

CLEARANCES	Initial	Date	Date Received in Council Office	Agenda Date	Assigned to:
Originator:		7/31/2018		8/8/2018	Criminal Justice Co
Division Head:					
Dept. Head:	<i>[Signature]</i>	7.31.18			
Prosecutor:					
Purchasing/Budget:					
Executive:					

TITLE OF DOCUMENT:
 Report on Criminal Justice Committee Listening Tour

ATTACHMENTS:

SEPA review required? () Yes () NO SEPA review completed? () Yes () NO	Should Clerk schedule a hearing? () Yes () NO Requested Date:
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SUMMARY STATEMENT OR LEGAL NOTICE LANGUAGE: *(If this item is an ordinance or requires a public hearing, you must provide the language for use in the required public notice. Be specific and cite RCW or WCC as appropriate. Be clear in explaining the intent of the action.)*

Report on Criminal Justice Committee Listening Tour

COMMITTEE ACTION:

COUNCIL ACTION:

Related County Contract #:	Related File Numbers:	Ordinance or Resolution Number:
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Please Note: Once adopted and signed, ordinances and resolutions are available for viewing and printing on the County's website at: www.co.whatcom.wa.us/council.

Report on Whatcom County Criminal Justice & Public Safety Listening Tour



CROSSROADS
CONSULTING

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the wake of a second failed ballot initiative to build a new jail, the Whatcom County Council's Criminal Justice & Public Safety Committee sought to gain insight into why people were opposed to the proposal, and to gather input on the types of facilities and services they feel are needed to improve criminal justice and public safety in Whatcom County. The Committee contracted with Crossroads Consulting to facilitate seven listening sessions across the county from April to June 2018.

In addition to gathering verbal public comments from the 115 people who attended the listening sessions, 101 participants completed a brief written questionnaire. The same questionnaire was posted online for three weeks and was completed by 693 people who did not attend a listening session but who wanted to express their opinions.

Public comment at listening sessions and responses to the questionnaire represented a spectrum of opinions about criminal justice, and indicated that the majority of people had a holistic understanding of public safety. Rather than a large, new, and costly jail, participants consistently voiced the need to reduce incarceration by investing in prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, and alternatives to jail.

While many participants agreed that there needs to be a jail for people who are violent and at risk of harming others, and that it needs to be a safe and humane place for corrections staff who work there and inmates, they felt that there were inherent injustices in the current incarceration system that need to be rectified. They clearly communicated that jail was not the appropriate place to address mental health and substance abuse issues, or to house the homeless.

Most respondents wanted more tax funding to go to human services than into building a new jail. They had many ideas about how to reduce the number of people who are incarcerated, and many hoped that by investing more resources into incarceration prevention and diversion programs, less money would be needed over time to support the jail system.

There was strong support for decisions about the jail and incarceration prevention and rehabilitation services to be driven by data and best practices. Participants expressed that they would like to be informed and included in future planning for the jail and criminal justice system reforms. This will require effective outreach strategies to reach the diverse array of people who care about and are impacted by the criminal justice system.