



Multnomah County Sheriff's Office
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DANIEL STATON
SHERIFF

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February 2, 2011

The Honorable Michael Schrunk, Multnomah County District Attorney
1021 SW 4th Avenue
Portland, OR 97204
101/6/600

Mr. Schrunk,

Thank you for the 2010 Corrections Grand Jury Report. We appreciate the thoughtful review the Grand Jury completes each year regarding conditions and management of the jails within Multnomah County. We are also pleased to receive recommendations from the Grand Jury regarding both things we are doing well, and areas where it is perceived improvement is needed. As with previous Grand Jury recommendations, we will review the recommendations submitted by the 2010 Corrections Grand Jury and identify those appropriate for immediate implementation, those needing further analysis prior to implementation and those either impractical to implement, or outside of the Sheriff's direct control to utilize.

Our overall impression of this year's Grand Jury Report is that it was very positive and highlighted a number of ongoing and cost-saving activities we can be proud of. As with previous reports, this year's Grand Jury found that *conditions* in our jails "exceeded expectations" with regard to cleanliness, operations and inmate safety. I am also proud to note staff members working in the jails were found to be professional, knowledgeable and respectful of inmates despite the challenging social environment often present in correctional systems.

Additionally, we are pleased the Grand Jury recognized the improvements in overall *management* made by this agency in the following areas:

- A "dramatic, positive change" in leadership
- Jail cost containment through continued analysis and enforcement of sick leave abuse
- A multi-discipline analysis of local jail bed costs to be used as a platform for data-driven budgeting
- The redesign and implementation of an Objective Jail Classification System in response to previous grand jury recommendations and corrections best-practices nationwide
- The completion of a door replacement project at the Multnomah County Detention Center (MCDC) which will reduce risk of inmate assault and suicide at that facility
- Efficiencies in commissary and warehouse functions providing for self-sustained operations
- Efficiencies in Corrections Health operations which reduced costs (making the Corrections Health function more cost competitive with private vendors) while maintaining an excellent level of health care to inmates in Multnomah County jails

The Grand Jury also addressed a few key concerns regarding the management of our jail system, including:

- Suicide screening and management, to include current screening practices, staffing and costs associated with suicide watch staffing
- “Structural barriers” impeding otherwise highly qualified staff from seeking promotion
- Communication between management and line staff
- Facility and support costs not controlled by Sheriff (internal service reimbursements, fleet charges)

Suicide Screening and Management:

We agree with the Grand Jury that the management of inmates with suicidal ideation is a serious matter deserving continual focus. We believe our current method of screening for suicidal thoughts or behaviors, both at initial booking and during health screening, as well as conducting safety and security checks in excess of state standards, provides a pro-active approach to discovering issues early and has likely prevented countless suicide attempts in our jail system. Our current focus, however, remains on the management of individuals identified to be at risk of suicide. We are closely examining both our staffing levels and deployment in this area as well as potential structural and/or housing options that may both increase staffing efficiencies and lower risk to vulnerable inmates.

Barriers to Promotional Opportunities and Succession Planning:

Testimony from this year’s Grand Jury indicates a significant ambivalence among staff regarding seeking promotional opportunities, particularly promotion into command ranks. An analysis is planned directed at affected staff to better discover what barriers exist, and what opportunities might be created, or business practices altered, to create an environment more conducive to seeking promotional opportunities. Also, an analysis of staffing and hiring needs will begin immediately to better plan for an increasing rate of retirement eligibility among corrections staff.

Communication between Management and Line Staff:

The Multnomah County Sheriff’s Office experienced a turbulent succession of changing administrations between 2008 and 2009. An unfortunate by-product of changing administrations is frequent changes in unit command that can interfere with an orderly and productive communication flow between line staff and their managers. I, like Sheriffs before me, have made adjustments to command teams, but I am confident now that those adjustments have been made, we can look forward to a season of stability as I begin my elected term of office which will be conducive to clearer and more frequent communication between line staff and their managers.

Facilities and Support Costs:

We are interested in exploring ways to create efficiencies that we hope will result in lower operating costs, as well as examining current service contracts to judge competitiveness with other market vendors. We appreciate the input received from the Grand Jury regarding this area and look forward to discovering and, wherever we have control to do so, implementing cost-saving practices in our operations.

The Grand Jury also concluded, with regard to facilities, that while MCDC was safe and clean, it could never house inmates efficiently under the original design which calls for the single bunking of inmates. While we agree that the MCDC is an older facility than the more recently constructed Multnomah County Inverness Jail, and that it is certainly more cost effective to house inmates in large dormitories than in single cells, the necessity of separations for unstable, vulnerable, disciplinary, violent, mentally ill and high-profile inmates in a 1,310 bed system demands a proportionate number of single cells. We do not agree that the MCDC is obsolete with regard to a single cell configuration; rather, we utilize MCDC as the cornerstone for not only our booking operation but for our initial housing and classification center. While replacing MCDC with a newly constructed, single story facility may present some modest cost savings in operation, we would not choose to eliminate or greatly reduce the availability of directly supervised single cell housing, which is key in allowing us to operate a safe, secure, and constitutional sound jail system.

Next Steps:

The Grand Jury listed seven specific recommendations for our jail system in their report (many I have touched on in this response), including recommendations regarding suicide prevention and watch, encouraging advancement in the ranks, succession planning, developing a strategic plan, information and technology improvements and the formation of a cost containment task force. As with the 2009 Corrections Grand Jury Report recommendations, I have tasked a member of my executive staff to chair a multi-agency workgroup to consider the recommendations and report their findings back to me with regard to potential implementation. We will also share these findings with you and the Board of County Commissioners as they are finalized.

Finally, I would like to thank you for your work, the work of your Office and for the dedication of each Grand Jury member, which made the process of this year's Grand Jury inspection and review productive and valuable. As with previous years, however, our agency committed a tremendous amount of staff time and agency resources to what has become a lengthy and often arduous process. I would like to simplify this process in future years and would suggest we work together to find ways where possible to consolidate interviews and the collection of records while protecting access for the Grand Jury to our facilities, staff and inmates.

Again, thank you for your work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Daniel Staton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Daniel Staton
Sheriff

cc: Multnomah County Chair Jeff Cogen
Commissioner Deborah Kafoury, District 1
Commissioner Loretta Smith, District 2
Commissioner Judy Shiprack, District 3
Commissioner Diane McKeel, District 4