

Ask commissioners why no actions are taken on their SPC report?

SPC Report
Were any of these suggestions utilized? Is there any record of council discussion of SPC report? Should we interview commissioners

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR JACKSON COUNTY'S FUTURE

A Report to the Board of Commissioners
By the Strategic Planning Committee
December, 1993

I. INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND

Jackson County government strives to provide the best service to its citizens in the most efficient, cost effective manner possible. Like many other local governments, Jackson County is facing decreasing resources during a time of rapid change in citizen expectations.

Recent "tax revolt" efforts in Oregon are symptomatic of a fundamental concern people have about government. Popular opinion seems to be that government is not responsive to citizen needs and that it is far too costly. People want to know they are getting their money's worth from government.

In response to citizen concerns, the County recently organized community focus groups and later "GO" Teams, which provided assessments of County operations. The reports from those groups provided the information base upon which to build future specific recommendations. The Strategic Planning Committee represents the next step in formulating the future of Jackson County government.

- ✓ Was an implementation team appointed?
- ✓ Does growth warrant more commissioners (C,C)
- ✓ Does flexibility, clear lines of command warrant restricting commissioners to policy (C,C)
- ✓ Does clarity of structure need charter delineation of administrative role? (CC)
- ✓ Should elected officials be restricted to policy makers only (C,C)

B. THE PURPOSE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING

The Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) was appointed by the Board of Commissioners to develop a set of recommendations to help Jackson County deal with immediate and long term service needs and budget requirements. The SPC was asked to report back to the Board in December, 1993 with its recommendations.

The SPC quickly recognized that Jackson County needs to make fundamental changes in order to streamline the organization, reduce costs, and improve service delivery. Even though the County is facing an urgent revenue shortfall, the SPC chose to avoid taking a "quick fix" approach. A "big picture", long term perspective of the County is essential to making any changes now and into the future.

II. APPROACH

A. FORMAT

The SPC chose not to make specific detailed administrative decisions. The committee felt that "micromanaging" details was not helpful, nor a part of their role. Rather, the committee has worked towards providing strong policy recommendations which can frame and guide the work to be accomplished by County managers.

The SPC is presenting its recommendations in three categories:

Category 1: Suggestions which can be implemented immediately or during the upcoming budget deliberations. These suggestions would not require major organizational changes or Home Rule Charter amendments.

Category 2: Recommendations which are more significant, might take more time to implement, and may require a charter change.

Category 3: A vision for the future.

B. PREMISE

The SPC recognized the following issues as significant in developing their recommendations:

- * Jackson County must address a \$2.6 million shortfall for FY 94-95.
- * Jackson County must utilize the benefits of modern technology in order to continue to streamline the organization.
- * Jackson County must achieve and demonstrate to the voters extraordinary efficiency in delivering essential services to the citizens of the County.

III. FINDINGS

After considerable discussion and input from affected parties, the SPC agreed on the following findings:

- * Jackson County is willing and ready to make the changes necessary to improve its services to its citizens.
- * Citizens consider accountability an important aspect of government. The "chain of command" should be as clear and as direct as possible.
- * Citizens value having elected representatives in key policy positions in government. (Should this apply to: Treasurer, Surveyor, Clerk, SR, Assessor, Sheriff, Judges) pros
cons
- * The political nature of government requires a balance between elected and top

appointed positions. The criteria should be whether the position actually sets policy or simply administers existing law and policy.

- * Many citizens do not understand how Jackson County is funded.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Strategic Planning Committee recommends the County Commissioners consider implementing the following:

A. SHORT TERM

- Any progress?*
- 1) Communication and coordination efforts should continue to be enhanced among all County departments having both elected and appointed department heads. Efforts to improve inter-departmental communication and coordination with technology should be a high priority activity.
 - 2) Continue combining departments along functional lines as opportunities are presented. This has worked well to reduce costs and increase efficiency of service delivery in the past when Health and Community Human Services and Parks and Public Works were combined.

B. FINANCES

The Jackson County Commissioners should provide clear policy guidance in the following areas related to finances:

- Comparisons Available?
1993
1994*
- 1) The cost of County government must be visibly and significantly reduced as a first step in gaining voter confidence. The citizens should be informed of accomplishments in this area.

