

Public Safety: Jail Project Meeting

Commissioners Hearing Room, 1800 Continental Place, Mount Vernon

Thursday, March 29, 2012, 1:30 p.m.

Minutes

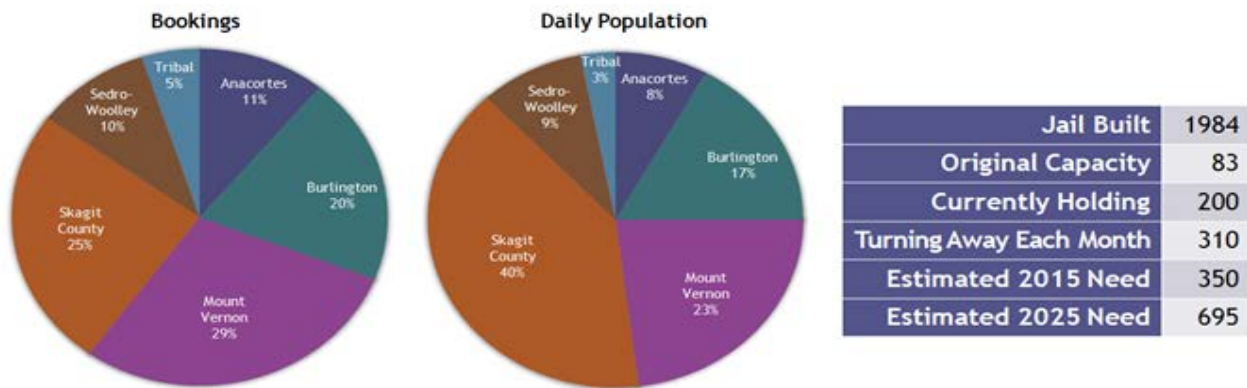
Skagit County Commissioner Ron Wesen thanked everyone for their attendance. He excused Chairman Dahlstedt who was attending a conference in Washington D.C. Partners and representatives at the table included: Mayor of Anacortes Dean Maxwell, City of Burlington Mayor Steve Sexton, City of Burlington Administrator Bryan Harrison, City of Mount Vernon Mayor Jill Boudreau, City of Sedro-Woolley Supervisor and Attorney Eron Berg, Town of Lyman Eddie Hills, Skagit County Sheriff Will Reichardt, Skagit County Commissioner Ron Wesen, Skagit County Commissioner Sharon Dillon, Skagit County Chief of Corrections Charlie Wend, Skagit County Administrator Tim Holloran, Project Manager Marc Estvold, Financial Advisor Susan Musselman. Others in attendance included representatives from the Cities of Anacortes, Burlington, Mount Vernon, Sedro-Woolley, Skagit County, and the Skagit Valley Herald. Commissioner Wesen explained that the purpose of the meeting was to address the county-wide public safety problem of the overcrowded jail. He said that the entire community was impacted by the overcrowded jail and that Skagit County wanted to partner with each city to move forward together towards finding a solution. He expressed that it was important for each city to participate in the process.

Skagit County Chief of Corrections Charlie Wend showed the DVD "Overcrowded: Inside the Skagit County Jail" then gave some facts about the jail and current conditions. He said that it was constructed in 1984 and designed to hold 83 prisoners. The jail currently holds 200 prisoners and that approximately 310 are turned away every month. He said that actual number of individuals turned away from the jail was probably more than 310 since police officers in the field making arrests realize that lower level offenses are being turned away, so that under certain circumstances, police officers sometimes decide not to make an arrest.

Chief Wend described other problems with the current jail which included: the layout which was an issue for supervisory reasons, costs, and safety measures; that there were not enough rehabilitation opportunities due to overcrowding; and that updated technology could not be easily installed or utilized due to re-wiring issues.

Chief Wend said that public safety was compromised. He said that the jail holds 200 prisoners and that 55 to 60 prisoners are sentenced alternatively and serve time performing community service within the community or are monitored electronically. Unfortunately, there is not sufficient jail capacity to confine these individuals should they violate the terms of their alternative sentence. Chief Wend said that the public safety issue worsens since many individuals within the community now know that they may not be booked for lower-level offenses.

Chief Wend shared figures for bookings and the daily population and how bookings made by cities are sometimes re-labeled in the daily population as a county prisoner due to felony sentencing.



Chief Wend clarified that the statistics listed and shown did not include the bookings or daily population of persons brought in by the Department of Corrections or the Washington State Patrol since they are not a fiscal partner and do not play a role in the decisions for a new jail.

