

**Skagit County Law and Justice Council
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, March 9th, 2011, 8:15 a.m.**

ATTENDANCE:

Ken Bergsma	Gregg Freeman	Linda Eiford
Charlie Wend	Gary Shand	Nancy Scott
Chuck Benjamin	Tim Holloran	Jennifer Kingsley
Keith Tyne	Peter Browning	Delilah George
Pam Springer	Andrea Vallee	Rebecca Clark
Lin Tucker	Emma Whitfield	Dale Ragan
Kate Martin	Laurie Jarolimek	

Today's meeting began at 8:20 a.m. with introductions and a welcome from **Ken Bergsma**, *Mount Vernon Police Chief and Law & Justice Council Chairman*.

February 9th, 2011 Meeting Minutes

There was a motion and second by the Council that the February 9th, 2011 meeting minutes be approved as written. The motion carried.

SPEAKER:

Rebecca Clark, Mental Health Coordinator for Skagit County, gave a presentation on **Adult Mental Health Program updates in Skagit County**. An overview was given of several Mental Health programs available in Skagit County including Crisis Intervention Team Training, Adult Mental Health Court, Community Wellness Program, Jail Transition Program, Skagit Treatment Engagement Program (STEP), and the Peer Connection Center. (Details as well as statistics and contact information on these programs can be found in the handout portion of the Law and Justice meeting website.)

Discussion followed- Chuck Benjamin brought up that Peer Center funding is in jeopardy at this time. Several members mentioned the important position the Peer Center is filling in the community at this time. The Center provides a safe, positive place for those with mental health concerns who have extra time on their hands as they are frequently unemployable. A question was raised as to any sort of leverage to make sure required medications are taken. The law is only voluntary on this point at the moment. Mental Health Court does require patients to go to Compass Health to get their required medications. The Center also provides needed face-to-face contact with mental health individuals. **Tim Holloran** inquired if a smaller space and additional funding by local Church groups had been explored. Opening fewer hours was also suggested as a cost saving measure in lieu of closure.

Charlie Wend spoke on Mental Health and Medical Health issues in the jail and working on further coordination of services. They are looking into Mental Health issues being aggravated by overcrowding and not being able to isolate the inmates for their safety as well as the safety of other inmates and staff.

Skagit Valley Hospital Mental Health Unit Capital Campaign is already underway with a tentative opening in 2012. This remodel would provide single bed rooms for mental health issues and would double the secure rooms (2) for involuntary commits.

Discussion Followed- Questions were raised as to why the jail had to put up with seriously disruptive mental health inmates and why they weren't sent to the hospital instead. The jail is usually the end of the line for those with mental health issues who also have criminal issues. Hospitals are not of the same safety/lockdown mindset as the jail, and can unintentionally contribute to community safety issues. The closure of Northern State has created a void where these issues had previously been handled.

FOLLOW UP ISSUES:

Gregg Freeman- brought up the forming of a Mental Health Diversion Workgroup between agencies in order to pool resources to work on this problem. Volunteers to work with Freeman on this include: **Charlie Wend, Linda Eiford, Rebecca Clark,** and a representative from North Sound Mental Health. If anyone else is interested in working on this committee please submit names to lauriej@co.skagit.wa.us.

UPDATES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Several Council members will be visiting the SCORE jail in Des Moines on Thursday, March 10th, to tour and speak with their officials to see if this might be workable in Skagit County. This is an 840 bed facility built with a 54 million dollar budget.

Charlie Wend announced that the Jail Facilities Task Force meetings will resume in April with the completion of the jail video.

Tim Holloran explained that Council members take the jail video and set up meetings with individual City Councils to solicit their suggestions and support for the new jail facility.

Dale Ragan expressed his desire for the cities to partner with the county on this project.

Charlie Wend reaffirmed that open communication is a priority regarding the new jail facility, and welcomes all suggestions and ideas.

Emma Whitfield said the 8-10 minute Jail Video will be ready for viewing at our April meeting.

Andrea Vallee said that Volunteers of America will be mailing out questionnaires for an upcoming conference for the Planning Commission for Restorative Justice for Washington and Oregon. She would appreciate feedback, especially those connected with juvenile justice organizations.

NEXT MEETING- is scheduled for Wednesday, April 13th, 2011.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:25.

Approved 4/13/11