

# Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) for the Justice Project

Thursday, October 13, 2022

10:00 – 12:00 pm

## Meeting Minutes

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**SAC Participants:** Stephen Gockley, Barry Buchanan, Cliff Langley, Erika Lautenbach, RB Tewksbury, Peter Frazier, Arlene Feld, Teresa Bosteter, Kristin Hanna, David Goldman, Kendra Cook, Scott Korhuis, Daniel Hammill, Perry Mowery, Michael Lilliquist, Brel Froebe, Maialisa Vanyo, Tyler Schroeder, Satpal Sidhu, Heather Flaherty, Mary Lou Steward, Deborah Hawley, Eve Smason-Marcus, Kara Mitchell Allen, Brooke Eolande, Bill Elfo, Don Almer (on behalf of Rebecca Mertzig), Eli Wainman, Daron Smith, Starck Follis

**Support:** Holly O'Neil, Facilitator; Mardi Solomon, Notes; Cathy Halka, County Staff; Jennifer Moon, Needs Assessment Report Writer

**Absent SAC Members:** Chad Butenschoen, Doug Chadwick, Brian Heinrich, Atul Deshmane, Seth Fleetwood, Anthony Hillaire, Jon Mutchler, Roman Swanaset-Simmonds, Eric Richey, Darlene Peterson

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*To view video recording, click on the link in the section heading.*

[Call to Order, Welcome](#) – Barry Buchanan, Council Member and SAC Chair

[Agenda Review & Timeline](#) – Holly O'Neil, Crossroads Consulting, Facilitator

[Remembering What We Are Doing](#) – Holly

- We have had excellent presentations from people bringing the relevant information we need. We have worked closely with the Incarceration Prevention & Reduction Task Force (IPRTF) to think about priorities for facilities and services. Jennifer Moon is compiling material into a report presenting our recommendations to County Council that will be a foundation for a Nov. 2023 ballot initiative.

[Purpose of Today's Meeting:](#)

- Determine levels of agreement on priorities identified so far. These are Vision, Values & Goals, as well as Needs & Recommendations that have been identified, and Needs & Recommendations relative to facilities.

[Looking Ahead:](#)

- The materials we are creating will be shared for public feedback through surveys of priority audiences (e.g., people with a history of incarceration and their families) and the general public. The Vida Agency (TVA) is conducting the surveys. SAC members will not provide feedback on the survey or the process but will see the results.
- TVA also is raising overall awareness of the SAC's process and work being done.
- Crossroads Consulting will facilitate a Town Hall on Nov. 15, 6:00-7:30, which is open to the public. All SAC members are encouraged to attend and to invite others.
- The next SAC meeting is Nov. 17. We will continue refining priorities and review sections of the Needs Assessment Report.
- Another SAC meeting will be held in Dec. or Jan. to look at the public input gathered by TVA and incorporate it into our final product. We now plan to present to Council at their first meeting in February.

[Decision-making Process](#)

- The SAC quorum is officially 12, as set by the resolution. The number of SAC members has gone up since that was set. The quorum number should be increased to ensure a more robust process.
- For approval, we need 50% +1 of SAC members in attendance.
- Surveys and SAC discussions have helped us think critically and find common ground. Survey results will be included in the appendix of the final Needs Assessment Report to illustrate levels of agreement. We will have a formal process

to approve of the final needs and recommendations. The process is: Motion, 2<sup>nd</sup>, discussion, amendments, vote with a simple majority to pass.

- The goal is to use a consensus-seeking process with final approval by a vote.

#### Process for Today

- Review the poll results and discuss the items that have less than 80% agreement. We will try to identify where people need more information or revisions are needed to increase agreement.

#### Introduction of Presenters – Barry Buchanan

#### Vision, Values, & Goals Poll Results – Deborah Hawley

- A small workgroup developed the Vision, Values & Goals statements – Deborah Hawley, Michael Lilliquist, and Kristin Hanna.
- Response rate is ~65% (26 respondents).
- Review the results of the poll. The level of agreement on the Vision, Values & Goals statements was over 85% for all items.

