helped the governor decides that extending it two to three weeks would be more appropriate. I do want to say at this point that this is a minimum of three weeks. It is by no means the maximum. So we are not, at this point, ready to say that we're ready for phase two. Yesterday we had the highest number of recorded cases in Multnomah County. We're doing very thorough contact tracing, reaching out to communities, trying to discern where those cases are coming from, but we won't have that detailed information for several days at the earliest.

Commissioner Ofsink asked the following questions:

What portion of the funding is secured and what portion is still pending?

County Chair Kafoury responded saying:

We have put forward a budget that's approximately \$90 million. The County has received \$28 million from the federal government in the CARES allocation. We are anticipating that we will

spend approximately \$7 million of that in this current budget, FY 2020-21. That leaves us with \$21 million for FY 21 that is secured. Other CARES dollars that have come into our community have been to the City of Portland. They received \$114 million. The City Council is scheduled to make its final decisions on how they will allocate their CARE's dollars in early July. So we don't yet have a firm confirmation. We have been in constant communication with the City, and have had commitments from them even before the dollars came into our community about the fact that we are joint partners in this effort and that they made commitments to help us with our response.

Then once the dollars came in, we started in earnest conversations about specific dollar amounts. Over the past three weeks, we have been discussing the same numbers and that is \$16.5 million for safety on and off the streets, which is a direct response with our joint office of homeless services. We know that the County, as well as the state has been encouraging the City to use the CARES money to help fund our public health response. In this budget we have \$15 million that is assigned to the City. We believe that that's a reasonable reflection of the conversations that we've been having with individual members of the City Council, with the Mayor and with the staff.

We also have just recently received \$17 million in Federal Emergency Solutions grant funding from the Department of Housing and Urban Development. It is funding that was appropriated under the CARES act. HUD allocated the first round of funding after the CARES act became law. Then HUD allocated the remaining amount of the funding. The total of the two allocations is \$17 million. We are very happy to receive \$10 million for state rent assistance from the Oregon Legislature's Joint E-Board Meeting that was held recently. That is money in the bank. We've been in conversations with the State and the Oregon Health Authority about supporting community testing. We have asked both verbally and in writing for a contribution of \$10 million and we have had a verbal confirmation of those dollars. But we don't have those dollars in the bank. So the amount of money that we still don't have in the bank is \$10 million from the Oregon Health Authority, \$15 million in the City of Portland for our public health response and the \$16.5 million from the City of Portland for safety on and off the streets.

What is that funding dependent on?

Chair Kafoury explained saying:

The city dollars just need to be voted on by the City Council. Then the money from the state, the \$10 million from OHA, I expect we will be getting a written confirmation of those dollars soon. The CARES money in and of itself has some strings. It has to be spent by the end of December, the end of this calendar year. The Budget Office has done an extraordinary dance to make sure we won't end up in March and don't have any money. It's been a challenge. Maybe Christian Elkin has something to add.

Ms. Elkin added the following:

We have secured the Emergency Solutions Grant funding and we will start drawing that down. It is intended to be spent on emergency shelter in response to COVID. We've been receiving this grant longer than a decade. We will have no problem complying with those restrictions on the funding.

Chair Kafoury explained further saying:

Much of the County's budget in normal years has so many different sources from state/federal. While this is a unique circumstance, dealing with the federal government and state government is not a unique circumstance for us.

Commissioner Quiroz asked the following questions:

What happens if all the required funding does not materialize? Can you talk to us a little bit about the scalability of these efforts? We obviously don't know the full extent of how the pandemic will proceed and so there's certainly opportunities to scale back or scale forward, depending on how things go. Can you tell us what would happen in terms of priorities, if all of the required funding does not materialize?

Multnomah County Chair Kafoury answered saying:

I'm an optimist here. I'm confident that the money is going to come and whether we get it from the sources that we've outlined today, or whether we get it from others, we know that this is a very conservative estimate. I could easily see the dollars that we need in our community to grow over the next year. We're used to stretching dollars at Multnomah County. We've not had a time where we've really lived with a flush budget. So we're used to making every dollar count. We also know that our community is strongly invested in ensuring that people are safe and as few people as possible contract this disease. Since these aren't "left" programs, these are programs, dollars and allocations that are going to save people's lives. I think at the end of the day we are definitely going to have the resources that we need.

Things are scalable. I'm also sure that these numbers will change over time. As I said, this budget was put together fairly quickly. It's just so hard to imagine that it's just been a few short months since we heard of COVID-19. So I have no doubt that the numbers will shift a little bit., Some areas may need additional funds, some areas may not need as many dollars. We continue to work in really close cooperation with our partners, not just at the City and the State, but also in Washington and Clackamas Counties, now that the three counties are tied together. I think things will change. That is one thing I'm confident of is that there will be some change; but I'm also confident that our community will rise to meet that need.

Commissioner Quiroz:

I appreciate the effort to amend and shift your budget. Not all the districts are doing that at this time, and it's nice to see the County working so diligently to be transparent about how that money is spent.

Chair Barringer said that is the end of the prepared questions. He thanked Multnomah County Commissioners and staff for the answers to the questions and asked if anyone had any comments they would like to make. There were none.

Chair Barringer asked if anyone had indicated they wanted to give testimony. No one had.

With there being no other comments, questions or testimony, Chair Barringer closed the public hearing and opened the meeting of the TSCC Commissioners to consider Multnomah County 2020-21 Approved budget amendments.

He asked if the Commissioners had any additional questions or comments. There were none.

He asked Executive Director Gibbons give a review of the changes from and staffs' recommendations for the Certification Letter.

Executive Director Gibbons said that the budget was well done from TSCC Staff perspective. He recommended the Certification Letter contain no recommendations or objections with regard to the 2020-21 Amended Approved budget or the budget process. He said he would recommend the Commissioner request an update on the County's budget prior to the mid-year since this is such an unusual year with all the uncertainties.

Commissioner Norton moved to certify the new certification letter recommended by staff which states the Commissioners have no recommendation or objections with regard to Multnomah County's 2020-21 Amended Approved budget but would like the County to provide a budget update prior to December 31. Commissioner Quiroz seconded the motion. Motion passed with a unanimous vote.

There being no further business the regular meeting was adjourned.