Chief Wend hoped that everyone recognized the problems facing the jail. Another challenge within the current jail was the lack of proper segregation for the mentally ill population, gang population, women population, and for the various hostile acts and circumstances that could arise. Chief Wend introduced Mr. Holloran who would discuss the proposed plan to move forward.

Skagit County Administrator Tim Holloran said that an outreach team had been formed which included Project Manager Marc Estvold, Skagit County Sheriff Will Reichardt, Chief Wend, and himself, and that they had been discussing the project and issues, and had presented the Public Safety Jail Project to the City of Anacortes, the Burlington Public Safety Committee, the City of Mount Vernon, and City of Sedro-Woolley. He said that the issue and need for a new public safety facility had been studied and researched since 1995 and that it was recognized that treatment programs needed to be in place to reduce recidivism. Mr. Holloran said that a structured plan needed to be put in place and that each city needed to partner with Skagit County and have a voice in addressing the overcrowded situation. The process would be open, transparent, and that choices would be data driven. Even though the County runs the jail, each city was a partner and that it would be important to participate and work together to find a solution. Mr. Holloran said that Skagit County wanted each city to participate and clarified that the smaller towns could participate, but it was agreed that they would be represented by Skagit County.

Mr. Holloran proposed that a Coordinating Council be formed and said that each city would be asked to appoint one representative/liaison and an alternate to attend monthly 90 minute meetings. These individuals would need to be empowered by their respective cities to speak on

their behalf at Coordinating Council meetings (express views, concerns, questions, suggestions, decisions) and also take information back to their respective cities for discussion, vet issues with their city officials, then bring viewpoints back to the Coordinating Council. The goal was to work together to strive for consensus.

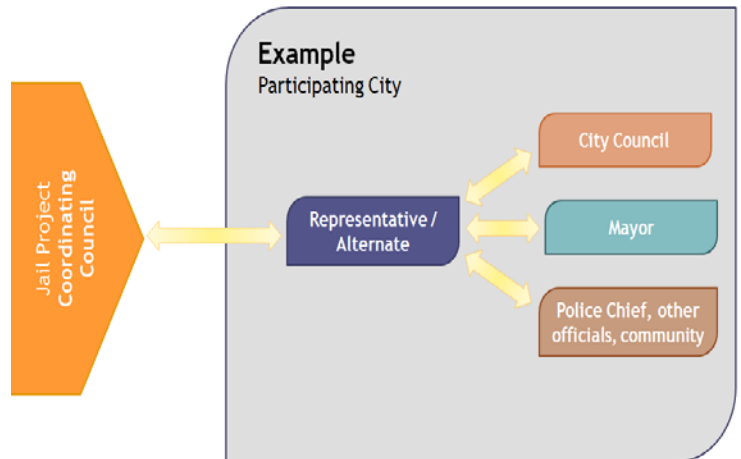
Proposed Structure

for Jail Project Coordinating Council



Proposed Model

for Interaction & Communication



Mr. Holloran stated that Marc Estvold was the Project Manager and that Mr. Estvold would be working with the mayors, police chiefs, finance directors, planning directors, administrators, and county on the multiple issues to discuss and decide on.

Mr. Holloran showed a proposed model for decision-making and voting that the cities could use to decide on issues brought to them by their representative/liaison after Coordinating Council meetings:

5	4	3	2	1
Endorsement	Endorsement with a minor point of contention	Agreement with reservations	Stand Aside	Block
<i>"We like it!"</i>	<i>"Basically, we like it."</i>	<i>"We can live with it."</i>	<i>"We don't like it, but we don't want to hold up the group."</i>	<i>"We can't live with it."</i>

Mr. Holloran asked for thoughts and comments.

City of Burlington Administrator Bryan Harrison stated that he believed the proposed structure provided a positive opportunity for the exchange of information which had been missing in the past. He agreed with having a two-way dialog. He questioned how the Coordinating Council would

be tasked with a work plan and said it would be important for them to be educated on the work plan and current information.

City of Anacortes Mayor Dean Maxwell wanted to know how the project would be financed. He stressed the importance of public education and support since the project would eventually be voted on. He said that he was aware of the problem and the need for a solution. He asked to see proposals and said that more information was needed for discussions with city officials and voters.

