

January 12, 2012

The Honorable Michael Schruck, Multnomah County District Attorney
1021 SW 4th Ave
Portland, OR 97204

Dear Mr. Schruck,

Thank you for the 2011 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 reports, we will review the recommendations submitted by the 2011 Corrections Grand Jury and identify those appropriate for immediate implementation, those needing further analysis prior to action being taken, and those either impractical to address or outside of the Sheriff's direct control to affect.

Our overall impression of this year's Grand Jury Report is that it was very positive and highlighted a number of ongoing, cost-saving and sustainability processes we can be proud of. As with previous reports, this year's Grand Jury found that conditions in our jails met or 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, the meal services in the facilities were found to be "nutritious and appetizing" while remaining economical and incorporating of sustainability efforts in both the preparation and delivery of the food.

We are pleased the Grand Jury recognized improvements in overall management made by our agency in the following areas:

- In general, the operations of the Sheriff's county jail system continue to improve relative to issues that have been raised in previous Corrections Grand Jury reports.
- The Sheriff has acted on previous Grand Jury recommendations to eliminate some upper management positions, including four captain's positions.
- The creation and utilization of an effective program to combat sick time abuse which continues to save a significant amount of money.

- The successful institution of sustainable living measures which save the agency money on a continual basis and resulted in receiving the Multnomah County Sustainability Award in 2011.
- The provision of mandatory suicide prevention training for all corrections deputies and management personnel.
- The continued improvement in communications with system partners at the regional, state, and national level.
- The noted improvement in the safety of operations at the courthouse.

There was a general noted improvement in the pride and professionalism of Sheriff's Office managers by MCSO employees, other public safety partners, and from the inmates as well. It was noted that this is clearly due to a top-down effect and begins with the Sheriff and his command team and their commitment to lead by example.

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

- Recommendation of immediate new hires to alleviate the significant overtime expense.
- The conduction of a mock disaster recovery test at MCDC and MCCJ to assist preparation for a mass evacuation in the event of a flood or other natural disaster.
- An assessment of any potential "blind spots" not covered by the surveillance cameras at MCCJ.
- The addition of an open module at MCDC for inmates at risk for suicide and under 24 hour watch.
- Change in the rotation of Classification deputies to lessen any impact on the accuracy and efficiency of the Classification system.
- Provisions for fitness training for all new deputies and a plan to encourage deputies to seek a balanced lifestyle; including an emphasis on mental health and fitness.
- Updating/replacing of the Motorola communications equipment used by staff.
- Staff concerns about open booking.

Steps already taken:

There are a number of recommendations made by the Grand Jury that we were either in the process of implementing or have since they toured our facilities. We have developed a single housing unit dedicated to inmates on suicide watch to better control costs. We have already partnered with departments countywide to replace our entire Motorola radio inventory to comply with current and future regional system requirements. Additionally, we will continue to manage rotations of all special assignments staff (including Classification) to ensure a sustainable ratio of experienced deputies remain with specialty units during the annual shift rotations.

Next steps:

- Hiring: We agree that the hiring of corrections deputies is a primary objective for 2012. We are currently acting on plans to accelerate hiring to address the growing dependence on overtime to support corrections operations.
- Open booking: We are interested in the concerns expressed by the deputies in the Grand Jury report regarding officer safety in open booking. We will continue to examine potential improvements in camera and radio coverage. We have also initiated the use of defensive tools to address staff concerns.
- Corrections work-life balance: The Grand Jury expressed significant interest in the issue of helping deputies maintain a healthy work-life balance. We share their concern and hope that an increase in hiring efforts will reduce overtime and provide some relief in this area. In the past we have provided training specific to educating staff on opportunities to improve work-life boundaries and we will explore providing similar training opportunities in the future.

The Grand Jury listed several specific recommendations for our jail system in their report (many I have touched on in this response), including recommendations regarding mental health, encouraging advancement in the ranks, succession planning, developing a strategic plan, and information and technology improvements. We will assess each recommendation and determine the appropriate steps to take in keeping with local statutes, our commitment provide a caring and respectful environment for inmates in our custody and to meet the expectations of the citizens of Multnomah County.

I'd like to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to Senior Deputy District Attorney Stacy Heyworth, who led the Grand Jury inspection this year. She was well prepared and worked with my Office in advance to the jurors being called to establish a thorough plan to complete the inspection. She was patient, clear in her direction, courteous, and exhibited the utmost in professionalism through the entire process and I would like to commend her on her efforts. I would also like to extend an invitation to her, and to all the individual jurors, to stay in contact with my office as we assess their recommendations and work to implement all necessary changes.

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 significant amount of staff time and agency resources to what has become a lengthy and arduous process. I would like to simplify this process in future years and would suggest we work together toward that end.

Again, thank you for your work.

Sincerely,

Daniel Staton
Sheriff