

**Meeting Minutes**  
**Law and Justice Council**  
**Wednesday, February 15, 2023 – 12:00 p.m.**  
**Benton County Justice Center**

**Present**

Chuck Torelli – City of Kennewick Council Member  
Dave Neher – City of Richland Deputy Police Chief  
Brigit Clary – City of Richland Police Chief  
Dave Wheeler – Benton County Probation Manager  
Eric Eisinger – Benton County Prosecutor  
Ryan Brown – Benton County Deputy Prosecuting Attorney  
Thomas Grego – West Richland Police Chief  
Tiffany Runge – Superior Court Administrator  
Joe Burrowes – Superior Court Judge  
Jon Amundson – City of Richland City Manager  
Josie Delvin – Benton County Clerk  
Chris Guerrero – Kennewick Police Chief  
Tom Croskrey – Benton County Sheriff  
Rob Guerrero – Benton County Corrections Chief  
Michael Alvarez – Benton County Commissioner  
Jon Law – Benton County Undersheriff  
Terry Christensen – Richland City Mayor  
Kevin Kennedy – Citizen Member  
Jerry Martin – Community visitor  
Pat Holten – Community visitor

**Called to order by Chief Guerrero at 12:00**

**Approval of Minutes:**

- February 8, 2023 – approved, no issues

**New Business**

Chief Chris Guerrero discussed that he received from the BOCC their list of questions that are asking for direction from this commission and out of that, they also wanted the discussions from each jurisdiction what their needs are and to send that to Matt Rasmussen

Commissioner Michael Alvarez discussed that the point is that they want one piece that outlines what each jurisdiction needs are.

Chief Chris Guerrero moved into discussion with the Council the Board of Commissioners Questions

**Should the Public Safety Sales Tax (PSST) be renewed?**

Council member Chuck Torelli stated that Council member John Trumbo (absent) asked him to bring up the question, “Will lifting the property tax cap from 1% to 3%, will there still be a need for PSST? Clerk Josie Delvin stated that one thing to remember about the sales tax, it is not just imposed on residents, imposed on all purchases made in the tri cities

City Richland Manager Jon Amundson stated that the comparison of property tax vs. PSST revenue, when designated under public safety sales tax has higher accountability

Chief Chris Guerrero stated that 1/10 is currently in front of legislation

Sheriff Croskrey asked if there are other options or what are other fund sources. He would like to hear our options and stated that ultimately this is under the Commissioners and wanted to know if there is an alternate plan

Judge Joe Burrowes stated that the mental health funding is 1/10

Member of the public Pat Holten stated that as a resident of Richland, we don't hear people complaining about the tax, she doesn't see a problem renewing what we have and is happy with our police. People would see it as a bad time to cut resources

No decision was made

**What has the PSST revenue been utilized for since its inception and how has the region benefited?**

Member of the public Jerry Martin stated that there are a series of reports on the County website very helpful

Judge Joe Burrowes stated that there are a series of reports on court filings and that data would be helpful

Clerk Josie Delvin stated that the data might show that caseloads have dropped which may not be an accurate depiction of the workload

Prosecuting Attorney Eric Eisinger echoed Brian Ave and stated that looking forward and looking at the needs is the approach that should be taken

Richland City Manager Jon Amundson stated that with a quick calculation, there is \$2.6 million for revenue under PSST vs. tax increase only \$600,000

No decision was made

**What is the Council's recommendation on the tax rate?**

Prosecuting Attorney Eric Eisinger stated that it should be renewed at 3/10 and it would be taking a step backward if we did anything short of 3/10

Commissioner Michael Alvarez stated that it appears everyone believes we need 3/10 and anything less would cause current services to fail

Judge Burrowes stated that currently we aren't meeting the needs and going less than 3/10 would make that worse

Richland City Mayor Terry Christensen states that the criticisms he has heard are centered around the large sum of funding that was held in the PSST fund

Member of the public Jerry Martin stated he believes it is premature for this council to make a recommendation due to a 18.5 million reserve

Clerk Josie Delvin stated that there is not 18.5 million, currently only six months of reserve

Council member Chuck Torelli the perception is based on 8-10 years of bad management and the focus should be on the future

No decision was made

**- If the tax is renewed should there be a sunset and, if so, what should the time frame be? – continue that discussion**

Council member Chuck Torelli stated it should have to have a sunset to prove fiscal responsibility

Citizen member Kevin Kennedy stated that perception is real, and he is hearing that there is a want for a sunset

Commissioner Michael Alvarez stated in a meeting, there was a consensus to do 10-year and prove fiscal responsibility and then go for no sunset

City of Richland Manager Jon Amundson stated success is easier to see with a sunset

Sheriff Tom Croskrey stated the need to have a sunset or people won't go for it

Chief Brigit Clary asked if this is the assumption, or do we need more data? Is this the genuine hurdle? She stated it would be valuable to look at other jurisdictions and what they have been successful at

Clerk Josie Delvin asked what kind of sunset clause can we do?

Deputy Prosecuting Attorney Ryan Brown stated we can do whatever we want

Prosecuting Attorney Eric Eisinger stated he is hearing lots of feedback about having a sunset

No decision was made

**Meeting adjourned at 12:59pm**