

***Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force
Meeting Summary for October 17, 2016***

1. Call to Order

Task Force Chair Jill Bernstein called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Present: Angela Anderson, Jill Bernstein, Jeff Brubaker, Anne Deacon, Stephen Gockley, Susan Gribbin, Fred Heydrich, Jack Hovenier, Byron Manering, Ken Mann, Moonwater, Irene Morgan, Darlene Peterson, Randy Polidan, Greg Winter

Also Present: Leslie Finch (proxy for Chris Phillips), Matt Huffman (proxy for Michael Knapp), Nick Lewis (proxy for Julie Finkbonner), Michael Lilliquist (proxy for Daniel Hammill), Kathy Walker (proxy for Dave McEachran),

Absent: Bill Elfo, Julie Finkbonner, Daniel Hammill, Michael Knapp, Betsy Kruse, Kelli Linville, Dave McEachran, Chris Phillips, Tyler Schroeder

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Gockley asked for a copy of the letter Ms. Deacon will write encouraging the legislature to adopt a requirement that the Healthcare Authority requires the current level of behavioral health services when it integrates primary care and human health services in 2020.

Schedule VERA Contractor Visit

Task Force members agreed to move the November meeting to November 7 to accommodate a visit and presentation from the VERA Institute consultants. The contractor will begin its system mapping exercise with Task Force members and stakeholders by scheduling a presentation on November 8, and continue with one-on-one discussions with stakeholders on November 9.

2. Committee Updates

Hovenier and Gockley updated the Task Force on Jail Stakeholder Work Group meetings:

- City of Bellingham Mayor Linville is resigned to accept a sales tax funding mechanism; City Council Member Barker is still considering it.
- There is more flexibility right now in jail design, size, and location, because the previous agreements failed.
- The County Executive indicated he encourages diversion, but there will always be fixed costs.
- The Work Group hopes to be done by February and March.

The Task Force discussed the City's willingness to approve the all-in funding option and that fixed costs are impacted by jail size and similar factors.

Mann and Bernstein updated the Task Force on the Steering Committee:

- Approved the draft Phase II Report
- Discussed next year's Task Force subcommittee focus and membership
- Each Task Force member, or a proxy in his/her absence, can attend as many committee meetings as desired, but will have a vote on one committee.

Bernstein and Mann updated the Task Force on the Triage Facility Committee:

- The committee has completed its phase two work at this time and is awaiting the County Council decision on facility location

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- The Phase 2 Report presentation to the County Council is on October 25 at the evening meeting; all are invited
- Whatcom County's proposed triage facility is the first priority in the North Sound Behavioral Health Organization (BHO) regional request to the legislature.

Deacon updated the Task Force on the Behavioral Health Committee:

- Reviewed Phase 2 Report, which focused on criminogenic risk factors
- Presentation from the Sheriff regarding a budget request for a new three-deputy crisis intervention team (CIT)
- Backdoor recovery services, including supportive housing, to reduce recidivism
- Rainbow Recovery Center relocation

Heydrich updated the Task Force on the Legal and Justice System Committee:

- Referenced the summary in the Task Force packet
- Motion regarding a pre-trial supervision unit
- Using a pretrial risk assessment tool
- Discussion regarding mental health court
- Letter to Whatcom Transportation Authority (WTA) to and from the Division Street facility
- An embedded social worker in the Public Defender's Office

Peterson stated that District Court, small cities, and City of Bellingham already do pretrial supervision.

Lillquist moved that the Task Force approve the following motion, "Recognizing and endorsing the ongoing review and evaluation by the courts of evidence-based pretrial risk assessment tools and other means of reducing pretrial incarceration, we, the full Task Force, recommend creation and funding of a pretrial supervision unit that would assist and monitor a defendant's compliance with pretrial release conditions." The motion was seconded.

The Task Force discussed the Prosecutor's concerns regarding liability, the lower number of pretrial inmates in Whatcom County, getting more information about the motion, and concerns about recommending funding without specifying a funding source.

The motion carried 16-2-2:
Opposed: Deacon and Manering
Abstained: Walker and Polidan

4. Presentation of Draft Phase II Report

Forrest Longman, County Council Legislative Analyst, reported on the Phase II Report presentation to the County Council.

Mann moved to approve the Phase II Report as presented to the County Council, with typo and name corrections. The motion was seconded.

The motion carried unanimously.

5. Discussion with WTA on Transit Services

Bernstein introduced Rick Nicholson, WTA, and asked the best way to bring Task Force concerns to the WTA and affect change.

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Rick Nicholson, WTA Director of Service Development, described his background, the WTA's current strategic planning process, and plans to expand the route from downtown to the Division Street facility and other areas.

Nicholson and the Task Force discussed:

- Mental health court clients' need for service
 - Expanding para-transport to mental health services
 - Those with cognitive challenges can apply for para-transport
 - The WTA would determine eligibility based on Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) rules
- To impact WTA decisions, more people should lobby the WTA, which considers vulnerable populations.
- Decisions are made based strictly on financial factors
- Bring concerns and suggestions to staff and the WTA Board
- Ridership doesn't happen without routes, and routes don't expand without ridership
- Zone service:
 - Most rural residents can schedule a ride on 1 or 2 designated days per week
 - There are six rural zones in the county
 - Riders need to call a day before
 - Riders need to be flexible; dispatcher will work with the schedules of all the riders
- The strategic plan expansion includes the need for greater equity outside of Bellingham
- Service provided 7 days per week and later evening service in Lynden, Ferndale, the Lummi Nation, Deming, Kendall, and Sudden Valley
- The vulnerable population includes those with a low income, disability, or seniors
- The WTA can plan for anticipated changes due to the new triage facility, which would require several months for Board approval, a public process, and hiring
- Regular schedules and earlier start times are desirable
- Drivers receive training and follow policies to deal with difficult passengers
- If necessary, drivers can remove a passenger from a bus; only supervisors can ban someone from using WTA services

Bernstein stated a goal is to continue to address necessary community services that include transportation, housing, and workforce development.

3. Update by Jurisdiction on Jail Diversion Programs

Lewis stated he invited the Task Force's Behavioral Health Subcommittee to hold its October 27 meeting at the Lummi Administration Building. Also, the Dispute Resolution Center awarded them a Transforming Justice award for their efforts to reduce incarceration.

Huffman stated he is working on diverting inmates to Yakima when possible. So far, only one person has qualified. Most defendants have other charges in other jurisdictions, and many qualify for jail alternatives.

Peterson referenced the City's monthly report in the meeting packet

- The biggest challenge is with pretrial defendants in Yakima
- They are considering hiring a public defender in Yakima
- The City is very satisfied with the services of Friendship Diversion Services for pretrial defendants
- The Yakima service is less expensive and good for post-conviction defendants
- They are uncertain about the cost and feasibility of the Yakima service for pretrial defendants

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6. Next Steps: Ideas and Further Information

Bernstein reminded everyone of the date and time of the next meeting and VERA Institute visit November 7 through November 9.

Gockley stated they could discuss expanding the scope of prevention and reduction during phase three.

7. Public Comment

No one spoke.

8. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 10:50 a.m.

DRAFT