

## **Coordinating Council Meeting - Public Safety Jail Project**

Commissioners Hearing Room, 1800 Continental Place, Mount Vernon

Thursday, September 14, 2012, 11:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

### **NOTES**

#### **ATTENDANCE:**

Eron Berg, Sedro-Woolley Supervisor/Attorney  
Bill Bergsma, DLR Group  
Ken Bergsma, Mount Vernon Police Chief  
Greg Booth, Mount Vernon Police Dept.  
Jill Boudreau, Mayor of Mount Vernon  
Bonnie Bowers, Anacortes Police Chief  
Chris Cammock, Mount Vernon Police Dept.  
Rick DeGloria, Burlington Councilmember  
Sharon Dillon, County Commissioner  
Jerry Dodd, Mount Vernon Police Dept.  
Marc Estvold, Project Manager  
Bryan Harrison, Burlington Administrator  
Tim Holloran, County Administrator

Roger Howard, Facilities Consultant  
Amber Klogjeri, Assistant Clerk  
Dean Maxwell, Mayor of Anacortes  
Kate Martin, Skagit Valley Herald  
Tom Molitor, Undersheriff  
Dale Ragan, Mount Vernon Councilmember  
Will Reichardt, Skagit County Sheriff  
Michael Rickert, Superior Court Judge  
Steve Sexton, Mayor of Burlington  
Bill Van Wieringen, Burlington Police Chief  
Keith Wagoner, Sedro-Woolley Councilmember  
Charlie Wend, Chief of Corrections  
Lisa Dally Wilson, Facilitator

#### **Introductions and Announcements (00:01:00)**

After introductions were made, Tim Holloran reminded the Council to invite appropriate staff to the tour of the SCORE facility on Wednesday, October 3, 2012.

#### **VOTE on Approving July 23, 2012 and August 6, 2012 Coordinating Council Notes (00:02:56)**

After Lisa Dally Wilson asked if there were any changes to be made to the notes from July and August, all seven members voted to approve and finalize the notes from July 23<sup>rd</sup> and August 6<sup>th</sup>. (Voting member David Svaren was absent).

Lisa asked for an update regarding the Coordinating Council website. Amber said that it would hopefully be ready for the Council and public within a week, but that the workload of the County's I.S. Department would need to be considered.

#### **Agenda Review and Expected Outcomes (00:04:44)**

Lisa reviewed the agenda and expected outcomes from the meeting.

#### **Project Updates (00:07:24)**

Marc informed the Council that the DLR Group was working on a feasibility study regarding the possible expansion/addition to the existing Skagit County Jail facility. He said that the report should be ready to present to the Council on October 11, 2012.

Marc discussed the changes made to handout #1. Updated figures from Gail Elias of Voorhis Associates, Inc. were used for future bed projections and he added a 3<sup>rd</sup> category, Total Project Cost, to create a framework for some preliminary budget discussions.

Will Reichardt discussed handout #2, 2011 Arresting and Budget Statistics. The graph depicted who was arresting (blue), where the crime had originally taken place (red), and who was paying for the person in jail (green). Bryan Harrison, Will Reichardt, and Eron Berg discussed the handout. Bryan thought that perhaps the green line was a good indicator of how to split up costs for the facility. Will thought that both the red and green lines were factors to consider when determining how to split facility costs.

Handout #3, 2011 Taxable Retail Sales in Skagit County, which was broken down by jurisdiction, was discussed. Marc clarified that this handout was provided in response to a request made by Steve Sexton and Bryan Harrison. The Council discussed La Conner and Concrete's taxes which were nearly the same. Concrete's sales tax was inflated in 2011 due to construction in the area.

#### **New Voorhis Information (00:21:42)**

Gail Elias joined the Council via Skype and discussed her updates to the Community Justice Center Master Plan.

(See PowerPoint for details: <http://www.skagitcounty.net/PSFCC/Documents/091312/Presentation.pdf>)

After taking into consideration the estimated population growth and incarceration trends, Gail recommended that the in-facility population be reduced in order to manage risk by expanding the functions previously assigned to the case expediter and boarding inmates at other locations. She also recommended that additional jail capacity be constructed based on the "best guess" scenario with a lowered incarceration rate, which would size the core for 600 beds, based on a 30 year planning window, and size the initial housing phase at 428 beds, based on a 15 year period.

#### **Q & A (00:59:52)**

Bryan wondered about the 26 years used to predict the incarceration rate of 5.34 per 100,000 residents. He noticed that the first 4 years were significantly different. He asked the Council if they should only consider the last 22 years. Gail reminded the Council that incarceration rates increase upon the opening of larger facilities. Charlie pointed out that in 1984 some laws changed and the municipalities in Skagit County closed their jails. Many of their inmates went to Skagit County's Jail.

Jill Boudreau asked Gail to discuss the conclusion that Skagit County was short by one judge. Gail Elias, Eron Berg and Michael Rickert discussed that finding. Gail said that information came from the State Court Administrator's Office which annually reviews caseloads across the state. They determined that, based upon the number of cases filed and unresolved after 9 months, Superior Court was short by 1.6 judges.

