

Public Protection Spending in Mendocino County: A Pathway to More Responsible Financial Stewardship

PRESENTATION TO THE MENDOCINO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS, MAY 25, 2021

A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT SUPPORTED BY SOUTH COAST ORGANIZING FOR RADICAL EQUITY (SCORE), SHOWING UP FOR RACIAL JUSTICE MENDOCINO COAST CHAPTER (SURJ), MENDOCINO CHAPTER OF BLACK LIVES MATTER, MENDO COAST BIPOC (BLACK, INDIGENOUS AND PEOPLE OF COLOR), MENDOCINO COAST JEWISH COMMUNITY (MCJC) JUSTICE GROUP, AND THE COAST DEMOCRATIC CLUB.

Current Issue

Public Protection category of the budget continues to significantly increase annually while other urgent community needs remain unmet.

Budget Category	FY 16-17 Budget Amount	FY 20-21 Budget Amount	Total Increase
Health & Sanitation	\$45,020,767	\$59,680,429	\$14,659,662
Public Ways & Facilities	\$18,795,267	\$44,560,535	\$25,765,268
Education & Culture	\$3,592,549	\$4,665,480	\$1,072,931
Public Protection	\$59,360,136	\$81,071,020	\$21,710,884

Current Issue

- MCSO continues to advocate for more funding, despite a lack of hard, substantive data or evidence that increased funds are needed.
 - 72% of all arrest made between 2013-2019 were for low-level, nonviolent offenses.
 - 12% of all arrests made between 2013-2019 were for violent crime.
 - Unable to fill currently funded personnel roles.
- Discrepancies in stated need for more funds and available public data on crime rates, incarceration rates and jail population size.
 - 338=Average Daily County Jail Population
 - 57% =People in County Jail Without Convictions

Challenges & Concerns

- Perception of low or no accountability regarding transparency around MCSO funding and management of those funds, leading to fraught community relations.
- Community is committed to recommending informed ways in which portions of the public protection budget category could be reallocated to other more effective, evidence-based community programs and solutions for how funds could be more responsibly stewarded.
- Solutions are challenging to design and implement when there is no access to clear, complete baseline data on how resources are being managed relative to the stated need.

Challenges & Concerns

- MCSO has demonstrated little commitment to backing up financial requests with substantive data, relying primarily on anecdotal evidence.
 - ~\$4M budget request to address inland illegal cannabis issues in 2020 did not include substantive data on need.
 - Request amount for same purpose dropped by more than half in 2021, indicating that original request may not have been calculated appropriately.
- There seems to have been gaps and inconsistent tracking around use of financial resources, likely pre-dating Sheriff Kendall.
- PSAB/community advisory boards have historically not been effective in addressing transparency and financial resource management.

Proposed Solution

- Comprehensive audit by a disinterested third party, selected by the Board of Supervisors.
- Audit is both financial and demographic in nature.
- Audit is not punitive but is an effort to gain key information that will help guide and inform more responsible financial stewardship and transparency going forward.
- Audit is not an end-goal, but rather a starting point for determining new paths forward for accountability and public transparency.

Why An Audit?

- Establishes how resources are currently being used and whether budget increases are warranted based on actual demonstrated need.
- Is a process that will encourage better community relations through transparency.
- The cost of a comprehensive audit would be far less than MCSO's recent budget increase request and past settlements.
- The data produced by an audit could help the Board of Supervisors make more informed recommendations when considering increases or reallocations of the Public Protection category of the budget.

Recommended Action

1. Convene an Ad-Hoc Committee of the Board of Supervisors prior to adopting the FY21-22 budget to review/discuss audit scope recommendations.
2. Determine prior to adopting the FY21-22 budget whether the Board of Supervisors is in favor of an audit.
3. Determine and earmark funds to begin audit process as part of the FY21-22 budget.