

**Whatcom County
Council Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee**

**COUNTY COURTHOUSE
311 Grand Avenue, Ste #105
Bellingham, WA 98225-4038
(360) 778-5010**



Committee Minutes - Draft Minutes

**Tuesday, July 9, 2024
1:15 PM
Hybrid Meeting**

**HYBRID MEETING - ADJOURNS BY 1:55 PM (PARTICIPATE IN-PERSON, SEE
REMOTE JOIN INSTRUCTIONS AT www.whatcomcounty.us/joinvirtualcouncil, OR
CALL 360.778.5010)**

COUNCILMEMBERS

Barry Buchanan
Tyler Byrd
Jon Scanlon

CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Cathy Halka, AICP, CMC

Call To Order

Committee Chair Barry Buchanan called the meeting to order at 1:16 p.m. in a hybrid meeting.

Roll Call

Present: 3 - Barry Buchanan, Tyler Byrd, and Jon Scanlon

Also Present: Todd Donovan, Ben Elenbaas, Kaylee Galloway, and Mark Stremmler

Announcements

Special Presentation

1. [AB2024-430](#) Presentation of the 2024 Incarceration Prevention & Reduction Task Force/Law and Justice Council Annual Report

The following people reported:

- Peter Frazier, Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force co-chair
- Heather Flaherty, Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force co-chair

They spoke about the work of former co-chairs Stephen Gockley and Jack Hovenier, and honored their efforts, then gave an overview of the highlights of the report, including:

- Discussions about the Justice Project Implementation Plan and the development of a needs assessment and gap analysis for recommendations on local criminal legal policy, public safety needs, behavioral health and diversion resources, and facility requirements
- Work they have done supporting legislative agenda recommendations for the county
- The use of the Anne Deacon Center for Hope as a crisis triage center for individuals struggling with mental illness and chemical dependency
- Discussions around competency restoration and the formation of a competency restoration work group
- Implementation of several projects called for in the Justice Project Implementation Plan
- New task force leadership and membership

They spoke about the following goals and priorities going forward:

- Integrating and launching the Justice Project Oversight and Planning (JPOP) Committee well so that people understand how the JPOP Committee and the IPRTF work together
- Communications to the public on the work of the IPRTF and the County in regard to the implementation plan
- Supporting better data wherever they possibly can
- Reorganization of the IPRTF to continue to evolve and to remain flexible and informed to meet issues as they emerge and change, to make sure this advisory body's recommendations are focused and actionable, and to make sure every meeting is worthy of the time members and staff spend on them
- Supporting progress on the Justice Implementation Plan
- Helping to create a culture of productive engagement of the task force

They asked the Council to share how the IPRTF can be most helpful to them as an advisory body and whether there are specific topics they would like the IPRTF to be thinking about in the year ahead.

Donovan asked whether the task force is going to look through the dollar amounts and estimates in the implementation plan to see how realistic they are and how relevant the plan is today, and to see whether they need to rethink the cost inflation on building the jail. He also asked what the budget policy opportunities in the plan are if the costs go up by 50% for the facility.

Scanlon asked whether they are involved in giving budget recommendations to the executive ahead of the budget discussions this fall given that some high-priority projects listed in the appendix of the report are noted as not having enough funding or are not in existence yet. He stated it would be helpful to get those recommendations, particularly about independently-elected offices such as the Prosecutor and the Sheriff. He would like them to look at funding gaps in the County and where it is that they might need to go for State or Federal funds.

Buchanan stated he has asked the task force and the co-chairs to identify some of their internal needs as well, and what kind of outside help that they might need for 2025 and 2026.

Stephen Gockley, former Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task

Force Co-Chair, stated he wanted to underscore that the sales and use tax proceeds were never intended to be all that they had to work with or enough to work with. He spoke about other funding possibilities.

Buchanan stated one of our big ideas is to have a behavioral care center with the new facility and we will need help instituting that and understanding it. He would like for the task force to look around the country and get some examples because it is a new concept for us and we will need some guidance on it.

Byrd stated he is in favor of Buchanan's idea of funding for the task force.

Scanlon stated there is chance for overlap between JPOP and the Finance Advisory Board and asked if the task force has recommendations, and Flaherty stated she would think about that. Scanlon asked whether the County is on track with implementing data work and what they think is needed to make sure they can have some of the data Flaherty alluded to in the report highlights.

Frazier stated they are woefully behind, in his personal view, but they have made more progress this year than has been made in any previous year. He stated they have a process coming up this year that will allow them to figure out what data is going to be required to help guide them in the coming years.

He and Flaherty spoke about the importance of data and how it helps them prioritize and budget, and they gave their final thoughts on today's presentation.

This agenda item was REPORTED.

Items Added by Revision

There were no agenda items added by revision.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 1:49 p.m.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

Cathy Halka, Council Clerk

Barry Buchanan, Council Chair

Kristi Felbinger, Minutes Transcription