

**Skagit County Law and Justice Council
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, September 17, 2008**

Attendance: Nancy Brown, John Lum, Tim Holloran, Rick Grimstead, Phil McLaughlin, Maile Keli'ipio-Acoba, Letty Alvarez, Linda Eiford, Roxane Goss, Pam Springer, Delilah George, Ken Bergsma, Daniel Dempsey, Ralph Schwartz, Gary Shand, Alan Erickson, Ken Dahlstedt, Wayne Dowhaniuk, Jackie Brunson, Linda Christensen, Gail Elias, John Milosovich.

Welcome and Introductions

The meeting was called to order by Gary Shand at approximately 8:15 a.m.

Nancy Brown introduced and welcomed to the Council the new Youth and Family Services Director, John Lum.

June 11 Meeting Minutes

A motion was made and seconded to approve the June 11 meeting minutes. The motion carried.

Administrative Assistance

Gary Shand discussed that Linda Christensen, Executive Assistant for Administrative Services, will temporarily take over the tasks previously performed by Kathy Mohebbi.

Task Force Committee Report

Gary Shand reviewed the two motions brought forth from the Task Force to the Council regarding the motion to rescind site 8 and the new motion to recommend site 11. He stressed that the relationship with the City of Mount Vernon is vastly important regarding the site selection.

Mr. Shand discussed the Task Force's suggestion for the Law & Justice Council and others to attend a couple of retreats to facilitate the mission and planning process of the proposed new Justice Center and Jail. The retreats will address funding, partnerships, and support. The first retreat will occur early December with the Law & Justice Council and a larger retreat in early January to include a broader group that will include citizens of Skagit County.

Tim Holloran discussed the medical model program relationship with Skagit Valley Hospital and the necessity of building this program now.

Mr. Shand mentioned other programs currently in use and said these need to be expanded as the County grows into a larger facility. Letty Alvarez explained the need for a program where the offenders can function well after re-entry into the community.

Court Consolidation and Indigent Defense Screening Presentation

Court Consolidation:

Pam Springer indicated that the courts provide the ability for the district and municipal court clerks in Skagit County to quash each others warrants and provide new courts dates for defendants/receipt fines and fees for any court in the county (meaning district and municipal),

provide case information, set infraction court dates, hold county-wide training on a yearly basis, to train on new procedures, and legislative changes, etc. We have held warrant amnesty programs and fine/collection amnesty programs. We provide staffing help when a court needs additional help for various reasons.

Indigent Defense Screening:

Letty Alvarez explained that the Office of Assigned Counsel provides indigent screening and assignment of counsel for defendants who have been charged in Superior, District and Mount Vernon Municipal Court, and/or where loss of liberty is at stake and the right to counsel attaches. Her office currently screens for Superior Court (adults and juveniles), District Court, and the City of Mount Vernon.

Ms. Alvarez screens defendants in jail that have been referred by the Courts mentioned above. Defendants who don't fall under those courts are not presently being screened, therefore no attorneys are being appointed immediately at the time of incarceration. This is concerning. Ms. Alvarez has approached the cities of Burlington, Sedro-Woolley and Burlington regarding the County's screening services for these municipalities to ensure a person's right to counsel is being met, especially for those clients in custody. The cities are currently looking at the proposal, though no decision has been determined.

Consolidation of screening services countywide would be a huge benefit not only to the cities, but also to the population that we serve. Additional benefits of consolidation include: 1) a person's right to counsel would be immediate for all in custody where defendants that are being held on countywide holds; 2) reduce recidivism and costs of warrants and jail stay; 3) simplify the process for defendants who qualify for services to one location instead of four; 4) Attorney referral would provide all the current cases giving the attorney insight into what cases are pending county-wide. Attorneys can then communicate and work on global resolutions for clients who will be sentenced to prison time. Once again, this will reduce recidivism since the person would not return from prison to deal with warrants from other municipalities.

Open House overview

Gary Shand reported that the open house received between 80 and 90 people on September 15. Overall, the public favored site 11, the Christianson Seed location, and the traditional architectural appearance was preferred. Gail Elias commented that the open house format was an excellent choice for the public. It was also mentioned that the next invitation mailing should include a Spanish translation.

Considerations to the Board of County Commissioners

A motion was made and seconded to rescind the Site 8 recommendation. The motion carried.

Another motion was made and seconded that the Law & Justice Council recommends that the Skagit County Board of Commissioners move forward pursuing acquisition of Site 11 as the preferred jail site. The motion carried.

Sex offender housing and grant opportunity

This topic was tabled due to Gregg Freeman's absence.

Other Business

Gary Shand mentioned the letter sent out to the cities and towns regarding Law & Justice Council participation. Ken Dahlstedt expressed the need to have all law enforcements represented by the cities and towns. Mr. Dahlstedt also mentioned the funding aspect of the jail project in that sales tax is a preferred vehicle versus a bond or property tax. We need the cities to back us.

Nancy Brown made the Council aware that the Youth & Family Services Department has been working on a gang violence workgroup and is asking for additional involvement. Interested participants need to contact Bob Hicks. Also, there is an opportunity to get involved in the school violence committee as well. They meet the third Wednesday of each month. Contact Chris Tobey for more information.

Gary Shand recognized Nancy Brown for her service as director of the Youth and Family Services Department.

Ken Dahlstedt recognized the work all participants in the Law & Justice Council.

Tim Holloran mentioned that Voorhis Associates is working on an updated Jail Master Plan.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:30 a.m.

Meeting Minutes were approved on November 12, 2008