

Hi Erik,

Please see **below** draft proposal to reposition the Coordinated Houseless Response Office (CHRO) for greater success. While the Office has achieved several major accomplishments, such as helping to secure ~\$15m of EO 23-02 emergency funding, there remain notable challenges that continue to impede meaningful progress. I've shared many of these with you and others over the past few months, and now offer this consolidated overview of challenges and specific recommendations to restructure the Office as it moves through the initial startup phase.

As the sole Office employee for many months, I gained important insights into the Office's functions - and dysfunctions - as it moved from concept to reality. I'm mindful that ours is just one of several pilot communities funded as part of an untested idea, with the goal of determining what works, what doesn't, and what needs to change. I accepted this position in that spirit of learning, collaborating, and bending the curve on homelessness at a regional scale.

In the same spirit, I hope the Board considers implementing these recommendations to address the concerns and challenges I and other key stakeholders have shared openly. I believe this proposal, along with the work plan and administrative plan documents presented to the Board, will provide a roadmap for success moving forward.

<b>Challenge</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
<p>Lack of consensus on the primary mission and principles of the Office. For example, members of the representative agencies disagree about the goals and functions of the Office, with some policymakers stating the Office exists to address unsanctioned camping, while others embrace proven strategies like shelter and service provision. Over the past few months, several public agencies plans announced plans for the removal of 700-800 unhoused individuals from multiple public land parcels. This has absorbed significant staff time and attention away from projects that generate evidence-based solutions.</p>	<p>The Office should follow HB 4123 to inform its charter and truly focus on developing a coordinated response system, rather than diverting attention to address emergent political priorities. Our Office has tried to provide guidance for reducing harm, coordinating services, and identifying alternative locations, however we have no authority over the removals or resources involved. This creates a direct conflict between the strategies and solutions proven to address homelessness, and the resources diverted towards camp closures, sweeps, and removals. This conflict should be mitigated to reduce strain on staff and improve with service providers and unhoused clients.</p>

<b>Challenge</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
Undefined roles and responsibilities for the Office, including Governing Board, Advisory Council, and staff.	The Board should more clearly define the roles and responsibilities of the Office in general, and specifically Governing Board, Advisory Council, and Office staff. This should include clearly defined relationships that describe cadence and nature of communications. This conversation was slated for our last Board meeting, and postponed by the Chair in lieu of an unplanned presentation. I suggest rescheduling for the next Board meeting.
Lack of Board consensus for the strategic planning process.	In January, the Board agreed with staff's recommendation to work with COIC and HLC to collaborate on strategic planning efforts. That process was then delayed due to the EO 23-02 planning process, and is now slated for completion this summer or fall. The existing draft Emergency Homeless Task Force (EHTF) plan was developed primarily by Deschutes County with City of Bend, and needs to better incorporate feedback from the other local governments. The strategic plan should include both an overarching regional plan as well as community-specific plans, and should clearly outline who does what, and by when, along with measurable goals.
No defined process for staff to receive approval for work activities and priorities.	The Board should establish a clear administrative mechanism for reviewing, providing feedback, and granting approval for work activities. This should be clearly documented to provide clarity for staff.
Lack of clarity regarding Board and staff goals and performance expectations.	Clearly define measurable goals, as outlined in the draft Work Plan presented to the Board, along with performance expectations for Board members, representative entities, and staff.
Lack of clarity regarding process for Board review and approval of strategic plan, work plan, and emergent activities, etc.	Establish process for Board to approve work planning activities in line with goals and performance expectations, to ensure staff can balance planned and emergent work. Examples of significant emergent work include the EO 23-02 emergency funding process and providing guidance to reduce harm on encampment removals. Shifts in project priorities, goals, and timelines should be formally established by the Board through a voting process in Board meetings, to ensure staff receive clarity regarding changes.

