

Hugo Neighborhood Association & Historical Society

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PSS Archives Index #3

Web Page: <http://www.hugoneighborhood.org/justicesystemexploratorycommittee.htm>

November 22, 2016 Letter/Email

Josephine County Board of County Commissioners

Cherryl Walker, Chair

Keith Heck, Vice Chair

Simon Hare, Commissioner

Josephine County Courthouse

500 NW 6th Street

Grants Pass, OR 97526



Subj: Josephine County (JO CO) Sharing Information about its Budget Process & Formally Identifying Citizens' Preferences for Budget Programs and Levels of Service (LOS), Including Justice System Public Safety Services (JSPSS), They Want and Are Willing to Fund

Dear Cherryl, Keith, & Simon:

This letter has two purposes. The first purpose is a request for meetings with the JO CO Budget Officer and JO CO Budget Committee (JOCOBC) to help us understand the county's budget process. Without any formal JO CO guidance available on the budget process (e.g., availability of JO CO government experts; JO CO budget manual, local citizen guide to the budget, etc.) we have had a serious handicap in trying to understand the JO CO budget process, and, therefore, its budgets (Appendix A). The second purpose is a recommendation for the county to formally identify the JO CO citizens' sincere preferences and priorities for budget programs and LOS they want, and are willing to fund. JO CO budgets providing the following statement, "*budgets will incorporate citizen input on service levels they are willing to fund,*" without supporting publically available budget records, are not a reflection of citizen preferences, only the reality of revenue allocation reductions by the BCC, and a balanced budget which is to be complimented.

Our first purpose is an official request to you, versus continuing to believe that the JO CO Budget Officer, and the JOCOBC, as the experts on the county's budget process, have any independent authorities or responsibilities to schedule their time and decide their own roles (e.g., respond to citizen questions outside formal two month budget process, etc.), beyond approving the proposed budget. Our request to you was precipitated by Mr. O'Hare's professional Sept. 23, 2016 email response to our Sept. 23, 2016 letter/email request for a meeting with him and the JOCOBC to share information about budget process questions (Appendix B).

"Mike – you are requesting a meeting with me and with the Budget Committee in order to discuss various aspects of the budget process. That is really a decision of the Board of Commissioners for both me individually and for calling together the Budget Committee. I will need to check with them regarding your request and will get back to you when I have more information. Thanks. Arthur O'Hare, Finance Director, Josephine County, Oregon"

Since Arthur O'Hare is your employee, and according to him, the JO CO Board of County Commissioners (BCC) controls his responsibilities and schedule, including those of the JOCOBC, we respectfully request that you schedule a meeting(s) for us with Arthur O'Hare, and the JOCOBC. The purpose is the same as our September 23, 2016 request to them – to understand the JO CO budget process (Appendix B).

Our second purpose is to formalize with you a JS&PSS Exploratory Committee, Hugo Neighborhood Association & Historical Society (HNAHS), recommendation that the JO CO BCC aggressively address the lack of public trust in our county government. Improving public trust over the long-term should be covered by formal public policy on many fronts and with many strategies by the BCC, as this is a major component shaping public opinion, including citizen voters on the last five JO CO public safety levies. For example, the BCC should strongly demonstrate sincerity in seeking to understanding why the majority of voting citizens do not trust JO CO government (i.e., you can't meaningfully fix the unknown), and seek solutions.

The BCC should also identify the citizen budget program preferences and LOS which reflect what they are willing to pay for, especially PSS, that will be used for budget allocations per the BCC's budget commitments (Appx A). This effort should include a formal collaborative citizen participation (CP) engagement program – citizens must know they will be heard, with a meaningful opportunity to influence the proposed budget. We do not believe the present “Apprise” citizen involvement (CI) budget process (i.e., traditional Oregon Local Budget Law), provides assurances that the public needs nor trusts. This one-way flow of information on proposed financial policies, the ‘review and comment’ methodology – JO CO decide on the policies, then introduce them to the public in a public hearing(s) – is a poor educational vehicle for complex topics, not to mention grossly inadequate as a persuasion tool promoting trust.

As part of the second purpose, we believe it would be prudent for the BCC to take academic Nathan Davis, Oregon State University, Rural Studies Program, up on his challenge for future studies to test his research conclusions about public trust in government, and citizen preferences utilizing several different CP mechanisms over the short, and long term (e.g., increased CI/CP in budget policy planning and delivery through co-production policies, public preference surveys, standing JOCOBC, early CP in budget process, formal CP budget comment period, focus groups, JO CO Fiscal Advisory Committee(s), workshops, etc.; Appendices A & C). Over the short term it is especially important that the BCC sponsor, and solicit a grant, for an independent vetted survey on JO CO citizen's budget program preferences, and accompanying LOS they are willing to fund. The design of the survey is crucial as it should be nonpartisan and independent of any local proposed levy and/or tax proposal. Design of the final survey questions, besides answering what citizens want, would need to identify mandatory State services, county essential services, and the minimally adequate level of public safety services (i.e., MALPSS study without Oregon HB 3453's process of a request to the Oregon Governor for a MALPSS). The actual “questions” of the public survey must be publically available via the web.