Skagit County Administrator Tim Holloran said that detailed minutes of each meeting would be provided to each city (mayors, tribal chairs, councils, budget/finance directors, administrators, planning directors, and police chiefs) for circulation. Minutes from each Coordinating Council meeting would be posted online as well. He also inquired if the cities would post information and minutes on their websites. He said that a lot of work needed to be done and that there were many issues to discuss. One of the main issues was the actual design of the building since it was known that the design of the structure impacts the operational costs and that an efficient design would be necessary.

Chief Wend said that during the presentation to the Anacortes City Council on Monday, March 26, 2012, a question was asked about showing the “Overcrowded: Inside the Skagit County Jail” DVD, and Chief Wend hoped that each municipality, if they provided information to their municipality on a cable channel, could also air the DVD on their TV station as Skagit County does since this would help educate the public. Chief Wend agreed that public support would be critical for the project.

Skagit County Administrator Tim Holloran wanted to make sure that the cities knew that they could approach Project Manager Marc Estvold and Financial Advisor Susan Musselman with questions and support.

Project Manager Marc Estvold discussed the potential sites being considered for the new jail.



Site 1



Site 2, 3, 4

Site 1 was located at the Port of Skagit near the airport. He said that this property was geographically centered in Skagit County, and since it was 50 acres, it would accommodate a single story structure which was proven to be the most efficient and cost effective to operate. A Zoning Code Amendment would need to be approved and an unclassified Special Use Permit issued. He gave a potential timeline for this process and said that it would not be until 2014 when they would know if they would be able to construct at the location.

Sites 2, 3, and 4 were located downtown Mount Vernon and all would require Comprehensive Plan Amendments and Zoning Amendments. The sites downtown would also need to gain the designation of being an Essential Public Facility and he said that it would take approximately one year to determine if the sites were buildable.

Site 2 was located at the existing jail and would include a re-model. Mr. Estvold said that having the jail near the courthouses reduced the expense of transporting prisoners to and from hearings. Mr. Estvold described the problems with the size of the property and the limits on being able to add additional levels to the existing structure. Moving forward with this plan would mean that the cost of operating the facility would be high since it would be multiple levels. *(Later on during the meeting, Chief Wend explained why single story structures cost less to operate than multi-level structures).*

Site 3 was located across the street from the current jail. Mr. Estvold again explained that the location was preferred due to the proximity to the courthouses, but again explained that the structure would need to be multiple levels and the cost of operation would be high.

Site 4 was also located near the courthouses. He said that the structure would need to be two-levels and he said that parking issues would need to be addressed.

Mr. Estvold said that one of the interim solutions to overcrowding had been to rent beds at jails in other counties. This was not sustainable due to the projected population growth and due to the percentage (80%) of the jailed population that required access to Skagit County Courts. He said that operational costs increase when Skagit County prisoners are re-located. He said that these are some of the issues that the proposed Coordinating Council would need to evaluate.

City of Anacortes Councilmember Ryan Walters asked why single level structures were cheaper to operate than multi-level structures.

Chief Wend answered that costs decrease and safety increases with single level structures. One of the main factors that drive costs up was the number of jail personnel required for escorting prisoners throughout the building and to and from the courtrooms. He said that more personnel are required for multi-level structures since unattended transport being monitored by video cameras was not as feasible. He also said that multi-level structures have an added cost of elevator maintenance and repair costs and reduced safety in elevators and stairwells.

City of Burlington Mayor Steve Sexton said that he believed the proposed plan seemed backwards. He clarified by saying that the design of the structure needed to solve the overcrowding issue and that it should be researched and decided on before choosing the location for the structure.

Project Manager Marc Estvold said that the number of beds the jail needed would determine the size of the facility needed had that research had been performed which evaluated the operational costs of different kinds of facilities. He said that another consideration was transportation costs. These costs should be considered when deciding where to place the facility. Mr. Estvold assured Mayor Sexton that a location would not be finalized until facility needs and financing options were fully explored.

Chief Wend informed those present that many studies had already been performed in 2004 which researched schematics and facilities and things to consider when constructing a jail.

Skagit County Sheriff Will Reichardt said that there was a lot of research available to look at which analyzed what kinds of facilities would best serve the needs of the community. He said that it was now time to partner with one another towards finalizing a plan.

City of Mount Vernon Mayor Jill Boudreau said that the city councils would need to weigh in on the size, type, and cost of the facility.

Skagit County Administrator Tim Holloran agreed and said that all financial aspects needed to be discussed.

City of Mount Vernon Mayor Jill Boudreau asked that a work plan be provided to the cities if they decided to move forward with the monthly meetings.

Project Manager Marc Estvold said he would provide a draft work plan with expectations to the cities that the Coordinating Council would review and discuss.

