

AGENDA
Law and Justice Council
Wednesday, April 9, 2025 – 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.

Mike Clark – Benton County Sheriff Lieutenant
Kevin Kennedy – Citizen Member
Chuck Torelli – City of Kennewick Council Member
John Trumbo – City of Kennewick Council Member
Chris Guerrero – City of Kennewick Police Chief
Rob Guerrero - Benton County Corrections Chief
Jared Kelly – West Richland Police Commander
Cameron Fordmeier – Citizen Member
Jeff Aultman – Chief Deputy Prosecuting Attorney
Martin Pilcher – City of Richland Police Chief
Brian Ace – Citizen Member
Michael Alvarez – Benton County Commissioner
Keith Johnson – Office of Public Defense Manager
Laurencio Sanguino – City Attorney, Kennewick
Jessica Foltz – City Attorney, West Richland
Josh Cuevas – Office of Public Defense

Meeting called to order by Chief Guerrero at 12:00

Introductions

- Around the Room Introductions

Approval of Minutes (Action)

- Meeting Minutes
Motion to approve by Citizen Member Kevin Kennedy, Lieutenant Mike Clark seconded, motion unanimously passes.

New Business

- Meeting Frequency – Every other month, quarterly, June & December, upon Commissioners request

Chief Guerrero asks for input about frequency of meeting.

Citizen Member Kevin Kennedy said quarterly is good.

Commander Jared Kelly agreed quarterly is sufficient.

Council Member Chuck Torelli said we were going to go thru an exercise of what is public safety and tell the public what it is. It's nowhere out there. If that is still a focus, we need to have some sort of meetings.

Chief Guerrero suggested to stay where we are at with frequency. There are a lot of topics that we can be covering and for the purposes of this meeting.

Citizen Member Brian Ace said the frequency he'll leave up to everyone else but does agree with Torelli about mapping out the system. This was a big ask for Mr. Eisinger to handle and tackle, add under old business.

Council Member John Trumbo said Mr. Torelli's initial remarks are important to identify what we are all about - for a long time that was PSST. We have a lot more to discuss as society has changed. Asked if we can identify core issues.

Katie Gillies suggested sending out bylaws and RCWs and then we can get topics to Chief Guerrero for each meeting.

Chief Guerrero said he will work with Eric to get the map done and bring it back to the group, keep the June meeting.

- Regional Updates

Sheriff's Office is down a couple of positions. They have two new dogs out on patrol and an ESD dog is out helping.

Commander Jared Kelly spoke about the new chief position posting.

Citizen Member Cameron Fordmeier said that future funding has been cut, 10 ASO in state, pulled back funding, 4.1 million came from our local agencies. I foresee us being less and less dependent on state and government funding. More dependent on county and city funding. Diversion and Deflection summit coming up. Going to present on statewide diversions.

Prosecuting Attorney Jeff Aultman said the PA's office is near full staffing.

Corrections reported that they have 4 vacancies, 4 at academy, juvenile is fully staffed, and construction is moving along.

City Attorney Laurencio Sanguino spoke about the recovery navigator program graduates upcoming.

OPD has a new Chief criminal defense and is almost fully staffed. April 24th, will start bind over docket started. No updates on supreme court rulings.

Commissioner Alvarez said bind over docket is a very strong idea.

OPD Josh Cuevas said bind over docket is with the shortage of attorneys, had to prioritize, lower-level crimes fell to the side, enough time left to file, bind over docket helps bridge the

gap.

Commissioner Alvarez said it allows lower-level crimes to go to DC for 30 days and they will take on the case and they can go ahead and plea it out.

Chief Guerrero asked if it lowers points for OPD attorneys

OPD Josh Cuevas said they're able to get contracts filled quickly, optimistic about it, the way we discussed filings, it does seem to be able to help with points.

Citizen Member Brian Ace said it's a great example of why the map will be helpful, so the community can feel that justice is still being served.

Chief Guerrero said this is allowing for cases to still be filed when maybe they weren't going to be filed previously due to the backlog.

Chief Pilcher spoke about two shut down parks along Columbia River, reopened, cutting back vegetation to remove homeless issues. Since early last year was reduced, they had several vacancies, promoted two lieutenants. One will take on getting WASPC accredited. 7 vacancies.

Council Member Trumbo said Kennewick has a growing problem with minibikes. This committee has been sharing lots of good items

Commissioner Alvarez shared a few topics

- WASAC – talking to state senators and reps, one major concern was the bill not allowing guns in the county land. This will cost us with signage and the risk with this and requested funding for this.
- Public Defense – still a big issue and working hard on recruitment.
- Work Release – pretty large issue. We had removed it, a judge asked us to reconsider it. Working with a lot of different experts on this topic to review the request. Will provide an update next meeting

Kennewick has 8 openings, 7 in Pasco academy, 3 in Spokane academy, 3 FTO, 4 openings in daytime, 2 in CAT team, no federal task forces filled except for ICAC. Crime is still down. Proactive is still the approach.

Old Business

- Status of Public Safety Sales Tax

Other Business

Public Comment

Meeting adjourned at 12:45pm