Please let us know if we can be of assistance in applying the needed grant, as we are fairly sure we can secure one for JO CO if the BCC formally sponsors the study project. We would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

A written acknowledgment is also requested that you received this communication, and a response to our meeting requests and study recommendation. Thank you in advance for any attention you can give to these matters.

Sincerely,

Mike & Jon :)

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Appendices

- Appendix A. Research on JO CO Public Safety Issue and JO CO Budgets
- Appendix B. Requests For Meetings to Clarify Oregon Local Budget Law As Practiced By Josephine County, Oregon: January 20 - 2016 to November 21, 2016.
- Appendix C. Exploratory Committee Recommendation For Identifying JO CO Citizens' Budget Program Preferences And LOS.

Email copies: HNAHS Officers; Other Elected JO CO Officials; JO CO Budget Committee; JO CO Management Team; Governor of Oregon (hard-copy); Oregon Department of Revenue; and The Grants Pass Daily Courier.

Blind Info copies: Under Separate Email – Selected JO CO Citizen Participation In Budget Stakeholders.

Appendix A. Research on JO CO Public Safety Issue and Citizen Involvement In JO CO Budget Process

- **Justice System & Public Safety Services Study Design: 2015**
Justice System Exploratory Committee, Hugo Neighborhood Association & Historical Society (HNAHS)
<http://www.hugoneighborhood.org/justicesystemexploratorycommittee.htm>
- **Citizen Involvement In Josephine County Budget Process**
Justice System Exploratory Committee, HNAHS (<http://www.hugoneighborhood.org/ci.htm>)
- **Budgets: Josephine County, Oregon & Chpt. VII. CI/CP Program & Budget Process Recommendations**, November 2016 *Citizen Participation In The Josephine County Budget Process*
Justice System Exploratory Committee, HNAHS (<http://www.hugoneighborhood.org/budgets.htm>)

Appendix B. Requests For Meetings to Clarify Oregon Local Budget Law As Practiced By Josephine County, Oregon: January 20 - November 21, 2016

Budgets: Josephine County, Oregon

Justice System & Public Safety Services Study Design: 2015

Justice System Exploratory Committee

Hugo Neighborhood Association & Historical Society

<http://www.hugoneighborhood.org/budgets.htm>

- January 20, 2016 Letter/Email to Arthur O'Hare, Finance Director, JO CO Finance Department, From Committee. Subject: Share Information About JO CO's JS&PSS Problem/Issue.
- May 26, 2016 Letter/Email to Josephine County Board of County Commissioners from Exploratory Committee on Citizen's Guides To The Budget.
- June 4, 2016 Letter/Email to Josephine County Budget Committee from Exploratory Committee on Citizen's Guides To The Budget & Participating in FY 2017-18 Budget Process.
- June 10, 2016 Letter/Email to Oregon Department of Revenue from Exploratory Committee on Clarifying Oregon Local Budget Law. O'Hare copied.
- September 23, 2016 Letter/Email to Arthur O'Hare, Josephine County Budget Officer, and Josephine County Budget Committee from Exploratory Committee on Requesting a Meeting to Clarify the JO CO Budget Process & *Recommendation For Researching JO CO Citizens' Preferences And Priorities*, Appendix C.
- September 23, 2016 Email From Arthur O'Hare, Josephine County Budget Officer, to Exploratory Committee on Exploratory Committee's Request for Meeting to Clarify the JO CO Budget Process. O'Hare's response to the meeting request follows:

"Mike – you are requesting a meeting with me and with the Budget Committee in order to discuss various aspects of the budget process. That is really a decision of the Board of Commissioners for both me individually and for calling together the Budget Committee. I will need to check with them regarding your request and will get back to you when I have more information. Thanks. Arthur O'Hare, Finance Director, Josephine County, Oregon"
- November 22, 2016 Letter/Email to Josephine County Board of County Commissions from Exploratory Committee on JO CO Budget Process Sharing and Study of County Citizens' Budget Preferences And Priorities.

Appendix C. Exploratory Committee Recommendation For JO CO BCC Sponsoring An Independent Vetted Study On JO CO Citizens' Budget Program Preferences And LOS

The Committee recommendation is Appendix C, *Recommendation For Researching JO CO Citizens' Preferences And Priorities*, part of the September 23, 2016 Letter to Arthur O'Hare, Josephine County Budget Officer, and Josephine County Budget Committee from the Exploratory Committee.

- Davis, Nathan. Presented June 10, 2016, Commencement June 11, 2016. *Citizen Perceptions of Public Safety Levies in Josephine County, Oregon: A Test of Group Engagement Theory*. Masters of Public Policy (MPP) Essay, Submitted to Oregon State University In partial fulfillment of the Requirements for the degree of Master of Public Policy. Corvallis, OR (Davis 2016).

Studies & Information

Justice System & Public Safety Services Study Design: 2015

Justice System Exploratory Committee

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http://www.hugoneighborhood.org/JSPSS_Studies.htm