

Meeting Minutes
Law and Justice Council
Wednesday, July 10, 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.

Chuck Torelli – City of Kennewick Council Member
Tom Croskrey – Benton County Sheriff
Rob Guerrero - Benton County Corrections Chief
Thomas Grego – West Richland Police Chief
Cameron Fordmeier – Citizen Member
Joe Burrowes – Superior Court Judge
Craig Meidl – Interim Chief for Richland Police
Eric Eisinger – Benton County Prosecutor
Michael Alvarez – Benton County Commissioner
Charlie Dow – Office of Public Defense Manager
Jessica Foltz – City Attorney, West Richland
Tim Markham – Juvenile Justice Manager
Amanda Watts – District Court Administrator

Sheriff Croskrey called to order at 12:02

Introductions

- Around the Room Introductions

Approval of Minutes (Action)

- May 8, 2024 Meeting Minutes
- Sheriff Croskrey asked for a motion to approve the minutes from 5/8/24, Chief Meidl moved to approve, Chief Grego seconded, motion passes unanimously

New Business

Court System/OPD

- Prosecuting Attorney Eric Eisinger stated when this issue came up, PA controls cases coming in and releases some, management got together and discussed a plan. They are deciding now what to file on and using specific criteria based on immediate public safety needs. Sends email and corresponds with OPD regarding statuses. Want to ensure they are filing charges and protecting the safety of the public
- OPD – 3 full time interns, two will be completing internship at the end of July. Scheduled on campus interviews across many states. Working to establish students to come here. Currently looking for additional space. 2 attorneys starting, will keep chairs full. Confident they can cover cases for July and August.
- Jessica Foltz said that in Richland they are almost assigning at arraignment, seems it is getting better

- Commissioner Alvarez stated he wants this fixed. Internships want to target specific law schools. Working on a strategic hiring plan for interns and looking at the financial piece of that. In talking about PSST, wants to set a meeting with all attorneys and identify where we can do better.
- Prosecuting Attorney Eric Eisinger thanked Commissioner Alvarez for being here and said that his leadership on this topic is much appreciated.
- Judge Joe Burrowes stated that judges can appoint attorneys and they are working to hire an intern. Tracking all data on processing cases and superior court takes care of all 72 hour holds and warrants and are pretty active on this. Waiting on a ruling on speedy trial and they will receive guidance on this.
- Sheriff Croskrey asked for the timeline on when the state will be reviewing this.
- Judge Joe Burrowes stated the OPD rule is coming out, he doesn't know of a specific case that will be decided. Can be a while to get there, but there is good case law right now.
- Commissioner Alvarez said that as far as the county is concerned, we have a lot of counties having financial deficits and we are being proactive. 70% of all county funds are used for public safety and judicial systems. I have 35 attorneys I must find funding for and set aside.

Meeting adjourned 12:27