

**Meeting Minutes**  
**Law and Justice Council**  
**Wednesday, January 25, 2023 – 12:00 p.m.**  
**Benton County Justice Center**

**Present**

Chuck Torelli – City of Kennewick Council Member  
Brigit Clary – City of Richland Police Chief  
Dave Wheeler – Benton County Probation Manager  
Eric Eisenger – Benton County Prosecutor  
Michael Alvarez – Benton County Commissioner  
Thomas Grego – West Richland Police Chief  
Thomas Croskrey – Benton County Sheriff  
Tiffany Runge – Superior Court Administrator  
Al Wehner – Citizen Guest Speaker  
Josie Delvin – Benton County Clerk  
Chris Guerrero – Kennewick Police Chief  
Matt Rasmussen – Deputy County Administrator  
Cameron Fordmeir – Citizen Member  
Fred Brink – West Richland Mayor Pro Tem  
Jon Law – Benton County Undersheriff  
Diana Ruff – Superior Court Judge  
Kevin Kennedy – Citizen Member  
John Trumbo – City of Kennewick Council Member

Called to order by Chief Guerrero at 12:00

**Approval of Minutes:**

- October 26, 2022 – approved, no issues

**New Business**

**PSST Strategy, Obstacles, Timing, and Plan Recommendations**

- Working towards recommendations for the ballot for PSST, discussed meeting more frequently
- Identifying what the jurisdictions want to do going forward
- Passed in 2014 with sunset clause to expire 2024. Some resolutions put in place about how it could be spent.

Sheriff Croskrey Introduced Al Wehner to discuss the historical perspective and what the community is saying. Served on citizen council for PSST. His discussion points were the following:

- There were 3 previous attempts to pass and all unsuccessful. County Commissioners approached council about whether they should attempt again.
- Original decided on 3/10, no outside group did a financial analysis
- Presentation made before commissioners, sunset clause included, and voters could evaluate the tax at a later date.

- Approach in 2013 was far different than previous attempts. Created citizen group, raised funds to be used to state facts, but also able to promote the measure itself. Key components were the sunset clause.
- Passed with 53% of the vote. Problems developed within the first year or two of measure being passed. Funding for metro became a public issue, Commissioners did not want to use the funds. Metro was one of the items specifically identified as an original use for the funds. Funding ended up being received for Metro after further discussions.
- It was stated that as a private citizen, 3/10 seems too high. Sunset clause is going to be critical. Without identifying specific programs, do not see how it will pass.

Prosecuting Attorney Eric Eisinger – asked what the original proposals were, Al Wehner was not sure at this time

Commissioner Michael Alvarez – numbers are important, if we could identify how much will be lost by each jurisdiction that would be good. Would like to see an analysis done on what percent would be adequate.

Al Wehner stated not good practice to supplant salaried employees into PST. 2022 has seen increase in crime but lots of funding in the bank.

Commissioner Michael Alvarez stated he is hearing lots of support in the community

Mayor Pro-Tem Fred Brink discussed that demographics have changed, median age is 35 in West Richland, challenge with different age group population may also pose a different challenge. With new Commissioners, they may have different thought process on how to spend the funds

Council Member Jim Trumbo discussed that he spent his working years in media, different perception on how to promote it. Al Wehner has hit things on the head, what he wants to know is not how much is in the pot, but rather what you did to use the tax. The perception is that the community will want to know what bang they got for their buck. Other perception is that going for sunset clause is not usually something that's realistic because we continue to ask for it to be renewed

Sheriff Tom Croskrey asked if we can do an analysis on what percent is really needed.

Commissioner Michael Alvarez stated that he and his team will be doing this.

Deputy County Administrator Matt Rasmussen stated that if all is spent out this biennium, would end up with 5 million.

Prosecuting Attorney Eric Eisinger asked to identify supplanting and what that means.

Al Wehner stated that the ballot measure states that it should not be used to supplant current deputies.

Council member Chuck Torelli asked if it should be part of the message that this is not a politician's tax, it's to support law enforcement

Deputy County Administrator Matt Rasmussen – one issue was jail costs and that we can't spend to pay for jail costs.

Citizen member Kevin Kennedy mentioned that the mental health courts and therapeutic courts are very positive options to discuss

Council Member Chuck Torelli discussed that it would be good to highlight how this tax supports the criminal justice system

Deputy County Administrator Matt Rasmussen mentioned getting a group together to tell story of the criminal justice system

Chief Guerrero discussed the followings points and timelines

- Every jurisdiction needs to come back and identify what the need is
- Realistic timeline – resolution was March 2014
- November election – may be a good time
- Current bill right now – senate 5361 house bill 1446 – would reimburse jurisdictions 1/10
- Moving forward we will schedule 2/8 meeting and every Wednesday after that to continue working towards being able to

### **Citizen Committee**

### **Old Business**

- 1. Information from Yakima about their strategy/plan for passing a resolution to discuss with Commissioners**
- 2. Status of Benton County Courts update**
- 3. Current Department openings**
  - a. Superior Court
  - b. Clerk's Office
  - c. WRPD
  - d. KPD
  - e. RPD
  - f. BCSO
- 4. Community education fact sheet – Commissioner McKay update**
- 5. Previous PSST strategy – Sheriff Croskrey update**

### **Other Business**

**Adjourn 1:00**