

**Meeting Minutes**  
**Law and Justice Council**  
**Wednesday, May 8, 2024 – 12:00 p.m.**  
**Benton County Administration Building**

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.

Thomas Grego – West Richland Police Chief  
Jon Law – Benton County Sheriff’s Office Undersheriff  
Melissa Hedrick – West Richland Police Assistant to the Chief  
Rob Guerrero - Benton County Corrections Chief  
Jennifer Azure – Benton County District Court Judge  
Cameron Fordmeier – Citizen Member  
John Trumbo – City of Kennewick Council Member  
Diana Ruff – Superior Court Judge  
Josie Delvin – Benton County Clerk  
Eric Eisinger – Benton County Prosecutor  
Tim Markham – Juvenile Justice Manager  
Michael Alvarez – Benton County Commissioner  
Matt Rasmussen – Deputy County Administrator  
Craig Meidl – Interim Chief for Richland Police  
Tiffany Runge – Superior Court Administrator  
Brian Ace – Citizen Member  
Amanda Hatfield – Elections Coordinator

Undersheriff Jon Law called to order at 12:01

**Introductions**

Around the Room Introductions

**Approval of Minutes (Action)**

Undersheriff Jon Law asked for a motion to approve minutes from April 10, 2024

Chief Grego made a motion to approve the minutes, Interim Chief Meidl seconded, motion passes unanimously.

**New Business**

- **Regional Updates**

BCSO – Undersheriff law stated they have 2 vacancies, hoping to fill it soon. By the end of summer, they will be up to full staff. Working into budget time, optimistic commissioners will help with the entire county.

RPD – Chief Meidl stated they have 9 vacancies, 31% can't be used due to other reasons as well. Police Chief search is happening, deadline is next Monday. Mid-July selection and should be in place in August.

WRPD – Chief Grego stated they are at full staff, but have a retirement coming from a Sergeant

Prosecuting Attorney Eric Eisinger talked about covering county about case load count, implementing new district court process, and charging standards. Very short on attorneys in this area and we will have to figure out how we will do business if funding and business won't be there

Juvenile Justice Manager Tim Markham – no updates from Juvenile

Judge Diana Ruff said Swanberg is resigning as of next week, rest assured every other judge will adjust their schedules for on-call. Two people have filed for the position, so it will be a long summer, but here to serve the community. Prioritizing getting trials out.

Judge Jennifer Azure said that district court has offered their assistance with superior court if necessary. 200 cases on docket just today on each judge's docket. Getting the council assigned is still a struggle, getting speedy trial rights within 90 days.

Chief Guerrero said they have 3 openings, 5 in background, up to full staff by end of June.

Citizen Member Cameron Fordmeier talked about assessment happening within the schools, traditionally K-12, entering colleges as well.

Matt Rasmussen said they are making good progress on the recovery center. The Commissioner's office is working diligently on the OPD and WASAC and filed a lawsuit against the state for OPD. Going to appeal that through the supreme court. Working through what a staff model would look like, it's a lot of bodies, but we could have the positions, and it's not easy to find people. Red mountain radio tower is making good progress. On target to have it done by August.

Clerk Josie Delvin stated they were fully staffed and now down 2 people, down only 1 on Monday.

Elections Coordinator Amanda Hatfield talked about starting a conversation about the elections, aware of the threats to elections. Have a list of all the drop boxes. Leading up to the general election, have security on election night.

Judge Diana Ruff asked if the new election center is going to be done by the general election

Amanda Hatfield said it will be done by the general election but won't necessarily be using it this election

Commissioner Alvarez said Matt is working on the recovery center and Jerrod is looking at OPD, looking at internships, student forgiveness after years of service. Outside entities are options as well

Council Member John Trumbo talked about the new city manager at Kennewick, consistently in our interviews she was in the top 2. High regard for her experience.

## **Old Business**

Commissioners recently opened up the RFP to non-governmental agencies.

Matt Rasmussen said that the gang crime prevention RFP opened to the public and is pretty consistent to the usual amount. Public evaluation process and allocating the funding based on the budget. Also, became aware that even though we were uploading PSST information to the website, it wasn't hitting the front end. Going to be fixing that.

### **Other Business**

Judge Diana Ruff said on behalf of Law Day, K-12 annual event every May 1<sup>st</sup>, Civic outreach and promote the rule of law. Doing quite a bit of outreach, lots of participation

Council Member John Trumbo said Friday May 17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup>, can meet Erin and council at their retreat. Talking about what we expect to face, but budgetary as well

Meeting adjourned at approximately 12:38