<b>Challenge</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
<p>Current staff capacity, structure, and scope are not suitable to the Office requirements.</p>	<p>Eliminate the Executive Director position and down-scope to accommodate three (3) FTE staff at a Coordinator or Analyst level, who can support the Board to complete major projects. The current Director role does not seem to have authority to allocate resources, set policy, or direct work activities, so this will enable the Board to oversee staff as they choose. This will also reduce the public pressure on a single leader which carries much of the perceived responsibility but very little actual authority.</p>
<p>No Advisory Council has been established, as the Board has not yet approved a clear structure for selecting members or establishing their purpose. Community leaders have asked CHRO staff not to create more groups and meetings, and instead to leverage existing groups such as HLC's leadership and committee meetings for feedback.</p>	<p>In our last meeting, the Board approved staff's recommendation to develop an ad hoc Advisory Council which would then meet and set its ongoing framework. Staff met with HLC's executive team to discuss this plan and have developed several options for Board review and approval. These options will be discussed at the next Board meeting.</p>
<p>No defined framework for how the Governing Board and Advisory Council will work together, and in coordination with Office staff.</p>	<p>The dynamic between the Governing Board and upcoming Advisory Council is still undefined. Recommendation to follow the guidance of another pilot cohort member which balance these two groups as follows: 1) the Community Advisory Council exists to identify system gaps, resource needs, systemic barriers, policy changes, and best practices, and 2) the Government Advisory Council exists to address those gaps, secure resources, remove barriers, change policies, and adopt best practices. Staff can then provide administrative support to ensure this work moves forward as planned.</p>
<p>Potential for duplication of efforts or misalignment with the regional Continuum of Care (CoC), Homeless Leadership Coalition (HLC).</p>	<p>Adopt an MOU which outlines clear points of intersection between the CoC and CHRO, including participation in meetings and planning processes, contribution of funds to support systems-level performance metrics, and general staffing to accomplish shared goals. Office staff have drafted notes for this MOU and will work with HLC's leadership to formalize this relationship.</p>

Challenge	Recommendations
<p>Misalignment between CHRO geographic footprint of Deschutes county with regional efforts in the Central Oregon tri-county area including Deschutes, Jefferson, and Crook counties.</p>	<p>Expand the Office representative scope to include IGAs with our neighboring counties of Crook and Jefferson to create a true regional approach to ending homelessness. This will help align CHRO activities with existing response frameworks, such as the Continuum of Care (CoC), Central Oregon Health Council (COHC), as well as the Multi-Agency Coordinating group established to support Executive Order 23-02.</p>
<p>The Office is currently situated within the structure of Deschutes County, which presents several challenges including friction between the County and Cities, and duplication of oversight by the Office Governing Board and the Board of County Commissioners. For example, the budget, work plan, hiring, and other functions still flow through the County's existing approval process.</p>	<p>Shift Office oversight from Deschutes County to Central Oregon Interagency Council (COIC), to reflect the regional/tri-county geographic footprint outlined above, and to leverage COIC's existing neutral consensus-building framework. This will help leverage the regional scale of solutions, and mitigate against strain evident between the Office's representative members and entities.</p>

In addition to the concerns and notes outlined above, I continue to feel conflicted both personally and professionally by efforts underway to remove hundreds of vulnerable unsheltered residents from public lands - mostly without sufficient planning, resource allocations, or service provision. The entanglement of encampment removals with the strategies and solutions promoted by this Office has strained our staff, partnerships, and mission.

So, in conjunction with this repositioning plan and after careful consideration, I'm resigning from the role of Director. I've been honored to serve the residents of Deschutes County and will continue to champion the incredible work underway throughout our community.

As a professional courtesy, I'm providing two (2) weeks' notice but willing to extend up to three (3) weeks to offer additional support to staff, colleagues, and partners as we transition critical projects and responsibilities. In this case, my last day would be June 9<sup>th</sup>, 2023. I've drafted a comprehensive transition plan to help guide this process, in conjunction with existing draft documents previously shared, including the annual work plan, administrative plan, and major project plans.

At his request, I'll continue to provide ongoing support and mentorship to my colleague, Chris Ogren, who I believe is a vibrant emerging leader in the space of public administration for homelessness and housing solutions. I've also been asked to continue providing technical assistance to several nonprofits and will happily do so on a pro bono basis to support their growth and success. Similarly, I'll remain available as a resource to staff and policymakers as needed to ensure continuity for the many promising initiatives we supported.

On a more personal note, I have truly enjoyed my time working with you, our colleagues at Deschutes County, and our many community partners in this work. I wish you the best of luck as you help carry this important work forward.



5/23/2023

Cheyenne Purrington