City of Burlington Administrator Bryan Harrison pointed out that each city may view the needs of the community, and the type of the facility needed, differently. He believed options needed to be provided and analyzed, and alternative plans evaluated. He believed that this should be the first step and that the selection of the location for the facility should be decided on afterwards.

After hearing Mr. Harrison and Mayor Sexton's concerns, Chief Wend suggested that everyone present needed to review the work, studies, plans, and reports already performed (from 2004 and 2005) so that everyone would be up-to-date on what issues had been researched, what options were available, and what some of the best ways to move forward might be. He said that cities could then make decisions knowing what had been done and whether or not they agreed with the results and ideas.

City of Sedro-Woolley Supervisor and Attorney Eron Berg shared that he had toured some jails and suggested that the Coordinating Council tour jails to see what works and what does not work within a facility. He also said that the purpose of the structure should be clarified. For example: is it for retribution or rehabilitation purposes? Mr. Berg believed that having a well informed team deciding on what was needed for the community should come before selecting a site and building plan.

Retired Undersheriff and former Chief of Corrections Gary Shand clarified to the group that a lot of work and research had already been performed on this issue and that the information from these studies about the needs and types of facilities which best benefited their communities was available on-line for review.

(<http://www.skagitcounty.net/Common/Asp/Default.asp?d=Jail&c=General&p=newjailstatus.htm>)

Skagit County Administrator Tim Holloran informed the group that for many years Skagit County had been working on this project alone and he stressed the importance of needing to partner and come together on a solution for the community. Mr. Holloran said that the City of Anacortes brought up an issue to research and discuss: whether a public or private entity should operate the jail.

City of Sedro-Woolley Supervisor and Attorney Eron Berg asked whether or not a Judge should be included on the Coordinating Council. He believed that they would need to be engaged with the process since law and justice was a combined matter.

The group was asked if they agreed with Mr. Berg that a Judge should also be included on the Coordinating Council. The group agreed.

Chief Wend said that he and Project Manager Marc Estvold were going to be touring the Snohomish County jail on Monday, April 16, 2012, at 3:30 p.m. He said that he could be contacted by those interested in touring the facility with him and Mr. Estvold. (Email: cwend@co.skagit.wa.us) He said that the building looks nice but is a multi-level building and did not include any courtrooms which greatly increased their operational costs since they needed to hire 19 full-time employees to transport prisoners to and from court. Chief Wend encouraged people to contact him if they wanted a tour of Skagit County Jail.

City of Anacortes Mayor Dean Maxwell said that the biggest issue to address was recidivism. He said that legislation does not properly address this expensive issue and he suggested sending a unified message to legislature about the strain this has on the community and that if success was to be achieved, a plan needed to be implemented to find a way to keep prisoners from reoffending.

Chief Wend agreed with Mayor Maxwell. He said that he was not a proponent of locking inmates up and throwing away the key, but of treatment and education programs. He said that mental health and chemical dependency treatment programs and other programs are needed so that prisoners are provided with the skills that they need so that recidivism decreases. Chief Wend said that he had been in the law and justice field for 30 years and that he has seen a lot of the same people coming back to jail. He said that programs help, and in the end, programs and treatment cost less than perpetually incarcerating people.

City of Sedro-Woolley Councilmember Keith Wagoner believed that the consensus decision-making model was a complicated way to make a decision and that it provided 4 approvals and 1 disapproval for voting on ideas.

Skagit County Administrator Tim Holloran agreed with Councilmember Wagoner but clarified that the goal was to gain some sort of consensus and continue moving forward towards finding a solution. He asked if there were any other ideas for a decision-making model.

City of Sedro-Woolley Supervisor and Attorney Eron Berg suggested 3 options instead of 5: yes, maybe, and no.

Skagit County Administrator Tim Holloran believed that the proposed 5 option scale gave everyone an idea on the decisions being made and helped determine how the majority of the group felt about the issues being voted on. He said that the proposed voting model could be discussed by the Coordinating Council further. He said that the City of Burlington had an issue with using sales tax to finance the project and he said how the matrix could clarify a city's position on issues. Mr. Holloran said that a plan would be brought to the Sheriff and Skagit County Commissioners from the Coordinating Council for a final decision.

Town of Lyman Councilmember Eddie Hills encouraged the formation of the Coordinating Council to move forward on the issue.

