

Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force

Meeting Summary, March 07, 2016

Whatcom County Courthouse, Rooms 513/514

311 Grand Avenue, Bellingham WA

Attendance

Present	Representing
Anderson, Angela	Whatcom County Public Defender
Brubaker, Jeff	Bellingham Fire Department
Deacon, Anne	Whatcom County Human Services
Elfo, Bill	Whatcom County Sheriff
Gribbin, Susan	Consumer
Hammill, Daniel	City of Bellingham, City Council
Heydrich, Alfred	Whatcom County Superior Court Commissioner
Hovenier, Jack, Co-Chair	Consumer Representative
Knapp, Michael	Ferndale PD
Kruse, Betsy	North Sound Mental Health Administration
Mann, Ken	Whatcom County Council Member
Moonwater	Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center
Morgan, Irene	Restorative Community Coalition
Peterson, Darlene	Bellingham Municipal Court
Polidan, Randy	Unity Care NW
Ruffatto, Peter (proxy for Kelli Linville)	City of Bellingham, Mayor's Office
Schroeder, Tyler	Whatcom County Executive's Office
Walker, Kathy (proxy for Dave McEachran)	Whatcom County Prosecutor's Office
Guest Speakers	
Wendy Jones	Whatcom County Sheriff's Office
Jeff Parks	Whatcom County Sheriff's Office
Absent	
Bernstein, Jill, Co-Chair	Citizen Representative
Finkbonner, Julie	Lummi Nation
Gockley, Stephen	Whatcom Alliance for Health Advancement
Manering, Byron	Brigid Collins
Phillips, Chris	PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center
Winter, Greg	Opportunity Council
Staff	
Wight, Dean - Lead	

Meeting Summary

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:03 by Jack Hovenier, Co-Chair.

Jack called the members' attention to the meeting summaries for February 1 and February 16, 2016. Moonwater asked whether future meeting summaries could contain more detail, as some interested parties aren't able to access the audio recordings. Jack asked Dean Wight to consider that request.

2. Review Proposed 2016 Meeting Schedule

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Members were directed to the proposed 2016 meeting schedule in the packet. Jack asked whether there were any questions about the schedule.

Moonwater asked whether there was any possibility of changing the schedule from the first Monday of the month to another day. She stated she would not be available the next three meetings. Others indicated conflicts with particular future dates. A suggestion was made to consider the second Monday of each month as a date, but others had conflicts with that date. Jack then suggested that members submit information to Dean about their availability on the first and second Mondays of each month, for him to determine which Monday would work best for most members in a given month. Dean stated he would send out a request for the information as a reminder.

3. Updates from Ad Hoc Committees

Jack then asked if the chairs of each of the Ad Hoc Committees had anything to report, noting that there likely had not been any meetings since the February 16 Task Force meeting.

Commissioner Heydrich stated there had been no meeting of the Justice System committee. He proposed the next meeting of the Justice System committee be scheduled for Monday, March 28 from 9:15-11:15 am.

Anne Deacon noted there had been no meeting of the Behavioral Health committee, but that the County Human Services staff had material to present to the next meeting. She proposed meeting on Thursday, March 24 from 3 – 5 pm.

Dean Wight indicated he would contact Chris Phillips about scheduling a meeting of the Triage Facility committee. He also stated he would work with each committee chair on preparing agendas for the three ad hoc committees.

4. Council Feedback on Phase One Report

Ken Mann reported that the County Council was pleased with the IPRTF Phase One report, and felt it provided a good framework for moving into Phase Two. He complimented the co-chairs and task force members for their work.

5. Steering Committee

Ken Mann explained his proposal that a Steering Committee be established for the Task Force, to deal with processes for moving the Task Force work forward, including the role of WAHA and the co-chairs. The Steering Committee would not make substantive decisions, but make sure that any procedural questions were addressed as they came up. All meetings and discussions of the Steering Committee would be reported to the Task Force. The Steering Committee would be made up of the County Executive representative, the

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County Council representative, the co-chairs of the Task Force, the ad hoc committee chairs, and the WAHA facilitator.

