

## **‘What are you afraid of?’: ClackCo to audit sheriff’s office after misused fund claims**

By Michaela Bourgeois

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PORTLAND, Ore. (KOIN) – Clackamas County commissioners have passed a motion to audit its sheriff’s office budget following claims from the sheriff that county tax dollars were being misused.

On Wednesday, the county’s top budget managers refuted Sheriff Angela Brandenburg’s claims that general fund restrictions were made to pay for a new courthouse. Instead, the budget managers and commissioners say general fund cuts are happening across the board and are not targeting the sheriff’s office.

The motion to audit passed nearly unanimously with one commissioner abstaining from the vote.

The sheriff says the way to correctly cut those funds would be to eliminate 34 positions, most of which are already vacant. The county denied her plan — saying the sheriff’s office should use money from a public safety levy passed in 2021 — so that they don’t have to cut staff.

“It’s the sheriff who has defunded her own program. It’s the sheriff who is defunding police while this board sits here and defends the police,” Clackamas County Chair Tootie Smith said during Wednesday’s budget committee meeting. “The question that we all need to ask, including the media, is: Why is she doing this? And Sheriff Brandenburg, what are you afraid of if we take a deep dive into your budget?”

Brandenburg says the commissioner’s plans to use levy funds is a misuse of the money.

“These taxpayers already pay for the sheriff’s office to have their base services, they pay for me and the undersheriff with their taxes,” Sheriff Brandenburg previously said. “We’re General Fund funded, and because they voted yes for 36 positions of additional deputies that they’re paying for – that the county’s not paying for – they get the gift of being charged again.”

The board of commissioners still has to review how much a performance audit of the sheriff’s office would cost and how long it would take.