#### Needs & Recommendations Poll Results – Stephen Gockley

- Response rate is ~63% (25 respondents).
- Review the results of the poll, noting discrepancies in levels of agreement between the need and the recommendation to address that need.
- The items that have less than 80% agreement were highlighted for discussion.

#### Discussion of the items with less than 80% agreement (Q=Question, A=Answer, C=Comment)

C: Disagreement between need and response may be because the recommendation goes too far or not far enough.

C: Why is the response rate on these polls so low? As a group we should have a higher response rate.

C: We want everyone to take the polls.

#### Re Housing Services for At-Risk Populations

C: We have a general housing problem. That relates to all the housing recommendations. Why would this group of people get priority for services? This is an equity question. Why this group over others in need?

C: All our needs/gaps & recommendations are great but what about cost? It would be good to do all these things, but we don't have infinite money.

C: Services should be put where they are most needed. "On demand" may cause issues. We still have a need for a jail and a lot of these other services will depend on what internal/external funding we have.

C: A possible reason people may not support dedicated housing for therapeutic court members is that not everyone agrees it is government's role to provide housing, but WA state is offering more funding for housing issues, especially related to social services. It is possible more federal funding will be available under the current administration.

Q: Could someone share data on how stable housing has an impact on recidivism?

A: Dedicated housing for therapeutic court members has already been developed as an accomplishment of the IPRTF.

There is clean and sober housing on Meridian St. for Drug Court members. This is a one-year+ program. If people go back to the drug-infested social networks they have come from it won't work. People need a stable place to go for successful diversion. Permanent supportive housing programs is a critical factor to success in diversion programs such as LEAD & GRACE. We need more. We know this from the people working with folks on the ground. There is no need for more statistics.

C: Dedicated housing is a big need for people in therapeutic courts. It's hard to be successful in these programs if you are worried about housing. Concern is that, if the housing is tied to a person's involvement with therapeutic court and a person is unable to successfully go through it, then housing would be taken away. That housing would be unstable. This needs to be addressed.

#### Post-incarceration Community Supports

Re "...need assistance to reenter the workforce":

C: Feel this is a service that can be offered in the jail. Why do we need an outside service to do this?

C: We had an outside organization provide job training classes and opportunities to connect with companies that hire people post-incarceration, but that program doesn't exist anymore. The job issue is essential. People need a way to make a living. It is similar to housing in terms of its significance in what we are trying to do. The training that is

needed to operate well in the work force is very important after people have been out of the work force and in a different culture.

C: Given the significant SUD & MH challenges in the jail population, vocational support services seem like a secondary need, especially given a limited pot of money.

#### Re recommendation to establish dedicated housing for reentry population:

C: Concern that there are a lot of groups that need housing and don't want to encourage people to go to jail to get housing. It's better to get them housing before that.

C: We shouldn't create a conflict between prevention and reentry support. We can't prioritize one over the other because we have said we want to do both equally.

C: Rather than promising housing, we should promise opportunities for employment. Going to jail shouldn't be a qualification for getting something for free. Our society should lower the stigma against people who have been incarcerated and create opportunities for them.

C: There are disproportionate rates of incarceration for disabled people, and they will never be employed at a level where they can pay for their own housing because the amount we pay disabled people is very low.

C: Lacking stable housing is one of the biggest barriers to employment. People can't maintain a job without a safe place to sleep, shower, an address, etc. Housing keeps people out of jail. We need more dedicated housing and that should be more of a priority than employment opportunities.

C: This recommendation is similar to the other one about permanent supportive housing. This housing has intensive case management support which is like moving in with your parents on steroids. This is a challenge, but people need it because they have a history of not being successful living independently. It is not realistic that people would go to jail to get housing. Not sure this item is at the top of the priority list given cost considerations, but it's not a concern that people will be gaming the system to get a roof over their head.

