

Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force Special Meeting Meeting Summary for April 13, 2017

1. Call to Order

Task Force Co-Chair Jack Hovenier called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m. in the Civic Center Garden Level Conference Room, 322 N. Commercial Street, Bellingham.

Present: Angela Anderson, Jill Bernstein, John Billester, Anne Deacon, Bill Elfo, Stephen Gockley, Susan Gribbin, Daniel Hammill, Fred Heydrich, Jack Hovenier, Betsy Kruse, Kelli Linville, Moonwater, Darlene Peterson, Chris Phillips, Randy Polidan, Tyler Schroeder

Absent: Jeff Brubaker, Nick Lewis, Byron Manering, Ken Mann, Dave McEachran, Irene Morgan, Greg Winter

Also Present: Joy Gilfilen (proxy for Irene Morgan) and Kathy Walker (proxy for Dave McEachran)

Review March 27, 2017 Meeting Summary

Anne Deacon identified scrivener's errors. There were no other changes.

2. Sheriff's Office progress in increasing access and removing financial barriers to jail alternative programs.

Elfo introduced the presentation regarding the Sheriff's Office jail alternative programs and Lieutenant Caleb Erickson.

Erickson submitted and read from a presentation (on file). He described the current programs, which include in- or out-of-custody work crews, mental health and drug courts, electronic home detention, and work and school release. His crew meets weekly to talk about what is working correctly and what can be done better. He reported on several changes made since 2014, including a reduced or waived application fee for people who can't afford it.

The Task Force members discussed participants ability to learn new skills and personal responsibility and the current number of daily participants. Per day, there is an average of:

- 5-20 people on out-of-custody work crew
- 25 people in the in-custody work crew
- 20 people on electronic home detention
- 15 people on work release

The application fees are set by the County's Unified Fee schedule. The Sheriff's Office is in the process of amending the ordinance to change the increase the per hour reimbursement amount to work off fines from \$8.60 per hour to approximately prevailing wage. The County Council recently changed the ordinance to reduce fees for electronic home monitoring and give the Sheriff more flexibility.

Work crew staffing levels depend on the type of work being done and equipment being used by the work crew. In general, five to eight people are assigned to each work crew. The supervisors are civilians who supervise their actions completely. The ratio of supervisors to workers is smaller when the workers are in-custody, but they may mix in-custody and out-of-custody participants on one crew.

The members discussed:

- The Sheriff's Office has no plans at this time to install a staff person at the courthouse to help offenders begin the program, similar to the City of Bellingham's program.
- Measure success by increasing number of participants and reduced recidivism. The Sheriff's Office has an intern who is documenting recidivism.

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- The Sheriff's Office will put as many people as possible in their jail alternative programs, including municipal populations, because there are no capacity problems at the work center at this time.
- The City of Bellingham and County need to work together to not send people to Yakima if they can instead be in a County jail alternative program.
- Consider who is most appropriate to be sent to Yakima, regardless of jurisdiction.
- The County will begin sending people to Yakima due to the deteriorating jail facility as they close certain units of the jail to do interim repairs.
- The Sheriff's Office jail alternatives are approximately 50 percent more effective.

6. Updates on Recent Events and Activities

Hovenier reported on the Jail Stakeholder Work Group. They are moving forward, and are close to reaching consensus.

4. Progress on Phase 3 Report

Forrest Longman, County Council Legislative Analyst, stated the chairs are working on drafts, which are due at the end of April.

Bernstein stated that comments on the drafts must be submitted by the deadlines.

5. Letter of support regarding the proposed homeless shelter.

Linville submitted a draft letter and suggested a change to the draft to connect the purpose of the Task Force with the purpose of the shelter, which is to reduce incarceration and recidivism and connect people with services. Add to the last sentence, "...with the services they need, **while potentially reducing incarceration and recidivism.**" She described the location and reported on the effort to create the shelter:

- The Lighthouse Mission offered to operate the shelter for the City at a very minimum cost to the taxpayers and will remodel the building.
- They have spent 18 months looking for a site that met all their criteria that it not be located on Holly Street, downtown, or near residential or commercial retail areas.
- It will take two years to build the shelter.
- She is asking also for individual letters of support from agencies.

The Task Force members discussed informing the community about the 18 month effort to find a location, certain members who can't support the letter without approval of their boards or because of judicial impartiality, and full information about the search process on Council Member Hammill's blog.

Bernstein moved to approve and send the draft letter, with the amendment. The motion was seconded.

The motion carried 14-0 with Heydrich, Moonwater, Gribbin, and Walker abstaining.

6. Updates on Recent Events and Activities

Deacon reported on the GRACE stakeholder work session:

- Participants included representatives from the Lummi Nation and Western Washington University
- The purpose is to address people in the community who disproportionately use emergency and law enforcement services.
- The program is for a pre-arrest, pre-diversion option.
- A second work session is scheduled to present the draft framework.

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3. VERA Institute System Mapping

Liz Swavola, VERA Institute, submitted and read from a presentation (on file). Since the last visit, they have worked on:

- Data received, so they can begin data analysis, which should take about six weeks.
- Pretrial risk assessment research for the Legal and Justice Systems Committee
- System mapping

Swavola described the process of creating a system map at the previous day's workshop. The Task Force members and consultants worked to refine the challenge statements.

Task Force members discussed:

- The timing, tension, and competing incentives between Drug Court and the Fast Track program. The existence of Fast Track is counterproductive to the goals of Drug Court, but pretrial monitoring may reduce that disincentive.
- Challenges defendants experience when navigating the court process
- The VERA Institute's cost-benefit analysis tools
- Court management systems that don't provide enough information
- Getting information on the number of people going from the emergency room to jail on a third degree assault charge
- Whether the consultants will talk to system users
- Concurrent versus consecutive sentences, with other jurisdictions.

Their next steps include a presentation on the data results and prioritizing strategies and consensus.

6. Updates on Recent Events and Activities

Bernstein announced the jail diversion discussion hosted by the League of Women Voters on April 15, 2016.

7. Public Comment

Lisa Farrino stated bring people back from Yakima to participate in alternatives. Don't send pretrial inmates to Yakima. There may be problems with the bail system.

8. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m.