

Date: 03/18/2021

To: County Board of Commissioners

CC: Tanya Ange, County Administrator

From: Office of Equity, Inclusion, and Community Engagement

Re: Summary of the March 9, 2022 Town Hall focused on continuing efforts to center equity in the Washington County budget process

## **Overview**

On March 9th, 2022, at 6 p.m., the Washington County Board of Commissioners (BCC) hosted their first quarterly town hall of the year. Serving as a follow up to the December 2021 Town Hall, this was an opportunity for the Board to share their budget priorities, hear community input and respond to questions.

The virtual event included a brief presentation about the County budget development process and efforts to center equity in the budget using the newly established Budget Equity Tool. The public was invited to participate in breakout sessions to engage with Commissioners in small groups. Spanish and American Sign Language interpretation services were both provided for the event which was recorded (main room and each breakout room) and will be posted on the [County's You Tube channel](#).

Documents that were shared with community in preparation of the Town Hall include the December Town Hall summary memo and a series of short budget videos created by the County Administrative Office Communications team which can be found on the [County's You Tube channel](#).

## **Process**

Tanya Ange, County Administrator, gave a brief presentation about where we are in the Washington County budget cycle and offered a snapshot of the current financial picture. Latricia Tillman, Chief Equity Officer, presented an overview of the Budget Equity Tool and provided context on the importance of equity in the County budgeting process.

Following these presentations, attendees had two different opportunities to join a breakout room to connect with a specific County Commissioner in a 20-minute session. Each room had a

staff member to help facilitate the conversation and capture high level notes (summarized on the last page of this memo). After these sessions were concluded, participants and staff returned to the main room for brief closing thoughts from Chair Harrington.

## **Breakout Sessions**

Each Commissioner was assigned their own breakout room. Two concurrent breakout sessions were held allowing attendees to choose up to two breakout room conversations to engage in. Simultaneous ASL and Spanish interpretation was provided in the main room and each breakout room. Though Zoom does not allow simultaneous interpretation in breakout rooms, with the help of an experienced interpreter, we developed a workaround that allowed attendees participating in Spanish to engage simultaneously in breakout rooms of their choosing using dedicated conference call lines staffed by Spanish interpreters. This eliminated the need for Spanish-specific breakout rooms creating a more inclusive Town Hall experience.

The focus of the breakout rooms differed between Commissioners but broadly focused on budget priorities and feedback received from the community. Time was allotted by each commissioner to take comments and questions from the public. Breakout rooms were also recorded, and ITS created a cohesive Town Hall video that will allow a viewer to watch the main session and breakout rooms in succession.

## **Attendance**

All attendees of December's Town Hall were invited to return for the March Town Hall. Centro Cultural and Vision Action Network who were co-hosts of December's Town Hall, helped advertise the event to the public. Throughout the event, 85 independent email addresses logged into the Zoom meeting, including County staff, interpreters and facilitators. The YouTube video of the main session was streamed live and recorded, receiving 29 views during the event. At the time of this report (March 18), the video had 54 views. Live viewing on YouTube during the event peaked during the staff presentations and dropped off heavily when breakout rooms began. The budget-focused short videos have each received between 28 and 49 views as of today (March 18).

## **Summary of Breakout Room Conversations**

The comments and questions from all five breakout room sessions were analyzed and sorted into main themes based on Commissioner.

**Kathryn Harrington, At-Large:**

- Discussion led by attendees included resource allocation to climate change issues; expansion of transportation services to people with disabilities and marginalized groups; rank-choice voting; and the importance of community corrections and alternatives for at-risk youth.

**Nafisa Fai, District 1:**

- Discussion led by attendees included addressing the shortage of public defenders; funding for immigration services; balancing a tight budget with equity at the forefront; after-school programs; and the importance of livability and walkability in low-income housing.

**Pam Treece, District 2:**

- Discussion included recovery from the pandemic - for our people and businesses; addressing houselessness through affordable housing; leading with equity; use cases for the Budget Equity Tool; reducing waste in government spending; rank-choice voting; tree protection; and a proposed adoption of a Climate Task Force or Climate Resolution.

**Roy Rogers, District 3:**

- Discussion included tree protection, the importance of adopting a climate strategy at the county level, and support for service providers accessing rental space for their services (e.g., rental protections, preferences).

**Jerry Willey, District 4:**

- Discussion included public safety funding; expansion of rural broadband services; tree protection in urban and rural forested areas; a desire for a greater focus on climate in Washington County; preschool for all; expansion of TriMet lines; addressing houselessness and support for immigrants; refugees and asylees.