

Meeting Minutes
Law and Justice Council
Wednesday, January 10, 2024 – 12:00 p.m.
Benton County Justice Center

This Council meets about, and takes action on, issues pertaining to local criminal justice matters. This includes but is not limited to: Issues regarding jail management and DOC coordination, local crime trends and availability of criminal justice resources, sharing of information, personnel and infrastructure to reduce duplication of efforts and facilitate policing and supervision efforts to reduce recidivism and enhance responses to offender violations.

Josie Delvin – Benton County Clerk
Rob Guerrero – Benton County Corrections Chief
Chris Guerrero – City of Kennewick Police Chief
Jon Law – Benton County Undersheriff
Charlie Dow – Office of Public Defense Manager
Chuck Torelli – City of Kennewick Council Member
Cameron Fordmeir – Citizen Member
Jay King – City of Prosser Police Chief
Dave Wheeler – Benton County Probation Manager
Joe Burrowes – Superior Court Judge
Tiffany Runge – Superior Court Administrator
Matt Rasmussen – Deputy County Administrator
Eric Eisinger – Benton County Prosecutor
Michael Alvarez – Benton County Commissioner
Thomas Greggo – West Richland Police Chief
Fred Brink – West Richland Mayor Pro-Tem

Chief Guerrero called to order at 12:01

Introductions

Around the Room Introductions

Approval of Minutes (Action)

Chief Guerrero asked for a motion to approve minutes from November 15, 2023

Judge Burrowes made a motion to approve the minutes, Clerk Josie Delvin seconded, motion passes unanimously.

New Business

Regional Updates

Chief Chris Guerrero asks for any new updates, and provides that KPD/Kennewick, with new legislation they purchased patrol rifles for patrol and tied 15 back to PSST, using the general fund for the remainder. Stated that two commanders are retiring at the end of June and end of February and

promotions are coming. 10 graduated from regional academy, close to getting out of FTO, 8 in current academy. Only 5 openings. Pasco PD announced another academy in March.

Commissioner Alvarez stated he had a couple of things to discuss. Stated that the county has been focusing on working with other city councils and mayors to discuss what they can do to make public safety more robust. He stated that Court Security is their number one priority, along with Prosecuting Attorney Eric Eisinger's office. The PA's office is a major focus point and Office of Public Defense. K-9 Shelter and animal control are also a major need for the county. Juvenile Justice Center is also a focus. The Reserves will go towards some of the things I have mentioned. We are going to keep a couple of months' reserves and continue to work with outside law enforcement agencies to identify needs, such as Prosser and the other cities.

Undersheriff Jon Law stated that the Sheriff is looking forward to working with the Board and collaborating with the Chiefs as well to ensure public safety needs are a collaborative approach.

Chief Greggo – stated that West Richland is very appreciative of the efforts to get this passed.

Chief Jay King stated that being one of the smallest agencies in the County he appreciates that they have been included. Currently they have two candidates for the Deputy Chief. February 1st, a new hire will go to academy. Almost to full staff.

Clerk Josie Delvin provided the update that they moved to second floor, front counter is helpful, setup for growth, seven windows are open. Phase 2 is for Superior court room, can hold 200 jurors. Phase 3 becomes PA's office.

Authority and Role Reminder

Chief Chris Guerrero reminded everyone of the resolution that puts this Law and Justice council in place. He stated it is important to read through it to understand who is supposed to be included in the council. He will also be sending it out digitally.

Judge Burrowes asked if it's a good idea to identify who is the voting member

Chief Chris Guerrero stated that if we had a vote that wasn't unanimous, we would reach out to members

Mayor Pro-Tem Fred Brink stated he is listed as a citizen member, but Mayor Gerry put him in the role as legislative member.

Chief Chris Guerrero stated that Kevin Kennedy may be considered a citizen member

Matt Rasmussen stated that his office can go ahead and modify the resolution

Future Meeting Schedule

Chief Chris Guerrero stated that citizen member Brian Ace asked if we can setup a schedule so we can be tracking the PSST. He asked if everyone is good with sticking on the schedule for second Wednesday of each month

OPD Manager Charlie Dow stated the website isn't up to date with the proper schedule

Deputy County Administrator Matt Rasmussen stated that his office will ensure its updated

Old Business

Status of Public Safety Sales Tax

Chief Chris Guerrero stated he was asked today from a Council member that he heard someone was going to try to overturn PSST

Deputy County Administrator Matt Rasmussen stated that it has passed the window to overturn

Other Business

Council member Chuck Torelli stated that going along with the Yakima County crime lab, that has PSST, can we come up with other ways to use PSST funds. He also asked if in Chiefs and Sheriffs meetings is this being discussed?

Chief Chris Guerrero stated that putting together that group regionally, Yakima Crime Lab that came in to play, they used it to help build that.

Chief Chris Guerrero mentioned the hiring and recruitment of deputies and that there is a statewide push to get them hired. One approach being discussed is councilmatic vote to implement 3/10 tax for that. Hard to know what the impact would be for us. Lots of entities are pushing for this.]

Commissioner Alvarez said this is being shot down very heavily by the public for councilmatic vote. He stated he is still going to stand behind what we will be using the funding for.

Mayor Pro-Tem Fred Brink stated he sits on the board of directors of AWC and they are heavily pushing for councilmatic vote for PSST

Public Comment

There was no public comment section as we did not have anyone from the public in attendance

Meeting adjourned at approximately 12:29