After discussions and questions, Ken Mann made the following motion:

“That the Task Force establish a Steering Committee comprised of the Executive representative, the Council representative, Task Force subcommittee chairs, Facilitator representative and Task Force co-chairs. The meeting shall be open to the public and the purpose is to discuss Task Force and sub-committee process, meeting goals for Task Force established by ordinance, and to clarify and discuss role of contracted facilitator.”

The motion was seconded by Darlene Peterson. Motion was passed unanimously.

6. Presentation by Wendy Jones/Jeff Parks

Jack invited Sheriff Elfo to introduce his staff who were present to report on the new Spillman jail information system. Jeff Parks reviewed talking points which he told the Task Force were also available on one of several handouts by the door. Task Force members were informed the handouts would also be put on the website and distributed electronically. Jeff described the structure of the Spillman system. He indicated their focus has been on implementing the system in stages, meeting the Department's business needs at the jail and for arresting officers first. He pointed out there has been pressure to get the old system replaced quickly, in order to stay in compliance with Federal Uniform Crime Reporting Standards. He stated that Department staff had met last week with an organization called Measures for Justice, under federal contract to create uniform national measures of court and incarceration activity. The project is working with 300 counties in five states. He shared a handout from that group, describing their goals. He mentioned it as an example of the interest from several directions in obtaining data regarding incarceration. Jeff indicated that the new system is running in parallel with the legacy system, while they gradually populate the new database as arrests & bookings occur. He pointed out that County Corrections must coordinate with 10 municipalities, 9 prosecuting attorney offices and 11 law enforcement agencies in Whatcom County. He indicated that all fields are searchable in the database, but said that it takes significant work to create “queries” using the Crystal Reports report generator that is linked to the database.

Wendy Jones then described the business uses of the Spillman system that serve the corrections officers in the jail. She also explained the legal limitations on what personally identifying information can be shared, limited to five basic information items. Requests for information which include other data associated with those five personally identifying elements cannot routinely be shared outside the Department. She referenced

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the handout describing the National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS), the counties in Washington State were expected to upload data to beginning in 2012. Wendy also described the resource limitations of the Corrections Division in responding to requests for information. In response to a question about behavioral health characteristics of jail inmates, she indicated that HIPAA rules require keeping such information separate from the jail database system.

Kathy Walker stated that the County Prosecuting Attorney's office had also met recently with the Measures for Justice representatives. She stated her office's reservations in sharing the requested information, particularly since the organization was not a governmental agency but a non-profit agency.

Moonwater from the Dispute Resolution Center spoke up to describe the importance of developing baseline information on the various aspects of criminal justice and corrections activity, in order to evaluate the effectiveness of any programs or changes implemented as a result of Task Force recommendations. Discussion followed regarding the kinds of questions that the different ad hoc committees have, which would help them in formulating and evaluation their recommendations.

Ken Mann then asked whether it was possible for the Sheriff's Department to export data from the Spillman system into an Excel file and provide it to another part of County government for analysis, to identify opportunities for affecting incarceration rates. Jeff Parks suggested there would need to be more discussion regarding that proposal, and that it would be helpful to know what questions members of the Task Force had. He indicated that Caleb Erickson from the Corrections staff was the technical expert on the Spillman system, and would defer to him in discussions about accessing data. There followed discussion on the complexities of formulating data requests, given that data resides not only in the Spillman system but in the various court databases and service system databases.

As time for adjournment was nearing, Dean Wight summarized the discussion and suggested that the issue of how to access relevant information from Jail and other information systems be referred to the Steering Committee for discussion. He also suggested that each ad hoc committee take time at its next meeting to further refine the questions of its members, which could form the basis for information requests.

7. Public Comment

Irene Morgan stated her concern that meeting audio recordings and handouts were not getting onto the WAHA website in a timely way, and stressed the importance of making

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information about Task Force work and activities readily available to the general public. She pointed out there is great interest in the work of the Task Force.

A member from the audience pointed out the importance of converting raw data into useful information.

8. Meeting Adjourned at 10:55 am.

DRAFT