

**Portland Business**

**Who monitors local government?**

The Tax Supervising and Conservation Commission protects and represents the public interest by ensuring Multnomah County governments comply with local budget law by:

- Communicating local government financial information in clear, objective, unbiased manner
- Providing local government staff with technical advice and assistance
- Promoting the efficiency and effectiveness of local governments

**Purpose and Authority**

The Tax Supervising and Conservation Commission is an independent, impartial panel of citizen volunteers established to monitor the financial affairs of the local governments. Oregon Revised Statute 294.610 created the Commission in 1919. Prior to that time, the Oregon Legislature controlled local government budgets.

The Commission, required in counties with over 500,000 population, has jurisdiction over all local governments that are required to follow local budget law and which have more than half of their assessed value within Multnomah County. The Commission presently oversees the budgeting and taxing activities of thirty-six municipal corporations, including Oregon's largest: city (Portland), county (Multnomah), port (Portland), mass transit district (TriMet), regional government (Metro), and urban renewal agency (Portland Development Commission). In total, these entities employ nearly 28,000 individuals and budget annual expenditures exceeding \$6.3 billion.

Five Commissioners, appointed by the Governor to four-year terms, direct the commission affairs. The Commissioners serve without compensation. Administrative employees, currently four staff, are appointed by the Commission. The Attorney General serves as the legal

counsel. Operating expense is limited by statute to \$280,000 annually and is allocated on countywide basis through the Multnomah County permanent rate authority.

The Commission annually serves the taxpayers by providing an extensive review of the budgets of the thirty-six local governments within its jurisdiction. The reviews are both procedural and substantive in nature. Procedural checks establish compliance with various laws governing local finance, particularly local budget law. They include such steps as verifying that the approved tax levies are within the constitutional limits and substantiated by budgets, ensuring that public notice requirements have been met, and validating that financial information is included in adequate detail. A substantive review of program content, the reasonableness of estimates and coordination of financial planning among various units is also performed. All budgets must be certified by the Commission prior to adoption by the local governing body. These types of review and the certification process distinguish TSCC from other regulatory bodies, such as the Department of Revenue or County Assessor's Office, who do not receive copies of the budget documents.

The Commission provides an independent and objective forum, by way of public hearings, at which citizens may attain information and express their views regarding the budget. Commission members represent the public at these hearings by asking questions indicative of the community at large. These annual public hearings are mandatory for the nine largest county entities and may be requested by the other taxing districts. The Commission holds additional public hearings throughout the year on supplemental budgets of the districts and on every new local

option property tax and bond levy request placed before the voters. The Commission may also call joint meetings of the levying bodies to discuss tax coordination or any other area of common interest.

The Commission publishes a comprehensive Annual Report of all Multnomah County local government budgets, indebtedness, property taxes and other financial information along with a Taxpayer's Guide summary of the information. A One Page Report pamphlet listing local government tax rates, assessed valuation, property taxes and annual budget and indebtedness totals is published each fall. A periodic TSCC Review Newsletter highlighting various local government financial activities and trends of interest is also provided. Copies of these publications, local government budgets and independent audits are available for review by the public at the Commission's office.

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**Policing from page 2**

drug dealing renter an eviction notice because illegal drug sales activity generally violates lease or rental agreements. In other cases, the NRT officers have opened Chronic Nuisance Property Ordinance files and sent letters to the property owner alerting them to the activity and the potential consequences and remedies. Along with monitoring the problem houses and motor vehicle traffic, bicycle and foot traffic was also observed. As a result, the meth users, addicts and sellers lost both the safety of the drug houses and their free mobility to move around East Precinct.

Raw arrest numbers are generally a poor way to judge the results of most law enforcement missions. However, it is one relatively easy measure to obtain and indicates that the officers were actively engaged in law violation suppression activities. The true measure of the success of this mission and the previous five drug house missions will be the reduction of crime in East Precinct and closure of drug houses.

- Drug houses: What you can do
- Call the Portland Police Drugs and Vice Division at 823-DRUG and report activity. Call your NRT officers in your precinct or call your Neighborhood Crime Prevention staff. To find out which Neighborhood Coalition you live in, call 823-4519.
  - Encourage neighbors to report all activity and to keep an incident log of suspected illegal activity, including: address of drug house; dates and times of activity; description of activity; if known, give names of dealers or occupants of house and car licenses of occupants or frequent visitors.
  - Set up or get involved in Neighborhood Watch and your neighborhood association.
  - Many drug houses have been

closed because of building code violations. Report possible violations, including garbage, to the Bureau of Buildings Neighborhood Nuisance Division at 823-7306. To report abandoned autos, call 823-7309.

- If the drug house is rented property, get in touch with the landlord. You can usually find the landlord's name and address by calling the Multnomah County Property Tax Assessment Office at 248-3326.

An eviction is one way to get rid of drug houses.

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