

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, May 27, 2025

10:40 AM

Hybrid Meeting - Council Chambers

**HYBRID MEETING - MAY BEGIN EARLY - ADJOURNS BY 11:15 A.M.
(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 10:36 a.m. in a hybrid meeting.

Roll Call

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

Also Present: Todd Donovan, Kaylee Galloway, and Mark Stremler

Announcements

Special Presentation

1. [AB2025-386](#) Report on jail booking restrictions

The following people read from a presentation (on file):

- Donnell Tanksley, Sheriff
- Steve Harris, Undersheriff

Tanksley stated on February first of 2025 he changed the booking restrictions that have been in place since the COVID-19 pandemic in order to make sure they had a clear framework of when they could and could not book a person. The prior booking restrictions were based on charges but the new ones are based on jail capacity. He stated deputies can see three levels of capacity (green, yellow, and red) in real time and each of those levels has a parameter for what a person can be charged with.

Harris spoke about monthly and annual booking statistics and average daily jail population, and stated the population totals account for only those who are presently in the main jail and work center.

Tanksley stated that the average daily population in reports prior to January 1, 2024 included people who were on electronic home detention and were out of custody but they changed the formula to show the average length of stay just for those incarcerated in both facilities.

Scanlon stated it would be helpful to see trends over time in the reports since the restriction levels change often.

The speakers answered questions about how other jurisdictions are reacting to the booking restriction levels changing so often, and how the level changes how an officer interacts with a person.

Harris spoke about the increasing number of outstanding warrants year over year compared to a more consistent and lower number of warrants issued, which shows that people are being issued warrants but they are not able to clear them because of the inability to actually book them to appear in court. He answered how long it will take the court system to process that many warrants, and stated it will take years.

Tanksley answered whether other counties in the state are seeing a similar trend, and he stated he does not have an analysis of that, but that many counties do not have any booking restrictions. He answered a question about what budget and policy decisions might have an impact on lessening the number of outstanding warrants, and spoke about a holistic approach of coordination between the county and the cities and educating the community that the goal is for people to go to court.

This agenda item was REPORTED.

2. [AB2025-392](#) Report from Superior Court Administration & Juvenile Court

Stephanie Kraft, Superior Court Administrator, read from a presentation (on file) on the purpose of the court, Superior Court's current caseload and that water adjudication claim filings will significantly change their civil caseload number, the duties of the Court, various Superior and Juvenile Court programs which they provide, the completion of courtroom 5C, an update on the HCA reentry program, the status of preparation for the new 3rd floor courtroom, water adjudication updates, accomplishments of the last year, and challenges they face.

Scanlon asked questions about how interpretation services might be used across multiple parts of the County, and whether staffing could be shared between adult detention and juvenile detention, and stated he will follow up later (because of time constraints).

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 11:16 a.m.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

Cathy Halka, Council Clerk

Barry Buchanan, Committee Chair

Meeting Minutes prepared by Kristi Felbinger