

CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Cathy Halka, AICP, CMC

COUNTY COURTHOUSE

311 Grand Avenue, Suite #105
Bellingham, WA 98225-4038
(360) 778-5010



COUNCILMEMBERS

Barry Buchanan
Tyler Byrd
Todd Donovan
Ben Elenbaas
Kaylee Galloway
Jon Scanlon
Mark Stremler

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL

December 3, 2024

TO: County Council

FROM: Jill Nixon, Legislative Coordinator II

SUBJ: IPRTF Recommendation to County Council

At the November 18, 2024 regular meeting of the Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force, the task force was presented with a proposal to add a seat on the Justice Project Oversight and Planning (JPOP) Committee for the County Prosecutor. The Task Force voted unanimously to recommend that the County Council add a seat to the JPOP Committee for the County Prosecutor, with the approval of the Prosecutor's Office, as proposed. Prosecutor Richey indicated he would like a designated seat on the committee.

At the November 21, 2024 regular meeting of the JPOP Committee, the Committee voted unanimously to approve a recommendation to add a seat to the JPOP Committee for the County Prosecutor.

The proposal is attached.

REQUESTED COUNCIL ACTION: Add a voting member to the JPOP Committee for the County Prosecutor

Justice Project Oversight & Planning Committee

Proposal to Add a Seat to JPOP

Preface

At the first meeting of the JPOP on Oct. 17, 2024, the committee discussed JPOP composition and brainstormed ideas for additional seats to be added.

At the Nov. 6, 2024 County Council Criminal Justice & Public Safety Committee meeting, the committee agreed that, if the JPOP wants to change the definition and/or add positions, it should make a formal recommendation to County Council, including a brief description of the reason for and benefit of the change.

In keeping with the Incarceration Prevention & Reduction Task Force's process, such a recommendation should be brought to the full IPRTF for approval and then the IPRTF would present the recommendation to County Council.

There may be other seats we would want to formally add in the future, but this proposal addresses the most pressing gap.

Proposal:

Add one seat to be designated and appointed by the Prosecutor's Office. The addition of this position is seen as essential because the Prosecutor's Office plays a key role in diversion, which is so critical to the desired systems changes the IPRTF and Justice Project Implementation Plan aim to make.

For Reference:

[From Draft Charter](#)

Membership

The composition of the JPOP Committee membership is set by [Whatcom County Ordinance 2023-039](#). The Whatcom County Council will appoint and approve the full slate of JPOP members. The JPOP Committee shall include balanced membership ensuring fair representation of BIPOC communities, service providers, and people with lived experience.

The JPOP Committee membership shall consist of:

1. Members designated and appointed by their agency:

- the Whatcom County Executive
- one Whatcom County Councilmember
- the Whatcom County Sheriff
- the Mayor of Bellingham
- one Bellingham City Councilmember
- one Public Defender
- one elected representative from the remaining cities within Whatcom County
- at least one representative from each federally recognized tribe within Whatcom County

- one representative from the Whatcom Racial Equity Commission
- The chair(s) of the IPRTF/LJC

2. Nine additional committee members representing the following positions, appointed by the County Council:

- two criminal legal system utilizers with preference for formerly incarcerated and BIPOC individuals
- one community-based behavioral health provider
- one substance use disorder treatment provider
- one reentry specialist
- one paramedic from Emergency Medical Services (EMS)
- one recovery subject matter expert
- one youth representative such as from teen court programs (young adult aged 18-24)
- one supportive housing subject matter expert

If the JPOP Committee decides it needs additional members, especially to fulfill its mandate that the committee include "a balanced membership ensuring fair representation of BIPOC communities, service providers, and people with lived experience," then it can make a recommendation for additions to the IPRTF/LJC and Whatcom County Council. The Council will create additional positions as needed.