

Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force

Meeting Summary for January 10, 2022

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1. Call to Order

Committee Chair Stephen Gockley called the meeting to order at 9:00 A.M. The meeting was held via remote-only Zoom Webinar.

Members Present: Barry Buchanan, Arlene Feld, Heather Flaherty, Stephen Gockley, Dan Hammill, Mike Hilley, Jack Hovenier, Raylene King, Byron Mannering, Moonwater, Perry Mowery, Darlene Peterson, Dave Reynolds, Eric Richey, Flo Simon, Donnell Tanksley, Bruce Van Glubt,

Members Absent: Bill Elfo, Seth Fleetwood, David Freeman, Deborah Hawley, Scott Korthuis, Eric Petersen, Tyler Schroeder, Maia Vanyo, Greg Winter

2. [Justice Project Needs Assessment \(00:01:12\)](#)

Buchanan gave an update on the needs assessment process. He shared the draft planning process document and gave an overview of the topics that will be covered at each of the Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) meetings:

- The first meeting will be held on January 26th and the main topic will be orientation, a presentation on the history of the project, jail capacity issues, and planning principles.
- The second meeting will be about data and Dr. Alexes Harris will be presenting.
- The third meeting will be centered around behavioral health.
- The fourth meeting will focus on facilities.
- The fifth meeting will be a wrap up and determination of next steps.

Buchanan described the role of the Technical Advisory Committee, which will produce the hard data needed to complete a needs assessment, as well as the Steering Committee.

Buchanan explained briefly what Phases Two and Three will look like. While Phase One will provide facility analysis, Phase Two will be discussions surrounding the what the facility will actually look like as far as design, features, and development. Phase Three will include setting up financial agreements and details.

Gockley brought up data and gaps in information and how that will affect timing. Buchanan agreed that data would need to be revisited after the second meeting since questions would likely come up.

Flaherty asked what has been learned from previous attempts at building a new jail facility and how this time will be different than those past instances. Buchanan answered that the first two initiatives did not put enough effort into public engagement and that this process will include a robust public process. He also stated that this process would include a holistic look at what our needs are, including behavioral health needs, with the intention of addressing as many variables as possible.

Hammill urged the committee to consider the needs of the City of Bellingham as well as the small cities' needs.

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King said that she appreciated that the project was being looked at as a justice center, not just a jail, which includes behavioral health services. She added that she is concerned that we will struggle to find treatment providers.

Feld emphasized the importance of getting feedback from the users of the systems, not just the administrators of the systems.

Flaherty said that she thought the community wanted to see a focus on diversion and availability of services outside of the justice system.

Hammill brought up payment reimbursement models and the important role the financial side can play in the ability of providers to participate. Feld added information about how the payments are structured and the importance of managed care organizations (MCOs). Buchanan said that in Phase Three they will be looking at the financial side in detail, however he also recognized the need to at least have an overview of navigating those issues in Phase One as well.

3. [Committee Updates \(00:28:28\)](#)

Representatives from various committees gave updates:

- Buchanan spoke for the Steering committee and said that they spent most of their time talking about items two and four from this agenda. Gockley took the opportunity to recognize Moonwater and Mannering's service to the Task Force as this was their last meeting. He added that there was a new deadline for applications to fill vacancies.
 - Moonwater stated that she wanted to brainstorm the best way encourage folks to apply for the vacancies.
 - Moonwater and Mannering each gave reflections on their time on the Task Force.
- King spoke for the Legal and Justice Systems Committee, which recently held a joint meeting with the Behavioral Health Committee. She gave an overview of the joint meeting, including their discussions on the vacant behavioral health specialist position, the crisis stabilization center, the guest participants they had, the impact of COVID on evaluation and restoration services. Hammill added his view on the challenges facing re-entry services.

4. [Updates from Jurisdictions \(00:40:50\)](#)

- Peterson gave an update on Bellingham Municipal Court. She gave an overview of the barriers they have been facing moving people through the system as well as a summary of their caseloads. She said that they currently have a big backlog of warrants that were authorized but not issued.
- Van Glubt reported for District Court that jury trials had been running smoothly for about seven weeks, however they are now suspended until February 14th. He added that they have a backlog of cases and that everything runs better when jury trials are able to be held. Regarding probation, he said that all meetings are in larger areas rather than in the secure areas of the office, however that has not slowed them down or gotten in the way of their ability to supervise.

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- Reynolds and King echoed what had already been said by Peterson and Van Glubt.
 - Caleb Erickson, Sheriff's Department, also agreed that the lack of trials was bringing up challenges for the Sherriff's department. He also brought up outbreaks of COVID and staffing shortages. Gockley asked about the jail population and Erickson responded that they have had an increased jail population in the last six months.
 - Tanksley reported that he is on the Substance Use Recovery Services Advisory Committee under the Health Care Authority as a representative of Washington Association of Sheriffs and Chiefs of Police. He said that they are asking about barriers to services in Whatcom County and he may reach out to Task Force committee members to interview them about that question.
 - Richey spoke for the Prosecutor's office. He said that they were having a lot of staff shortages because of COVID. He gave an overview on their caseloads, which are quite high at this time due to their backlog and the lack of jury trials. He added that property crime, homicides, and assault cases are all up and they are seeing a high level of cases overall coming in.
 - King reported that Blaine had started using Axon body cameras.
 - Hilley gave an update on Emergency Medical Services. He reported that their transportation services were strained due to COVID, but their workforce was fairly healthy at this point.
5. [Update on IPRTF Communications Consultant \(01:02:50\)](#)

Jill Nixon, Legislative Coordinator, told the committee that a request for proposals (RFP) for the communications consultant has been developed. She said that the next step was to work with the County Finance Department to finalize it and distribute. She invited any committee members to let her know of any firms they would like the RFP to be distributed to. She added that she also needs to narrow down the list of potential communication campaign topics.

6. Other Business

There was no other business.

7. Public Comment

There were no public comments.

8. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 10:07 A.M.