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WHATCOM COUNTY
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WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL

APPLICATION FOR APPOINTMENT TO WHATCOM COUNTY BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

PLEASE PRINT LEGIBLY and COMPLETE ALL ITEMS

Name: Rafael A. Gowzales

Date: 12.27.23

1. Name of board or committee-**please see reverse:** INCARCERATION PREVENTION AND
2. You must specify which position you are applying for. **Please refer to vacancy list.** REDUCTION TASK FORCE
INTERESTED CITIZEN
3. Do you meet the residency, employment, and/or affiliation requirements of the position for which you're applying?
(If applicable, please refer to vacancy list.) ----- () yes () no
4. Which Council district do you live in? ----- () One () Two () Three () Four () Five
5. Are you a US citizen? ----- () yes () no
6. Are you registered to vote in Whatcom County? ----- () yes () no
7. Have you ever been a member of this Board/Commission? ----- () yes () no
If yes, dates: _____
8. Do you or your spouse have a financial interest in or are you an employee or officer of any
business or agency that does business with Whatcom County? ----- () yes () no
If yes, please explain: _____
9. Have you declared candidacy (as defined by RCW 42.17A.055, see instructions) for a paid elected
office in any jurisdiction within the county? ----- () yes () no

You may attach a résumé or detailed summary of experience, qualifications, & interest in response to the following questions.

10. Please describe your occupation (or former occupation if retired), qualifications, professional and/or community activities, and education.

PLEASE SEE ATTACHED

11. Please describe why you're interested in serving on this board or commission: _____

PLEASE SEE ATTACHED

References (please include daytime telephone number): PLEASE SEE ATTACHED

If appointed, I will comply with the Council & Executive Expectations of Boards and Committee Members and complete Open Government Training as required by RCW 42.30.205.

Signature of applicant: Rafael Gowzales

THIS IS A PUBLIC DOCUMENT: As a candidate for a public board or commission, the above information will be available to the County Council, County Executive, and the public. All board and commission members are expected to be fair, impartial, and respectful of the public, County staff, and each other. Failure to abide by these expectations may result in revocation of appointment and removal from the appointive position.

Rafael A Gonzales

Application for the Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force

Response to Question 10

I was a Public Defender for more than 30 years in Superior Courts in Yakima, Benton, Franklin and Grant Counties. I served as the director of public defense for two different county offices, one of which served two counties. I have extensive experience in jail systems, working directly with clients, jail personnel, professional staff and law enforcement.

I provided direct services to clients seeking release or reduced bond conditions, admission to specialty courts such as drug court or DUI court; criminal trial processes; and interactions with various offices in the jails. I am familiar with the physical limitations and other considerations when working with in-custody clients, combative persons, drug and alcohol-affected clients and those with active mental health issues. I also worked for the state Office of Public Defense, helping counties develop public defense systems and procedures.

I graduated from Gonzaga University School of Law in Spokane in 1986, where I was a Thomas More Scholar, then clerked in Division II of the State Court of Appeals in Tacoma for one year. I then practiced in Yakima for three years, working for the law firm that represented, among other clients, the Yakama Indian Nation. From there, I went to the Yakima County Department of Assigned Counsel where I remained for more than 15 years.

After leaving Yakima County, I worked for the state Office of Public Defense in Olympia then left to start the Benton-Franklin Office of Public Defense in Kennewick. From there I went to Grant County and started the Grant County Office of Public Defense. I continued as director and as a felony contract defender for eight years. Rather than retiring, I transitioned from full-time felony public defense work to representing mentally ill clients in Involuntary Treatment Act (ITA) proceedings in Yakima County. That representation involved clients detained in designated mental health facilities and continued until I fully retired at the end of 2021.

I served on active duty in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1969 to 1972. I received my BA from Central Washington University in Ellensburg where I majored in Journalism and Ethnic Studies. Prior to law school, I worked in journalism and corporate communications.

Rafael A. Gonzales

Application for the Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force

Response to Question 11

Whatcom County has a unique opportunity to develop a model detention system; one that can be responsive to the varied populations facing detention in not only criminal but civil matters in the county judicial system. I worked in counties that developed and implemented specialty courts. I am multi-racial and have a long-standing interest in and appreciation for consideration of these issues in public accommodation settings.

I believe my experience as a public defender in felony court and ITA proceedings would be very helpful to the Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force's work.

References

Paul Kelly, Director, Yakima County Department of Assigned Counsel, Yakima, WA

509-574-1169

Mark Griffin, retired attorney, Seattle, WA

206-354-8800