



# Justice Project

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*(Public Health, Safety, and Justice Facility Needs Assessment)*

## MEMO

Date: June 23, 2020  
To: Stakeholder Advisory Committee for the Justice Project  
From: Councilmember Barry Buchanan, Sheriff Bill Elfo, Executive Satpal Sidhu, and Prosecutor Eric Richey  
RE: Status of the Justice Project – June Update

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As you know, the Justice Project was suspended through May as a result of the global COVID-19 public health emergency. The project team has reassessed the current situation and determined that the project will be suspended through the end of the year, at which point the team will reevaluate next steps.

While current limitations on community engagement and fiscal concerns brought on by the pandemic have made it impractical to continue the Justice Project, the County still has a need to identify options for modifications within existing jail facilities for infectious disease screening and treatment. We are proactively discussing development of a new contract for consultant services to address immediate needs related to COVID-19 to ensure the safety of staff and those incarcerated.

Additionally, the County is reviewing potential modifications to the Work Center (Division Street facility) to accommodate additional inmates and alleviate space constraints at the Downtown Main Jail facility because of COVID-19 protocols. The County will use CARES Act funds for this study (less than \$40,000) and will update the Council, Justice Project SAC, and public regarding potential next steps, if any.

On May 21, 2020, we issued a memo to Whatcom County Councilmembers regarding *COVID-19 Public Health Precautions – Correctional Facilities*, which is available online for your review at [www.whatcomcounty.us/justice](http://www.whatcomcounty.us/justice).

Through the end of the year, during the period of inactivity of the SAC, County leaders will provide regular memo updates regarding any project-related activities.

Thank you again for your willingness to participate in the Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) for the Justice Project, and please reach out to the SAC liaison Cathy Halka at [chalka@co.whatcom.wa.us](mailto:chalka@co.whatcom.wa.us) if you have any questions or feedback.