

JAIL OPERATING CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (JOCAC) REPORT ON COLUMBIA COUNTY JAIL OPERATIONS – APPROVED MARCH 17, 2020

In November 2016, the citizens of Columbia County approved a levy to provide funds to operate the Columbia County Jail for four years. One provision of this levy was to maintain the Jail Operations Citizens Advisory Committee now comprising nine members appointed to staggered three year terms and representing a diverse cross-section of the County.

Although the Committee's only charge is to advise the Sheriff and the Board of County Commissioners "concerning the proper appropriation of jail levy funds," the Committee believes that the knowledge we have gained on jail financing and operations should be shared with the citizens of Columbia County. The complete report, listed as JOCAC Report 2020, can be found in the General Link section of the Columbia County website (columbiacountyor.gov).

The Committee has received thorough briefings on the budget, jail operations, personnel hires, and equipment upgrades and replacement in order to verify that all funds raised by the levy were spent on jail operations. During investigations in 2019 the Committee determined in the fiscal years 2016-2017 through 2018-2019 three clerks were paid exclusively from the jail budget instead of 50:50 from the jail/patrol budgets. Since jail funds were used for non-jail operations the County will transfer \$190,150.00 in County general funds back to the jail budget before the end of the fiscal year to make this correction. The Committee will review time splits for all employees that perform both patrol and correction operations quarterly. In examining County quarterly and year-end financial reports the Committee has verified that with this correction all funds raised by the levy, and all other funds raised for jail operations, have either been spent on jail operations or are in an account reserved for jail operations.

The goal of the levy was to support a jail to house offenders in Columbia County and with sufficient capability to eliminate early releases. Early releases due to insufficient jail capacity were eliminated on March 12, 2015 and have not been required since. The local jail population was 89 inmates on March 13, 2020.

The County has a challenge fully staffing jail operations. Potential employees are reluctant to fill Correction Deputy and Correction Technician positions due to uncertainty of levy renewals and lower salaries than counties to our South and East (\$5-8/hr. less). The challenge is especially pronounced in hiring female deputies; one being required on each shift.

In a contract signed last year the County now receives \$92 per day per inmate from the U.S. Marshals Service vs \$80 per day per inmate in the previous contract. On March 13, 2020, there were 68 U.S. Marshals Service inmates at the Columbia County jail.

The Committee believes the Columbia County Jail is extremely well run. The Sheriff, Jail Commander, and deputies are professional and are mindful of the community's welfare; they treat inmates with an understanding that they will eventually return to the community. On the last biennial Oregon State Sheriff's Association Comprehensive Inspection in February 2019, the jail was found in full compliance with 312 of 315 standards and in partial compliance of the other three. The Department of Corrections Inspection conducted at the same time found no discrepancies, and all areas of the State inspection were fully compliant.

DETAILS OF EMPLOYEE PAY FROM JAIL FUNDS

If Columbia County was a large county, like counties to our South and East, employees could exclusively perform either jail or patrol functions and monitoring the use of jail levy funds would be a simple task. But to reduce costs jail deputies and correction technicians are kept to a minimum and their work is supplemented by patrol deputies. Office employees also perform both jail and patrol tasks.

The Columbia County jail operates with an adequate but small staff of four deputies and one correction technician on both the day and night shifts. On the day shift there is also a sergeant, two transport deputies, and one court security deputy. But the County has a challenge fully staffing jail operations. Potential employees are reluctant to fill correction deputy and correction technician positions due to uncertainty of levy renewals and lower salaries than counties to our South and East (\$5-8/hr. less). The challenge is especially pronounced in hiring female deputies; one being required on each shift. This necessitates using patrol deputies for sick time and vacation relief. Additionally, personnel are often required to perform other jail operations, to stay with an inmate in a hospital; high profile trials; help with court transfers; and to collect a person with a felony or court warrant from an instate or out of state location. In these instances a patrol deputy is temporarily used. Patrol deputy trainers are also used for recertification training of jail deputies. Patrol deputies, that also perform jail operations, compensation is paid from both jail and the patrol budgets in a ratio of about 10:90.

Committee members need to be certain that all charges to jail operations, by non-jail personnel, are for services provided for jail operations. There are three clerks, one administrative assistant, one evidence technician, one sheriff and eight deputies whose

time is budgeted to be divided between jail and patrol operations. In 2019 the Committee spent much of its time working with the County Finance Director, County Counsel, Sheriff, and Jail Commander to determine the correct division between jail and patrol operations for these people. The Committee believes the current divisions for these people are correct, but in our investigations it was determined in the fiscal years 2016-2017 through 2018-2019 three clerks were paid exclusively from the jail budget instead of 50:50 from jail/patrol budgets. Since jail funds were used for non-jail operations the County will transfer \$190,150.00 of County general funds back to the jail budget before the end of the fiscal year to make this correction. Every three to four months the Sheriff will review the time distribution split for all employees working for both jail and patrol.