

**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 - Final

**Tuesday, February 6, 2024
1:50 PM
Hybrid Meeting**

**HYBRID MEETING - ADJOURNS BY 3 P.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

Dana Brown-Davis, C.M.C.

Call To Order

Committee Chair Barry Buchanan called the meeting to order at 1:51 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. [AB2024-103](#) Presentation from the EMS Manager regarding the Medical Reserve Corps
Mike Hilley, Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Manager, read from a presentation (on file). He spoke about the background of the Medical Reserve Cops (MRC) in Whatcom County and how they helped during the pandemic and in other areas, the creation of a state overhead MRC to provide management at the state level and to provide specific skill sets as needed, work in the last several months in Whatcom County with those experiencing homelessness, data on how many people have been served during that time, and focus areas for the MRC for the next six months. He answered whether there are any minimum qualifications that people have to meet to be in the Corps, and stated members are generally credentialed medical professionals. He answered where someone can go to get involved and how the County can help in getting the information out there, and whether people in the program have gone through the severe weather shelter volunteer training through the Health Department.

Malora Christensen, Response Systems Division Manager, answered a question about the point-in-time count of the population of individuals without shelter and stated it is coordinated by the Whatcom Homeless Service Center and the Health and Community Services Department and relies heavily on a lot of different outreach teams including the MRC.

Hilley answered whether there are other direct duties of the MRC that were not included in the presentation, whether the 93 individuals medically served from June-December 2023 were served by the MRC, and whether he sees a role for the Reserve Corps in helping with the fentanyl crisis in our county.

This agenda item was PRESENTED.

2. [AB2024-115](#) Report from Sheriff's Office on Operation Stonegarden Grant Funding

The following people reported and answered questions:

- Steve Harris, Undersheriff
- Donnell Tanksley, Sheriff

Harris referred to the file attachment (on file) regarding Stonegarden funds and stated "fy" stands for fiscal year. Each one of those grant periods has a three-year operational cycle in which they actually do the activities funded by that fiscal year. So, that is why Council recently saw a contract amendment for a 2020 fiscal year that they are still operating on. Outside that three-year period, the government can also collect funds that were unused and reallocate those to other agencies that are able to use them. As far as the actual activities they do, they are fully compliant with the state law, and he spoke about their activities at the US / Canada border in the last few years.

They answered questions about what their main concerns are at the border, what their take is on why this program exists and why the Federal Government is not just hiring more people to do it themselves, whether there is anything in the program they would like to change from prior leadership to make sure we are compliant with the Keep Washington Working Act, how they handle immigration-related issues and other stops at the border, what can be purchased with the fiscal year 2020 equipment grant, whether reimbursement from the Federal Government helps with maintenance costs for equipment that we acquire through the program other than boats, and what type of arrest it would be if they arrest someone at the border who resides in Point Roberts.

This agenda item was REPORTED.

Committee Discussion and Recommendation to Council

1. [AB2024-096](#) Ordinance suspending Whatcom County Code 1.28 to update the Correctional Facilities Operational Standards

The following people discussed the proposed ordinance with Councilmembers:

- Donnell Tanksley, Sheriff
- Steve Harris, Undersheriff

Tanksley briefed the Councilmembers and stated he is asking for another extension because they are 130 policies into 187 policies prior to

completion. Last week, the director of the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs was here visiting, and part of that visit was to talk about accreditation for the Sheriff's Office and the Jail. His goal is to have this extend into the accreditation process which will take a while.

Buchanan stated they are hoping it can be done this year and Donovan spoke about the history of the item and its extensions. He asked, if we are ultimately going to completely get rid of Whatcom County Code 1.28, why we do not just do that now, what will be replacing this in the Code, and whether there is a work plan that is different than in the past.

Tanksley stated last year the Council approved another lieutenant and part of that position is to ensure that the policies and procedures are in place but they may still need more staff. Before they can codify language that says the operational guidelines and the codes are contained within the Sheriff's Office policy and procedure manual that is posted online, the Council may want to ensure that they are OK with the policies first. He answered whether the policies would be run through the Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force (IPRTF) Law and Justice Council as it states in the ordinance. He stated he would not recommend that it go to the entire IPRTF because it would take a long time, and answered where the vetting would come from if it did not come from the Law and Justice Council. He and Harris spoke about who will be working on the policies in the Sheriff's Office and whether they have been hired yet. Harris stated if the policies involve any type of working conditions or hours of work, that will also have to be approved by the union.

Elenbaas stated that if these policies go through the IPRTF it will take years, so he does not know if that would be a good idea.

Byrd moved that the Ordinance be RECOMMENDED FOR ADOPTION.

Donovan stated he would like to amend the ordinance but asked if it would need to be re-introduced.

Tyler Schroeder, Director of Administrative Services, answered whether additional costs in our union negotiation contracts that might be incurred by incorporating changes that are required by the State would be funded by the State. He stated it would likely be unfunded.

Tanksley and Harris answered whether the standards are being written in such a way that they will be universally applicable to our current and future

facility and answered questions about the accreditation.

Royce Buckingham, Prosecuting Attorney's Office, answered whether changing "Law and Justice Committee" on line one of page two of the ordinance to its correct name of "Law and Justice Council," and whether Donovan's proposed amendment would be substantive changes and he stated they would not. He also stated he recommends that they pass temporary policies.

Byrd's motion that the Ordinance be RECOMMENDED FOR ADOPTION carried by the following vote:

Aye: 3 - Buchanan, Byrd, and Scanlon

Nay: 0

Items Added by Revision

There were no agenda items added by revision.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:01 p.m.

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WA

Barry Buchanan-via email 2/9/2024

Dana Brown-Davis, Council Clerk

Barry Buchanan, Committee Chair

Kristi Felbinger, Minutes Transcription

SIGNED COPY ON FILE