- 2) After departments list and prioritize those services which are supported by general fund dollars and the cost of those services, they should work together to find new revenue sources to reduce general fund needs. The goal of every department should be to become as self-supporting (i.e., no general funds) as possible.
- 3) All departments should work through the Administrator's office and Budget Committee to select programs and subprograms which could be cut to meet the expected \$2.6 million revenue shortfall in 1994-1995.

Does this imply fees?

DO NOT MAKE CUTS "ACROSS THE BOARD" ANY LONGER, CUT ENTIRE PROGRAMS IF NECESSARY TO BALANCE THE BUDGET.

Was this followed?

Programs which remain would be those:

- (a) critical to human health and safety;
- (b) mandated at a minimum service level;
- (c) self supporting or close to it;
- (d) that receive substantial outside funding.

- 4) The County should establish a schedule for eliminating general fund support to the Exposition Park, Britt Festival, and any other similar event activities which could become autonomous. The goal to be achieved by the 1995-1996 fiscal year.

How this been done? Easy to check

C. STRUCTURAL CHANGES

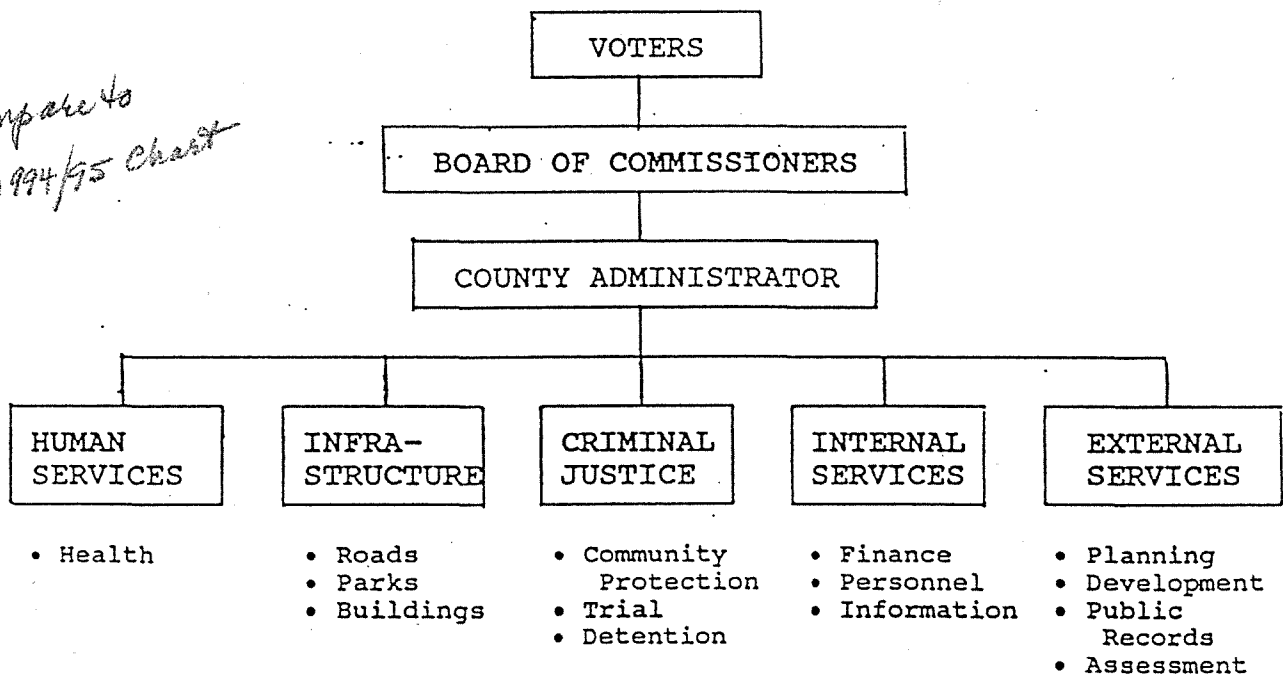
The Jackson County Commissioners should provide clear policy guidance in the following structural areas:

1) The County should reorganize its service structure into functional areas such as shown in Figure 1. The combination of the 15 existing departments into fewer functional areas will:

- a) improve staff communication,
- b) reduce some redundant costs,
- c) simplify the chain of command,
- d) give staff a sense of a "fresh approach" in the provision of services, and
- e) be a very visible indication to the public that the County is making every effort to reduce costs and to become more progressive and efficient.

