

AGENDA

Law and Justice Council

Wednesday, October 9, 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.

Tom Croskrey – Benton County Sheriff
Cameron Fordmeier – Citizen Member
Chris Guerrero – City of Kennewick Police Chief
Jared Kelly – West Richland Police Commander
Brian Ace – Citizen Member
Craig Meidl – Interim Chief for Richland Police
Josie Delvin – Benton County Clerk
Chuck Torelli – City of Kennewick Council Member
Rob Guerrero - Benton County Corrections Chief
Eric Eisinger – Benton County Prosecutor
Diana Ruff – Superior Court Judge
Tiffany Runge – Superior Court Administrator
Michael Alvarez – Benton County Commissioner
Laurencio Sanguino – City Attorney, Kennewick

Meeting called to order at 12:00

Introductions

Around the Room Introductions

Approval of Minutes (Action)

Meeting Minutes

- Chief Guerrero asked for a motion to approve minutes, Council Member Chuck Torelli moved to approve, Citizen Member Cameron Fordmeier seconded, motion passes.

New Business

Regional Updates

Sheriff Croskrey spoke about the electronic search dog, used to locate child pornography and electronics. Said that we have funds, and the dog is ready to pick up in November. He met quite

a few at the ICAC conference and heard lots of success stories. One that went out in the field, was able to locate a phone and a body. No deputy vacancies, 2-3 clerical vacancies.

Commissioners spoke about the interim OPD manager, looking at putting a few more defenders on staff. Another manager coming in in January. More incentives for Public Defenders, student loan reimbursements. Also doing internships in OPD and incentives.

Chief Chirs Guerrero asked if these are a cost to the county

Commissioner Alvarez said yes, it's at the cost of the county

Commander Kelly talked about the haunted house at the end of the month. The drone program is getting up and running. For staffing, they have 2 in the academy, 1 opening and another retirement at the end of the month.

Chief Rob Guerrero said they have 4 in the academy and 1 opening.

City Attorney Laurencio Sanguino said they are hiring 2 attorneys, working on the 3rd then they will be fully staffed.

Citizen Member Brian Ace spoke about a resurgence in youth violence. Community violence grant came out and they recently applied for one with health district.

Citizen Member Cameron Fordmeier said workforce shortage is also experiencing this. Ten new SVP's will get their certificate soon.

Josie Delvin said they are fully staffed.

Council Member Chuck Torelli said that the biggest impact is budget cycle – public safety is the biggest part of our budget. There is an impact and helping citizens understand what public safety and criminal justice really means.

Prosecuting Attorney Eric Eisinger spoke about attorney staffing being the biggest concern. Shortage of attorneys, we are having to work and go find them. Internally we are looking at ways to improve services to victims. Addressing changes to victim witness processes. From a criminal justice standpoint, OPD case standards will come back from state supreme court. Has significant impacts.

Interim Chief Meidl spoke about implementing traffic school, 6 positions filled by January. Martin Pilcher is the new chief and should be here last week of October. WASPC, pushing for year #3 to stay specifically in the local law enforcement.

Judge Diana Ruff announced we had a person to take juvenile court admin position, person did not take the position. Still down a judge but is on the ballot. Being down a judge, we have been able to get them all out. Has been quiet lately on the criminal docket. Judges retreat is coming up.

Chief Chirs Guerrero said they have 8 openings, 3 in the academy, 3 waiting for academy, one starting on 16th, one 11/1 and one retirement at the end of month. We have been requested to only send to Pasco academy. Juvenile violence, project safe neighborhood building program to identify highest risk youth and do a multidisciplinary program to help prevent them from getting

into system. Had a meeting a month ago and working with a company that has been working with our analyst and was hopeful we could have the data sooner. After we have the information, we will be reaching out to our partners. Addressing domestic violence in Kennewick. Brought on Sharp Performance and it has been useful. Going to support Benton County's efforts in purchasing the electronic search dog.

Sheriff Croskrey thanked Chief Meidl for his time here helping us out

Chief Chirs Guerrero echoed it

Old Business

Status of Public Safety Sales Tax

Chief Chirs Guerrero asked for any updates

Commissioner Alvarez spoke about the last few commissioner meetings, finance manager came up and this budget is the most complicated and complex budget she has done. County is going to be making changes this year. \$14 million we were going to have to come up with and \$6 million for OPD. We may have to use some PSST to use some of those funds.

Chief Guerrero said there's huge support from Boys and Girls club and the utilization of it.

Chief Guerrero asked about overall public safety system and flowchart

Prosecuting Attorney Eric Eisinger said he has not done a flow chart, but it is in process

Other Business

Public Comment