

Skagit County Law and Justice Council
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, October 8, 2008

Attendance: Delilah George, Mavis Betz, Roxane Goss, Charlie Wend, John Lum, Doug Wood, Daniel Dempsey, Rick Grimstead, Ron Coakley, David Svaren, Gregg Freeman, Linda Eiford, Andrea Vallee, Peter Browning, Tim Holloran, Linda Christensen

Welcome and Introductions

The meeting was called to order by Gregg Freeman at approximately 8:15 a.m.

The September meeting minutes were not approved. They will be brought forward at the next meeting in hopes that the quorum requirements are met.

Law & Justice Council Retreat Report

Charlie Wend gave an overview of the retreat discussion from the October 7th Task Force meeting. Noted below are the meeting notes from that meeting:

The date for the retreat is December 4, 9 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. The retreat will replace the regular Law & Justice Council meeting. Linda Christensen will make final arrangements for reserving the WSU facility and line up a caterer.

The main goal of this retreat is to plan a scope of work that will be discussed at a larger retreat tentatively planned for January 2009 with a larger group of participants. This large group will include, but not limited to city and town officials, business partners, other agencies, and individuals that will partake in the planning of the new Justice Center and larger jail.

Suggested topics to cover at the retreat include:

Speaker's bureau, weekly jail report, around Skagit County report, presentation to each city and town, and civic group presentation

Charlie Wend suggested that we ask Mediation Services to participate in the first retreat and he will make the contact.

The invitation list for the December retreat will include the Law & Justice Council, Sheriff Department staff, and police chiefs. Rick Grimstead will contact the police chiefs. Gail Elias and John Milosovich will be contacted by Tim Holloran to confirm their attendance. Charlie Wend noted it would be a good idea to invite Don Wick to the retreat.

Tim Holloran and Charlie Wend will begin speaking with citizens who approach them to be a part of the citizen speaker bureau group. They will develop a letter. Dan Berentson suggested that Kari Rankin be present to represent the citizen group.

Commissioner Dahlstedt mentioned that it would be beneficial to receive a support resolution from each Skagit County municipality.

Charlie Wend and Gary Shand will organize presentations to all municipalities and the tribes similar to the one presented to the City of Mount Vernon. These presentations will be scheduled after the November election.

Sex Offender Housing and Grant Opportunity

Gregg Freeman discussed currently there are few resources for offenders released from jail or prison and virtually no resources for indigent offenders. The community is at greater risk when sex offenders are homeless as the Department of Corrections and local Law Enforcement can not effectively monitor their activities. Homeless offenders are also at higher risk to re-offend across a broad spectrum of crimes. Skagit County will have some HGAP funding in the near future that will potentially provide money to assist this population; however, we currently do not have locations or landlords identified who are willing to rent to sex offenders. This is a public safety issue for Skagit County, and it is recommended that the Law and Justice Council form a task force to examine sex offender housing issues in Skagit County and make recommendations regarding the future management of this population.

Risk Needs Assessments

Linda Eiford presented the Risk Assessment process for District Court Probation. Each probation officer performs a risk assessment on each defendant at the beginning of their probation supervision, with the exception of pretrial supervision cases which are considered high risk by nature of their referral.

There are three levels of risk - high (Level 1), medium (Level 2) and low (Level 3), which are determined by the score on the risk assessment. Reassessments are performed every six or twelve months, depending on the level of risk on the initial assessment. High risk defendants may be seen daily, weekly, or monthly depending on their scores - but no less than monthly. Probation officers may request an over-ride from the Director if they feel there are extenuating circumstances which would indicate a higher or lower score than the assessment indicates. This assessment was created 25 to 30 years ago in Wisconsin. It has been validated for accuracy three separate times in Washington. It is quick, easy, and no cost to the department.

Gregg Freeman presented an overview of the newly implemented DOC classification tools and Skagit County Sergeant Ron Coakley presented an overview of the County's jail inmate screening process.

Work Release Program

Charlie Wend made a presentation regarding the Bellingham Work Training Release (BWTR). Skagit County offenders are often transitioned through BWTR and Charlie discussed some of the hurdles facing Skagit offenders when they return to Skagit County. Employment stability is often immediately sacrificed due to the difficulty of maintaining a job in Whatcom County and a residence in Skagit. Housing continues to be a challenge to releasing offenders due to lack of affordable housing and the scarcity of landlords willing to rent to this population. Charlie suggested that the Council and Skagit County consider rolling some State Work Release beds into the new Jail/Community Justice Center as a means of facilitating offender re-entry into our local communities. Greater transitional stability should result in fewer incidents of victimization and fewer returns into the correctional system, thus saving scarce resources and providing improved public safety.

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

Meeting minutes were approved on November 12, 2008