FIGURE 1

Compare to 1994/95 chart



Examples of activities are shown under these proposed functional groupings. Actual activities within each functional area should be decided by staff and Commissioners.

- 2) The County Administrator should manage the County through the functional department heads. The County Administrator's primary role should be to lead, communicate, coordinate, provide liaison to and from the Board, the public, and department heads and to carry out policies established by the Board. ✓

** Model charter gives possible details for suggested change*

The Charter needs to be amended to include and affirm the role of the County Administrator. The Charter change should begin immediately.

There should be formal agreements between elected department heads and the Administrator's office insuring that mutual responsibilities are carried out effectively.

- 3) The number of elected officials should be reduced. The determining criteria should be the policy generating role of the official. The SPC voted unanimously that the positions of Treasurer and Surveyor be converted to appointed status. (This recommendation requires a charter change.) The other elected positions, except the Commissioners, should be reviewed by an implementation team.

Does an implementation team exist?

- 4) The County should seek opportunities to transfer state authorized and regulated activities back to the state if any general funds are needed for the operation.

- 5) The County should continue with three Commissioners elected at large with the chairman selected by mutual consent. Should population growth warrant additional representation, the County should consider a five Commissioner board, all part time or with one elected to a full time role. The Commissioners should retain ultimate policy authority over County matters. Possible Charter change

Requires for population growth = ?

D. LONG TERM VISION

The SPC strongly recommends that the County develop a long term vision to guide both short term and intermediate action. The primary example is the development of more opportunities to share service delivery on a regional basis. This "Metropolitan Service" model is working in other areas and should be pursued even more in Jackson County.

The County Library and Health and Human Services Departments currently are county-wide efforts. Another example already in place is "Jacknet", a cooperative crime investigation team sharing the manpower and expertise of many local police agencies. It may be possible to combine many police agencies into one regional agency in the future. There may be many more opportunities to combine functions and reduce duplication.

Pros/cons of Jacknet - Does Ashland participate? why?

V. IMPLEMENTATION

In order to implement the recommendations contained in this report, the Board of Commissioners should provide policy guidance in the following areas:

- 1) The County should seek voter approval for funding all County prioritized functions as a package. — *Was this the proposal voters rejected last year?*

Historical Size of Request? Voter Response

Voter funding support should begin with a serial levy request. After public confidence in the effectiveness of County government is achieved, then seek a more permanent tax base.

*Current
Ballot list
this.*

3) Should a combined levy fail, the County should then consider seeking voter approval for a separate public safety and/or library levy for an amount to be equal to the expected shortfall. Voter rejection would reduce the operation budget within the department that sought the levy only.

4) The first county-wide levy should be sought as soon as it is needed. At that time the County should:

- ? a) establish a levy support committee to coordinate a serious campaign.
- ? b) develop a refined public awareness program covering the current County services, plans for improvement, and financial projections.
- ? c) get the word out! Make presentations at council meetings, community service organizations, involve the media in reorganization efforts and use cable access opportunities.
- ? d) list those programs which would be cut if the levy fails, not as a threat but as simple reality.

5) The Board of Commissioners, County Administrator, and appointed department heads should consult with existing elected department heads to facilitate a smooth transition from elected to appointed status once voters have approved the appropriate charter amendments.

6) To assure continued community involvement and action on these recommendations, the Board should appoint an "implementation team" consisting of County staff and community volunteers. This team should be charged with following through on recommendations accepted by the Board of Commissioners.

*Was this
done?
Yes, how efficient,
functional, effective
has it been?*

This "implementation team" should be appointed by February 1, 1994 to assure timely action.

VI. CONCLUSION

The SPC's vision for Jackson County government is rooted in the concept of collaboration both internally and among the various government agencies throughout the geographic area of the County. Fundamental to these collaborative efforts is the support of appropriate technology which allows quick access to data and data analysis. Only through these efforts can Jackson County be as flexible and responsive as the community demands.

Jackson County must begin now to address pressing issues so it can be ready to serve its citizens as effectively as possible in the future. This Strategic Planning Committee Report is another step towards being prepared to deal with future challenges. Other groups, committees, or task forces will be necessary to carry out specific plans outlined in this report. Continuing to involve more citizens and staff in an effective manner will make these plans a reality.