

OYA *In the Loop*

April 22, 2009

Last week, we finished our budget presentation before the Public Safety Subcommittee of Ways and Means. The committee members were interested in our agency, our juvenile justice partners, and the youth we serve. They had lots of questions.

As a result of the hearings, we have more work to do. Before the final day of hearings began, one member of the subcommittee asked me several questions about cost per day in our facilities. He challenged me to find new and innovative ways to reduce our cost per day from its 2009-11 estimate of \$231 back to its current rate of \$196.

Additionally, after the hearing when I thanked our co-chairs for their courtesies to us, they asked several questions and made statements that led Joan Palmateer and me to believe that they might want to consider facility reduction options that were different than the ones we presented.

As you know, our facilities reductions were the closures of Eastern, Rogue Valley, Tillamook, and Camp Tillamook. Each of those facilities is located in counties with unemployment rates higher or roughly equal to that of Marion County. If the committee begins talking about reducing MacLaren and Hillcrest, I want to be prepared to talk about the best way, from our perspective, for those reductions to occur. In our debriefing last week, our Cabinet agreed with me that we should be ready to discuss all contingencies. Therefore, we are examining options related to MacLaren and Hillcrest.

This week, a workgroup composed of Cabinet members, superintendents, program and Business Services staff, and labor leaders began to brainstorm ideas to reduce our cost per day and to create options that reduce MacLaren and Hillcrest. Our reduction target is an additional \$41 million. Facilities' portion of that is roughly \$28 million. That's the target I asked the workgroup to reach. Future efforts will focus on Central Office and Field Operations' share of the reduction.

I am telling all of you about this so that you are not surprised about new ideas that might be discussed. This is a very challenging time for all of us. During times like this, every program and every dollar is subject to examination and possible reduction.

I know you are wondering what this means for Facilities Operations. Are the facilities in Burns, Grants Pass, and Tillamook saved? Are MacLaren or Hillcrest going to be reduced or closed? The answer to each of these questions is: maybe and maybe not; it depends on the reduction target amount the committee receives from legislative leadership, it depends on the committee public safety priorities, and it depends on the reduction criteria the committee develops. There are probably even more variables.

And what about our community-based partners? The committee was impressed by the testimony of the county juvenile departments, foster parents, residential treatment providers, and parole and probation employees. The committee members had positive comments about those community based services, and the focus of their questions was related to our facilities. That's why our recent work and attention are directed that way.

With any reduction option, our communities will be less safe and our public safety mission will be compromised. With any reduction option, youth who should be in a facility to receive treatment will be released into our communities and our communities do not have enough resources to serve them. With any reduction option, we will lose experienced and dedicated employees. Their families will be impacted and the economies of their communities will further deteriorate.

I promise to keep you informed about this process. I do not think we will learn more specific information about possible reductions to our juvenile justice system until after the revenue forecast in mid-May.

Public Safety -- United in Oregon

The Ways and Means Committee began to hold budget hearings around the state this week. I anticipate that public safety, which many people believe is one of the core functions of government, will be a common concern in every venue.

Just as you have heard me talk about the hydraulics of the juvenile justice system, and how each component affects the others, so it is with public safety in general. The branches of the public safety system are intertwined, and none can function effectively without the other. If the balance is skewed, the system will topple.

At its most basic, public safety is composed of law enforcement, the courts and corrections. Imagine if any one of the three branches is disproportionately funded -- or cut. The effect on the work of the other branches would be profound.

I mention the importance of unity among all of us in public safety as we individually or collectively try to influence lawmakers because I know that our passion for youth or our own worries about our jobs might overshadow the big picture. Legislators appreciate testimony that is thoughtful, compelling and reflects balance.

Legislative deadlines are upon us

Friday, April 17, was the deadline for committees to schedule work sessions for bills in the chamber of origin. That means if House bills in the House or Senate bills in the Senate are going to be worked this session, they have to be posted on an agenda for a meeting up to Tuesday, April 28. This does not apply to bills in Rules, Revenue and Ways/Means committees.

Tuesday, April 28 is the deadline for committees to actually pass the first chamber bills out of committee with correct amendments and fiscal and revenue impact statements. The first chamber bills don't have to be heard on the floor by April 28, just moved out of committee. Again, this does not apply to bills in Rules, Revenue and Ways/Means committees.

As each deadline passes, fewer bills will be considered "live," meaning that the live bills will have more focused attention on them for their content or relating clauses. There are procedural loopholes, so remember, no concept is really dead until Sine Die....

The second chamber (House for Senate bills, Senate for House bills) has a fast turn around to assign bills to committee, schedule bills on agendas and work them in committee (with any additional amendments, fiscals and revenues.) Deadlines in the second chamber are May 20 for work sessions to be posted on agendas and May 28 for committees to work bills.

The Legislative Fiscal Office will be working on many fiscal impact statements over the next ten days or so. They have asked that policy and fiscal staff be available to respond to requests for fiscal impacts next weekend (4/25-26) to help meet the deadline for bills to be worked in committee (4/28).

Governor's Reset Button

In a media interview printed in The Oregonian earlier this month, Governor Kulongoski expressed an interest in taking a look at what people want and expect from government. I think we can expect the Governor to reach out to Oregonians after the legislative session to gauge what a rhetorical "reset button" would do for our state. This initiative is not being considered for the immediate future, i.e. the 2009-11 biennium, but may help shape a vision for 2011 and beyond.

These are tough times. I, and every member of my Cabinet, appreciate the work you are doing to keep Oregon safe and give youth productive, meaningful futures.

Bobby