

Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force: Behavioral Health Committee

Meeting Summary for May 17, 2022

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1. Call to Order

Committee Chair Mike Parker called the meeting to order at 9:01 A.M. The meeting was held via remote-only Zoom Webinar.

Members Present: Doug Chadwick, Brian Estes, Heather Flaherty, Stephen Gockley, Dan Hammill, Mike Hilley, Perry Mowery, Mike Parker, Michael G. Smith, Donnell Tanksley, Brien Thane

Members Absent: Nathan Bajema, Chris Cochran, Arlene Feld, Seth Fleetwood, Rhyan Lopez, Courtney Taylor

2. [Behavioral Health priorities at the state level \(00:01:10\)](#)

State Representative Alicia Rule gave an overview of the what has been accomplished at the state level in the last two years regarding behavioral health. She reported that the state has funded the following:

- The Crisis Stabilization Center and transportation for the center.
- Maplewood Behavioral Health Center, which will be a longer-term treatment center housed at the same site as the Crisis Stabilization Center.
- A detox center to be housed on the Lummi Reservation.
- 9-8-8 system, which will be a behavioral health response line.
- Alternative Response Team.

Representative Rule responded to questions from committee members. Topics addressed included:

- Gaps in the crisis response system, including the 9-8-8 system. Whatcom County is one of the first jurisdictions to implement a 9-8-8 system, so there are not answers to all the questions about how it will work and how gaps will be addressed.
- Workforce shortages and how we can provide quality staff to manage these programs. Representative Rule stated this was a high priority issue for her and summarized her ideas on how the situation can be improved.
- Maplewood Treatment Center. The funding for the building is secured, but the County will be tasked with building it.
- Risks involved in co-response between law enforcement and behavioral health professionals.
- Involuntary treatment.
- Prevention and treatment of behavioral health issues and substance use disorder.
- Developmental disabilities in children and the relationship between developmental disability, mental health, and substance use.

3. [Bellingham downtown security \(00:45:58\)](#)

Darby Galligan, Senior Planner with City of Bellingham Planning and Community Development, reported to the committee about Downtown Bellingham safety:

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- In 2021, the City of Bellingham started hearing concerns from the community about downtown safety and, in response, implemented a services assessment to identify solutions.
- Based on that assessment, the City established several services and programs, including hiring a private security firm and launching the Safety Ambassador Pilot Program. This program employs ambassadors who are trained in de-escalation.
- Other programs include a graffiti abatement program and a City Block Program, which offers training to downtown business owners including de-escalation training and training on how to design their business to improve safety.

Galligan responded to questions and comments from Committee members. Topics addressed included:

- Programs offered by the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Washington, which may be of interest to the downtown business owners.
- How the Safety Ambassador Program will work with the Alternative Response Team.
- Divert to where? What can be done to give a place for folks to be moved to and reduce the trauma of being moved multiple times. Galligan clarified that the programs are only addressing people who are on public property and that staff are trained to make a request to move on.
- Examples of what role the staff on the ground play and in what situations they can respond.
- The possibility of implementing safe parking or safe camping facilities and the barriers to that.

4. Youth mental illness

This topic was not discussed.

5. [Agenda items for June joint meeting with Legal & Justice Systems Committee \(01:22:25\)](#)

Legislative Coordinator, Jill Nixon, told the Committee members what she already has on the agenda for the joint meeting. Other ideas for the agenda included:

- NAMI's implementation of the Clubhouse model.
- Flaherty suggested adding an update on the status of the recommendations on reducing the jail population put forth by the Vera Institute's report. It was agreed that the Steering Committee would be the appropriate place to discuss this item first.

6. Other Business

There was no other business.

7. Public Comment

There were no public comments.

8. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 10:31 A.M.