City of Mount Vernon Mayor Jill Boudreau said that the City of Mount Vernon appreciated the involvement of Marc Estvold and Susan Musselman. She wanted to acknowledge the frustration that there had been regarding the lack of progress with the project and shared her hopes that political issues would not hinder the project.

Skagit County Administrator Tim Holloran believed that the attendance shown at the meeting displayed everyone's willingness to work together and move forward on the project. He acknowledged that a lot of money had already been spent on the project and a lot of time had passed. He shared that with the passing of that time, they became better educated on the many ways of how *not* to build a jail.

Skagit County Sheriff Will Reichardt said that it appeared that the group agreed on the proposed structure of the Coordinating Council and he asked the cities how many representatives they would want.

Skagit County Administrator Tim Holloran said that the idea was for each city to designate one representative/liaison and one alternate (one vote per entity).

City of Sedro-Woolley Supervisor and Attorney Eron Berg said that he believed one representative made the most sense.

City of Burlington Administrator Bryan Harrison said that he liked having a clear process showing roles and partnering and sharing ideas and he believed the proposed model could work.

City of Anacortes Mayor Dean Maxwell said that he still believed the process was backwards and he asked how the project would be financed and what the costs would be to Skagit County voters. He said that utilizing sales tax would lessen the burden on property owners. He asked for more information on various models and costs.

Project Manager Marc Estvold stated that models and costs and different options would be brought before the Coordinating Council.

Skagit County Administrator Tim Holloran said that all were good questions and that all were factors to be worked on simultaneously since one issue influences another.

Skagit County Sheriff Will Reichardt said that the Coordinating Council would also communicate with their city on upcoming topics and issues to discuss and said that, for example, if financing were to be discussed, the representative/liaison would also invite the cities' Budget/Finance Director.

City of Mount Vernon Councilmember Dale Reagan wanted to be sure that the proposed concept and information being discussed would be shared with each city so that they all understood the process.

Skagit County Administrator Tim Holloran said that the meeting was being taped and that it would be posted online for viewing at any time. He said that this information and a letter to each mayor would be mailed out. He also said that Project Manager Marc Estvold and/or the team would be happy to attend city council meetings upon request and provide information and updates.

City of Burlington Attorney Scott Thomas asked that an 18 month work plan be provided to the cities soon so that they could discuss.

Project Manager Marc Estvold said that a draft work plan with goals and expectations would be provided. He also said that after the Coordinating Council is formed, agendas would also be provided to each member in advance so that they could share it with their city.

Skagit County Administrator Tim Holloran discussed information flow between cities and the Coordinating Council on issues. Perhaps some issues could be discussed outside of the Coordinating Council with mayors and administrators like the fact that the U.S. has a high incarceration, recidivism rate, and questions whether the system was working.

City of Anacortes Mayor Dean Maxwell said that the current situation was not sustainable.

Skagit County Administrator Tim Holloran agreed and said that he believes the current system does not work.

City of Mount Vernon Mayor Jill Boudreau pointed out that a draft work plan would be needed and should be sent to the cities along with the letter from Skagit County asking for their appointed representatives for the Coordinating Council since the scope of topics may factor into who would be appointed.

Skagit County Administrator Tim Holloran agreed with Mayor Boudreau and asked if the cities would be able to make a decision by April 13, 2012 on who to appoint.

The cities believed they could appoint a representative/liaison and alternate by April 13, 2012.

City of Anacortes Councilmember Ryan Walters asked and thought that both the representative and alternate should attend each meeting.

Skagit County Administrator Tim Holloran said it would be left up to each city if one or both representatives would attend each meeting. He clarified that each entity would only have one vote. He said that Chairman Ken Dahlstedt would be the Commissioner who would be involved with the Coordinating Council.

Skagit County Commissioner Sharon Dillon thanked everyone for their attendance.

Skagit County Administrator Tim Holloran said that they were thinking of selecting reoccurring dates for the Coordinating Council meetings and that, if and when necessary, the Coordinating Council could also hold special meetings.

City of Anacortes Mayor Dean Maxwell said that Thursdays might work the best since the cities often have regular Wednesday meetings.

Skagit County Commissioner Ron Wesen thanked everyone for coming to discuss the issue and that Skagit County looked forward to receiving letters from each city listing their representative/liaison. He said that he wanted to work together and form a plan that solved the problem and addressed the needs of the community and citizens.

Skagit County Administrator Tim Holloran said that today's minutes would be mailed to each city along with a DVD of the meeting, the letter requesting their representative/liaison and alternate, the Overcrowded DVD and a draft work plan.

The meeting ended at 2:45 p.m.