#### Reentry Services

Re PACT Services: People's comments were they didn't know what PACT was. Are there other concerns?

C: Concern that PACT is a specific, limited fix that may exclude other ideas. Community-based ideas deserve to be discussed as well.

Q: Is there anyone on the SAC who has a finger on the pulse of national and international data about what works?

A: PACT is an evidence-based program for people with very severe mental illness who can't function without assistance (medication, case management). We need to include this clarification in the need/recommendation description.

Q: Court & reentry navigator programs have been discussed. Would this be good to include?

C: The issue of navigators is important because the populations we're talking about need support in all aspects of this process. We should also have navigators for court experiences. They have difficulty dealing with attorneys, making decisions when they don't understand the system, etc.

#### Jail-Based Behavioral Health Services

Re "Create positions for 2 Intensive Case Mgrs. (CMs): The problem may be specifying the number 2.

C: Two CMs is not enough. CMs are burnt out because of caseloads. Consistency of CMs who can build relationships and work with folks over a long period of time would contribute to success of people engaging in the criminal legal system.

C: The Health Dept. administers a team with Lifeline Connections. There are currently two MHPs and one reentry specialist. There also is an MHP who works with youth. The recommendation is for one MHP and two reentry specialists. There are a lot of people releasing from jail. We hear that isn't enough.

Q: Are there numbers of what a caseload would look like for those CMs if the number of CMs increased by 3 or 4?

#### Initial Detention/Initial Court Hearings – What is missing or needs to change with the needs & recommendations?

C: Comments indicated lack of understanding of Public Safety Assessment. This matter is within the scope of judicial officers within Superior Court to move them beyond the cash bail system. They aren't really one of our target audiences. Concern with this being on our recommendations because Superior Court judicial officers haven't asked us for our views. Stephen is happy to provide additional information about this.

#### Community Behavioral Health Services

Re recommendation regarding Designated Crisis Responders assigned to Law Enforcement: Comments indicated confusion about this recommendation. Perry will help to clarify.

Re recommendation to increase availability of MH &/or SUD treatment: There is disagreement with the second part of the recommendation. People do not want to prioritize admission of individuals releasing from incarceration.

### Priorities Regarding Jail Location Poll Results – Tyler Schroeder

- Response rate ~50% (21 responses).
- Poll questions came from the dialogue at the Sept. 29 work session.
- Highest priority is cost to build on site – 81% rated this important or very important

### Re proximity of jail location to community resources

- Public transportation is very important to us – 91% rated important or very important.
- Proximity to courthouse – 76% important/very important. It is important for people to appear in person in hearings. It would be OK to have a courtroom in or near the jail.
- A “campus” approach with Crisis Stabilization Center, Work Center, Jail, Sheriff’s Office may not be as important.

### Ranking of Preferred Jail Location

- The 21 respondents rated Irongate 1<sup>st</sup> choice, Civic Center 2<sup>nd</sup> choice, and Ferndale 3<sup>rd</sup> choice.

Discussion – We are working with limited data. What is most important to think about to advance the conversation?

