

**MINUTES**

**BOARDS OF BENTON AND FRANKLIN COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

Special Bi-County Board Meeting  
Wednesday, February 23, 2022, 10:00 a.m.  
Benton County Administration Building  
Commissioners' Conference Room, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
7122 W. Okanogan Place, Suite E303  
Kennewick, WA 99336

**Benton County**

Present: Chairman Shon Small  
Commissioner Will McKay  
Commissioner Jerome Delvin  
County Administrator Jerrod MacPherson  
Clerk of the Board Cami McKenzie

Benton County/Franklin County Employees Present: Matt Rasmussen, Deputy County Administrator; Adam Fyall, Sustainable Development; Kyle Sullivan, Human Services Manager; Tammy McKeirnan, Human Services; Shyanne Palmus, Communications Coordinator; Robert Heard, IT; Greg Wendt, Community Development Manager; DPA Ryan Lukson; Finance Manager Linda Ivey; Sheriff Tom Croskrey; Darryl Banks, Juvenile Administrator; Franklin County Clerk of the Board Karin Milham; Jim Raymond, Sheriff; Monty Huber, Admin Commander.

**Franklin County**

Present: Chairman Clint Didier  
Commissioner Brad Peck  
Commissioner Rocky Mullen  
County Administrator Keith Johnson

**Pledge of Allegiance**

The Boards recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Discussion of Concept of Creation of a Veteran's Service Officer Position or Possibly Contracting with a Third Party to Act as Such to Serve Benton and Franklin Counties**

Kyle Sullivan, Human Services Manager, said they started discussing a county funded veteran's service officer a few years ago. He said that both Relief Fund advisory boards expressed a desire to have this program and Mr. Gill previously presented to the other advisory boards. Mr. Sullivan added that both Commissioner Didier and Commissioner McKay were at a meeting and talked about presenting the idea during a Bi-County meeting. Also, Mr. Gill was going to present to the Boards in person, however, was not able to travel and would be presenting by video.

Steve Gill, WA State Department of Veteran's Affairs, via/WebEx, gave a Powerpoint presentation on the creation of a Veteran's Service Officer position and discussed the following:

- Washington State Serving Veterans and Their Families
  - Veterans Homes and Cemetery
- Veterans Services and Counseling & Wellness
- Veteran Service Officer Accreditation
- Memorandum of Agreement with County Governments
- Percent of Veterans Receiving VA Disability Compensation and Pension (National Average vs. Washington State)
- VA Expenditures in Washington State by County
- Counties with County Veterans Service Officers

Commissioner Delvin asked if the Veterans Relief Fund could support this position, at least to get it started. Mr. Sullivan indicated there were reserves in both accounts, however, the Relief Fund was supposed to be available if a vet had a crisis.

Commissioner Delvin also asked if the State put money into this program. Mr. Gill said the legislature created a County Vet Services Officer Fund that allowed counties with fewer than 100,000 population to access the fund. He said currently two counties received funding from this State Fund - Stevens and Clallam Counties and at this this point there were not funds to add to the bucket.

Commissioner Delvin said he would support this program.

Chairman Didier asked if there were national or federal funds available. Mr. Gill indicated there were no national funds available, however, there was currently legislation to lobby to receive funds, but not yet.

Chairman Didier asked if the program would assist the veterans in accessing federal funds that were available to them if the counties hired a Veterans Service Officer. Mr. Gill indicated it would provide services to apply for those funds; their goal was to connect veterans with these benefits.

Commissioner Peck said this program had real potential to improve their quality of life and he would support the program.

Commissioner McKay said he was in support of this program and asked if they could save money by sharing with other counties, like perhaps Yakima County. Mr. Sullivan said that Benton and Franklin Counties have had partnerships and it made some sense to partner, however, that it would be less likely to have Yakima as part of the equation due to traveling. Mr. Didier added that the workload for the officer for two counties might be too much.

Mr. Sullivan said there might be a need for two or more officers for this area, however, if they started with a position funded jointly by the two Counties, they could review the need in the future after the program was established.

