

Meeting Minutes
Law and Justice Council
Wednesday, September 28, 2022 – 12:00 p.m.
Benton County Justice Center

Present

Chuck Torelli – City of Kennewick Council Member
Brigit Clary – City of Richland Police Chief
Dave Neher – City of Richland Police Commander
Rob Guererro – Benton County Corrections Chief
Dave Wheeler – Benton County Probation Manager
David Giles – City of Prosser Police Chief
Andy Miller – Benton County Prosecutor
Matt Rasmussen – Benton County Deputy Administrator
Ryan Lukson – Benton County Deputy Prosecuting Attorney
Thomas Grego – West Richland Police Chief
Thomas Croskrey – Benton County Sheriff
Tiffany Runge – Superior Court Administrator
Brian Ace – Citizen Member
Josie Delvin – Benton County Clerk
Chris Guerrero – Kennewick Police Chief
Joe Burrowes – Superior Court Judge
Cameron Fordmeir – Citizen Member
Fred Brink – Citizen Member

Called to order by Chief Guerrero at 12:00

Approval of Minutes:

- August 24, 2022 – no need to approve per Andy Miller, we will just make sure they are accurate moving forward

Introductions

Chief Guerrero introduced new citizen member – Brian Ace

New Business

1. Continued Discussion on PSST reserve amounts by each jurisdiction

- Need confirmation from other jurisdictions (KPD, RPD, WRPD & Prosser) on reserve amounts
 - Kennewick PD – Chris Guerrero – 8 - 9 months of reserve currently, new budget may bring it down to 6 months, 14 position openings and concern of how it will be perceived, many interviews scheduled
 - Richland PD – 1 opening, next month 2 openings, 6-month reserve
 - West Richland PD – reserve is 430,000, signing last opening tomorrow
 - Prosser PD – 100,000

2. Current Benton County RFP presentations – 9/27/22

- Identify the total submitted as requests

- Matt Rasmussen stated there were 6.5million in requests, working to get to six-month reserve, selection committee next week to go thru the material. Announcements in the next 2-3 weeks

3. Information from Yakima about their strategy/plan for passing a resolution to place the PSST on the ballot

- Chief Guerrero heard back from Captain in Yakima, he said it was passed without Cinderella clause. Was planning to gather info on the strategy. Will get information from the Sheriff's Office as well.
- Sheriff Croskrey – meeting set for next Tuesday 10/4 to discuss
 - Ideas will be presented by next meeting
- Brian Ace asked the question, was Yakima the full 3/10, yes full 3/10 and no Cinderella clause?
- Sheriff Croskrey inquired what the timeframe was before first and the sunset, Chief Guererro did not know.

4. Status of Benton County hiring consultant company

- Matt Rasmussen – did a presentation to approve to board, initially were ok with 40k, ended up adding and adjusting scope, can't do as much social media and marketing that initially thought. Andy's office gave thumbs up, if we do one mailer, which they feel necessary but will be 20k additional. Going back to the board next Tuesday

5. Follow up

- Community education fact sheet – Commissioner McKay
 - Nothing as of yet, Commissioner McKay was absent from meeting
- Previous PSST strategy – Sheriff Croskrey
 - Sheriff Croskrey still holding off and working with Al Weiner

6. New Business

- Ryan Lukson - Law and Justice Senate Committee – firearm and forfeiture orders, happening in King County. Major push around forfeiting firearms at time of decision, using law enforcement and prosecutor to assist in tracking. Potentially using PST in the future to support something like this. Statistics were presented by Yakima.
- Chief Guerrero – wanted to reach out to the courts because they have been receiving questions about the rise in crime, backlog in cases, prosecution. Superior Court and District Court only trying minimal cases per week. What is the best way to gather this information as law enforcement may not have the information readily available?
 - Judge Burrowes – if related to Superior Court, contact Tiffany Runge, she will assist with those questions. They are working on getting trials out.
 - Josie Delvin – one piece related to backlog, COVID hurt and the after effect, seeing a lot less juror response. Response rate has dropped. Send out jury 1,000 summons, used to see 400-500 respond, now only seeing 200-300. Seeing convicted felons being able to serve on jury now as well.
 - Andy Miller – artificial limits by PA's due to the number of trials and victims who are upset. Public has a right to be concerned about backlog. Criminal cases, prosecution doesn't get stronger over time. Witnesses move out of state and memories get worse as time goes on.
 - Ryan Lukson – staffing is an issue as well, lacking court recorders and that can create issues. Court Recorders are overworked.
 - Tiffany Runge discussed hiring contract and free-lance court recorders, they don't want to take jury trials.

- Judge Burrowes – agreed interpreters are hard to come by.
- Ryan Lukson – prioritizing to hire these court reporters using PST funds.
- Andy Miller – small boost in pay to help court reporters working with Lexi in HR.
- Judge Burrowes - We have not asked for additional funding in either CE or PST. Court Reporters received small bump on bi county
- Brian Ace – identify and map out justice system to understand the link between dollars and solving problems. Triage assessment would be one way to assess the issues.
- Chief Guerrero – an assessment would help identify what are the priorities of the justice system
- Judge Burrowes – stunned by the amount of need in PST presentations for staffing
- Chief Guerrero – we can have all the cops on the street, but the system has to be working in conjunction.
- Andy Miller – can commissioners look at salaries for court reporters
- Judge Burrowes – promoting court reporters needs
- Chief Guerrero – jurisdictions would be happy to put on agency Facebook pages to promote, advertising with everyone behind a camera
- Ryan Lukson – recruiting is needed, can commissioners be approached about this?
- Chief Guerrero – can we get from BC what the priorities are to give to the Commissioners
 - Council Member Torelli – everything is critical, everything is urgent. Identify needs in informatic way, how do different agencies deal with insurance increases.
 - Matt Rasmussen – needs to understand the chain reaction, more collaborative discussions, hire someone to come in and strategize and put this all together, great message to public that they see us working together to better the system
 - Brian Ace – what difference are we making? Telling community how its helping, true connection

Old Business

1. Confirmation from jurisdictions on PSST Commissioned Officer/Deputy allocation:

- a. BCSO – 27, KPD – 15, RPD – 12.5, WRPD – 3, Prosser PD – 2 – **Total of 57 Commissioned Officers within Benton Co. agencies funded by PSST.**

Other Business

Meeting adjourned at 12:56