

Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force
DRAFT Meeting Summary for November 27, 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 Room, 322 N. Commercial, Bellingham.

Present: Angela Anderson, Jill Bernstein, John Billester, Jeff Brubaker, Anne Deacon, Bill Elfo, Stephen Gockley, Susan Gribbin, Daniel Hammill, Jack Hovenier, Betsy Kruse, Kelli Linville, Ken Mann, Irene Morgan, Chris Phillips, Tyler Schroeder, Greg Winter, Deborra Garrett (proxy for Fred Heydrich), Kathy Walker (proxy for Dave McEachran)

Absent: Fred Heydrich, Nick Lewis, Byron Manering, Dave McEachran, Moonwater, Darlene Peterson

2. Committee Updates

Mann reported for the Steering Committee:

- The Task Force's introduction to the Vera Institute final report
- 2018 Strategic Plan for the Task Force
- The Phase III Report
- His plans for an exit interview with the Vera Institute consultants in New York in December

The Task Force members discussed the Vera Institute recommendation for data improvements, Task Force member terms, and additional funding for the Task Force in 2018 in the amount of \$100,000.

Deacon and Hammill reported for the Behavioral Health Committee:

- Bellingham Police Department presentation on bike theft trends and data regarding neighborhoods in the Bellingham area, its connection with opioid use, and the broad issue of connections among victims
- Opioid use in homeless camps and contamination concerns from all the needles
- The need for a motion to support GRACE program

Deacon moved to support the Whatcom GRACE program and encourages community leaders to offer financial support for its development and implementation. The motion was seconded.

The Task Force members discussed funding for the GRACE program; acknowledging that the City and County are already stepping up to finance the program; other benefactors of the program, such as Peace Health; extending the request for funds to small cities; setting goals; offering outcomes that are measurable and accountable; working on priorities for the Task Force and how detailed the recommendations should be; creating a consumer focus group and victim focus group; and amendments to the motion.

Hovenier restated the motion with amendments proposed by the Committee, "The Behavioral Health ad hoc committee recommends funding and implementing the Whatcom GRACE program, and encourages stakeholders to continue to support and community leaders to offer financial support for its development and implementation."

The motion to approve the amended language carried unanimously.

Deacon continued to report for the committee. More funds for behavioral health housing are available. The Task Force should review those options.

The Task Force members discussed plans for developing a consumer focus group.

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4. Review and approve Task Force Introduction to Vera Institute Final Report

Mann reported for the Steering Committee. He referenced the draft Introduction and moved to accept it as written and attach it permanently to the report. The motion was seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

The Task Force members discussed getting more data from all jurisdictions.

5. Review and approve Task Force Final Phase III Report

Mann reported for the Steering Committee and moved to approve the Phase III Report to be submitted to the County Council. The motion was seconded.

The Task Force members discussed focusing the Task Force more countywide, the lack of data from small cities, the public involvement plan, jail referrals to behavioral health services,

Schroeder stated they could add the public involvement plan as an exhibit to the Report. The Task Force concurred.

Deacon stated she believes a statement regarding self-referrals for behavioral health services from jail inmates is inaccurate. The Task Force members discussed whether the statement in the motion is accurate.

Hovenier moved to amend the report on page 10 of the report, item 4, "~~Nearly one-third (32 percent) of people admitting to jail were referred to jail behavioral health services.~~" The motion to amend was seconded. The motion to amend carried 16-3, with Hammill, Gribbin, and Morgan opposed.

The motion to approve the report as amended carried 17-0 with Walker and Deacon abstaining.

3. Legal & Justice Systems Committee Presentation and discussion on developing a pretrial assessment tool and pretrial services unit

Gockley and Garrett reported for the Legal and Justice Committee.

The Task Force members discussed:

- Implementation by all courts, including District Court
- The use of the same or different pretrial assessments among all the courts
- The continuum of consequences once convicted based on what a defendant has done, not the jurisdiction in which the defendant lives
- A unified approach among all the courts is goal
- Funding for pretrial services

Gockley moved that Whatcom County develop a plan, including cost estimates and implementation strategies, to adopt a statistically validated pretrial risk assessment instrument(s) with a pretrial monitoring program to serve Courts in all Whatcom County jurisdictions.

6. Update on collaboration of law enforcement and St. Joseph Hospital

Phillips stated a third meeting between law enforcement and hospital representatives are scheduled for this week, and includes emergency room staff, the Sheriff, and representatives from the City of Bellingham. They have clarified the policy for law enforcement that it's not necessary they check weapons and are creating the protocol for when line staff call law enforcement.

7. Update by Jurisdictions on Jail Diversion Programs

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Elfo reported for the Sheriff's Office:

- The collaboration between law enforcement and St. Joseph hospital (see agenda item 6).
- Additional full-time employee for crisis intervention in 2018
- Contract with Yakima jail
- District Court is offering electronic home monitoring, implemented by the Sheriff's Office
- Changes regarding book and release
- Changes to allow warrant quash by court clerks
- Judges are considering a reset of court hearing dates at hearings

Billester reported for the small cities and stated the jail, not the judge, is making jail alternative decisions. The defendant still has to report to the jail.

The Task Force members discussed connecting Judges Bobbink and Lewis to Judge Lev so small cities can find ways to streamline the process and transportation issues to Bellingham.

Peter Ruffatto, Bellingham City Attorney, reported for the City of Bellingham and stated their numbers for using the Yakima jail and using electronic home monitoring are up.

8. Next Steps: Ideas & Further Information

Mann stated the County Council provided funding for the Task Force in 2018. The Task Force needs to go through a strategic planning process and come up with a work plan that prioritizes recommendations, with guidance from the County Council on the level of detail the recommendations should have. The first Task Force meeting in January will be a longer facilitated meeting to create a work plan.

The Task Force members discussed reestablishing the Law and Justice Council.

Phillips moved to approve the 2018 meeting schedule that avoids Bellingham City Council days, including July 16, 2018. The motion was seconded and carried unanimously.

9. Other Business

There was no other business.

10. Public Comment

Sherry Lambert spoke in support of the work of the Task Force and helping those in need.

11. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 11:05 a.m.