Chairman Small said he was also in favor of the program and requested the county administrators get together to review the program and report back to the Board.

Chairman Didier and Commissioner Mullen also indicated they were in favor of the program.

The Boards again discussed funding. Mr. Sullivan said some counties funded the position with the Relief Fund and some funded with the General Fund. He said if it were a shared position, it would be reasonable to use the Relief Funds, however, if there were one position for each county, they would need to have conversations about additional funding options.

Mr. Sullivan said if both boards were in favor, he would work with both county administrators and move forward to develop a program and bring back to the Boards for review.

All Board members stated they were in favor of moving forward.

**Discussion/Possible Decision on the Creation of an Advisory Board for the Regional Health Recovery Center**

Matt Rasmussen presented resolutions for the Boards to consider for the creation of an Advisory Board for the expenditure of the 0.1% behavioral health sales tax funds recently approved in both Counties. He said both counties passed the 0.1% behavioral health sales tax, and it made sense to have a community driven group and they were recommending the creation of a bi-county committee. The purpose of the advisory committee would be to provide advice to County Commissioners to see what services should be provided by the tax, and to make recommendations on new services, and changes to services that were not effective.

They would meet regularly and with other groups and individual providers and anyone in the community to gather that information and provide recommendations.

Mr. Rasmussen said they were recommending a joint advisory committee as follows:

13 voting members:

- Two experts in the field of mental health
- Two experts in the field of substance use disorder
- Three representing persons with lived experience
- Two representing hospital emergency room managers
- Two representing law enforcement or corrections
- Two representing fire departments or emergency medical responders

Seven non-voting members:

- One person representing Benton County (County Administrator or designee)
- One person representing Franklin County (County Administrator or designee)
- One person representing Benton County Human Services (Human Services Manager or designee)
- One person representing the Benton-Franklin Health District (Executive Director or designee)

- One person representing Adult and Juvenile Drug Court (Superior Court Administrator or designee)
- One person representing Mental Health and Veterans Court (District Court Administrator or designee)
- One person representing the Benton-Franklin Recovery Coalition;

Committee members should serve a term of three years with term limits of not more than three terms. Additionally, these would be voluntary positions, with minimal reimbursements for travel/training.

The Board then discussed multiple options for additional citizen representation, either voting or non-voting. Several options were suggested and ultimately the Board agreed on the following additional members:

- Four additional voting members (citizens) – with two appointed by each county for a total of 17 voting members. The voting members would be equally chosen by each County, with the odd (or third person with lived experience to be appointed by the committee). The non-voting members would remain as recommended.

If accurate, Mr. Rasmussen said he would amend the resolutions and circulate to each county for approval and signature.

The Board agreed.

### **Discussion Regarding Construction of New Juvenile Justice Center at the Kennewick Justice Center Campus**

Chairman Small said he requested this item be added to the agenda. Mr. MacPherson said at the last bi-county meeting they were given direction to review construction and/or remodel of the Juvenile Justice Center and they identified the following two concepts:

- Stand-alone new Juvenile Justice Center on the Benton County Justice Center campus on vacant, undeveloped ground.
- Utilizing existing space – currently where the Sheriff’s office was housed. It would involve a remodel but would have the ability to use services for medical and food that could be shared with the jail.
- They were developing an RFP for consultants to review these two concepts and come up with a recommendation on moving forward, with a progressive design build process for the construction project.
- Changes to the current interlocal agreement were being drafted.

Commissioner Peck discussed the different bi-county relationship models and that the Human Services relationship worked well. He said it would be helpful to know if they were envisioning

one joint facility or if Benton County would build the facility and then Franklin County would be the client. Mr. MacPherson said that Benton County would own the facility and Franklin County would be the client.

Commissioner Peck also asked if there were any thoughts about the future of the current site. Robert Blain said the intent would be to demolish that building and maybe look to sell the lot.

There being no further business before the Boards, the meeting adjourned at 11:22 a.m.

---

Clerk of the Board

---

Chairman, Benton County