- C: The WTA operations center is 3 blocks from the Work Center. Operationally it would be very easy for WTA to add service between downtown and an Irongate facility because they already make that run to their own facility.
- C: Regarding the percentage responding to “enough land to build horizontal design”: It doesn’t coincide with the choice of Irongate. From Tyler’s 9/29 presentation, the square footage needed for all the facility needs would only fit in Ferndale. The Ferndale site is 100% what is needed. It will be less expensive.
- C: Irongate is a close 2<sup>nd</sup> to Ferndale, provided there is an opportunity to acquire additional land.
- C: We may need an if/then decision tree.
- C: Would like the most affordable jail with the most room to expand which leads to Ferndale.
- C: In conversation, people working inside the criminal legal system indicated willingness to be away from courthouse as long as satellite courts could be constructed at Irongate. In favor of Irongate but only if there is enough space to build a horizontal facility and get all the things we need there. There may be space there that could be purchased to make it all happen.
- C: There are dynamic aspects to consider: If Irongate or Ferndale are selected, the Ferndale site is surplus. If any site other than Civic Center is chosen, then we need a presence near the courthouse. How big might that grow to be? If the jail were moved to Irongate, is it best to keep using the Work Center as it is now or change it to Admin. Offices and move the Work Center to downtown? If you need more space at Irongate, you can have it by moving the Work Center. Pieces will move around dynamically. Don’t decide based on current configurations.
- C: Tyler: The County has gone through the different iterations. The last iteration had courthouse improvements to allow for better transport to the courthouse for hearings. That would be provided if a site other than Civic Center is selected. 81% indicated cost to build on the site was important for determining location. Could provide SAC with more information about cost estimates to build horizontal vs. vertical design. There is some info from 2008 & 2010 HDR reports indicating a substantial increase in costs to build a vertical facility. Could send this info to SAC.
- C: Re Civic Center site: There are design factors we have no information on. There is a fair amount of land between South parking lot and “the Pit” and the footprint of the current jail. Could we replace parking with underground or rooftop parking? We don’t have enough info to make informed recommendations. A lot of the Ferndale land is not developable. There are wetland mitigation issues. We’re not going to move the courthouse. There is so much value to maintaining the cluster of services in Civic Center. Encourage us not to make a choice, but to wait until the design phase after this community input phase. Location isn’t something we are equipped to provide meaningful input on.
- C: Re eminent domain mentioned by Starck before: The library folks have said they do not want to remain where they are. That is a whole block of land that could be developable.
- C: Re Civic Center: It could be a triage intake and place for housing people going to court. It could be a hub where they start, classification. Divert people from there before they go to court. Taking courthouse to the jail is less favorable, less public. The fewer people who go through the court system, the better. There are so many possibilities, we shouldn’t nail something down right away.

- C: This SAC is a great data source, but I feel ignorant to answer a lot of these questions as an individual and stakeholder. Analysis and data collection is best done by experts who have their fingers on the pulse of externalities that go into making these decisions. Want us to focus on collecting data from lots of stakeholders and have experts do the analysis.
- C: The focus on site selection is putting the cart before the horse. The horizontal facility is the way to go. What would a vertical facility be like downtown. Is that the impression we want to give the community? There is a lot of space in Whatcom County. We should get information to settle on what the facility will be and site selection comes later.
- C: Doing this in next year's election is risky. The referendums have failed twice in off years. Voter turnout in off years is half what it is in regular election cycles. We want to get it right this time and make sure it passes.
- C: Irongate is the best option. Ferndale location failed twice in 2015 and 2017. It's not a winning combo. Bringing courts to Irongate works. The Crisis Stabilization Center is at Irongate as well.
- C: There is extensive project creep. Some of the recommendations are embedded in ballot measures that have already passed. We need to focus on what we are recommending to the Council – a facility and services. Housing shouldn't be in this ballot measure. It needs to be more narrow.
- C: Feel a strong sense of urgency. Our jail is awful! It is a horrible place and not safe or healthy. We have to do something. Don't think our community really sees how serious the problem is. If they saw the true picture, they would have sense of urgency.
- C: There is a desire to meet in Dec. to keep this moving forward.

### Next Steps

- **Complete two polls by Oct. 19:** Please fill it out Facilities Location and Needs & Recommendations polls if you haven't, or you can go back and redo your survey.
- **Give comments on Needs Assessment Report Table of Contents**
- **Town Hall is Nov. 15, 6:00-7:30 pm.** (hybrid meeting). **Please attend and spread the word.**
- **Next SAC meeting is Nov. 17, 10:00 am.-12:00 pm.**
- Don't want to do any formal votes before we hear back from TVA about the public input.

Adjourn 12:00 pm.