Eron asked if the judges ever considered where a person would be serving their time after sentencing. Michael informed the Council that the judges do not take into consideration where an individual will be serving time (either in the crowded Skagit County Jail or at the State Department of Corrections (DOC)). Michael clarified that sentences of 12 months plus a day, or more, serve their time at the DOC. Sentences of 12 months or lower are served at the Skagit County Jail.

Michael also said that the statistics provided by the State Court Administrator's Office could be misleading. He said that 5 cases could keep three judges busy for a year while one judge could work 800 cases a year by himself of a different nature. He said that the caseload study was often incorrect. Michael said that Skagit County does not need another judge. He pointed out that the study was also misleading many years ago when they needed another judge, but the caseload study said they did not.

Dean Maxwell asked Gail about the costs per bed in a new facility. Gail clarified that higher security, single bed cells cost more than a cell with two or three beds in it. Dean wondered about pricing a structure per square foot instead of per bed.

Tim and Gail briefly discussed concerns about possible upcoming state policy changes and if those were factored into the rates. Gail said that would be hard to quantify and were not.

Michael agreed with Gail's findings to build a facility to house 428 individuals with the room to expand to 600 in the future. The Council thanked Gail for briefing them on the updated plan.

The Council took a break at 12:50 p.m. and reconvened at 1:00 p.m. (01:20:47)

Marc informed the Council that he would provide new information by using the set of years Bryan suggested in order to see how the numbers and rates compared.

Charlie, Michael, and Will debated possible future changes to the state's prison system that could negatively impact the county's jail population.

#### **Declines and Warrants (01:27:39)**

Charlie presented a handout showing Outstanding Warrants in Skagit County. He said the Jail will not accept someone who has fewer than five warrants.

Charlie said handout #4 was an email from a Sedro-Woolley Police Officer, Lieutenant Tucker, and it was provided to the Council because it captured the problems faced by officers in the field. Charlie said that when the jail closes, it negatively impacts the entire judicial system including the Prosecuting Attorney's Office, the Judge, the Public Defender's Office, the Jail, and the Police Departments.

#### **Other Alternatives to Skagit County Incarceration (01:37:35)**

Handout #5 was a list showing alternatives to incarceration the Corrections Division utilizes which included Electronic Home Monitoring, illegal dumpsite abatement/Litter Crew, the One Day Offender Program, holding inmates in other jurisdictions, and also offering some specialty programs which included night, drug, and mental health court. Charlie said that ten Skagit County inmates are held in the Snohomish County Jail.

Handout #6 listed the functions of the jail and identified what the jail does on a daily basis. Charlie said that they constantly look at ways to manage risk.

Charlie and Steve discussed Skagit County's budget and the number of inmates sent to other facilities. Charlie said that court dates, the behavior of the inmate and the budget, needed to be considered before placing an inmate at another location. Will said that there were approximately 20 – 25 inmates who could serve time at another facility.

Steve said that Burlington utilized Okanogan for housing some inmates. He wondered if Skagit County's costs for housing inmates elsewhere were passed on to the Cities.

Bryan wondered about the possibility of sending 20 – 25 inmates to another location, and reinstating the court expeditor position. He thought that could work as a short-term solution to the problem. He said that the Cities could help pay for the County's expeditor position and the placement of 20 – 25 inmates elsewhere. He thought it would be a good test for the Council, and he wondered about comparing the costs of shipping out inmates to the costs of operating a new facility.

Will informed the Council that the situation in the jail was dangerous, which was why he moved ten inmates out and set the new cap in the north end at 115. He said that if 20 inmates were moved out, the jail would still be crowded and dangerous.

Tim informed the Council that Skagit County was working on their budget for 2013 and that the court expeditor position was being included. He voiced concerns about the term "solution". He said the jail was overcrowded. Charlie sees risk every day. Short term measures might sound good but they are not the answer. Tim said that in 2009, when the jail sent ten inmates to another location, they went over their budget by half a million dollars. Short term measures could be explored, but in the end the County has an overcrowded and dangerous situation to manage. He said the Jail does not meet standards, and if the role was reversed and the Cities were running the facility, they would be just as concerned as the County because every day the County faces huge liability.

Bonnie reminded the Council of the hidden costs associated with sending inmates to other places (court costs and transportation costs). She also said that the overcrowded jail has seen an increase in the number of inmate assaults. The Cities and County are paying higher medical bills.

Charlie shared that he attended a conference/training recently and he received a document to review regarding jail standards. It is a lengthy document and he has to figure out how to achieve those standards. He said that the problem was urgent and each day brings Skagit County closer to a horrendous event that could cost millions of dollars (which could have gone towards a safer facility).

#### **Further Discussion (02:00:35)**

Lisa gave the Council a handout which listed the questions verbally spoken by Susan Musselman during her presentation on August 6, 2012. Lisa said that she hoped that the Cities would be able to answer the questions soon.

Bryan said that the size, cost of the facility and operations, and how to pay for it needed to be determined. He said that the Cities are faced with other costs that impact their budget including flood control, library funding, and the recently increased EMS Levy.

Marc said that the Council would be looking at capital and operational costs soon.

The Coordinating Council process was discussed. The Cities appreciated moving forward together. Michael Rickert wanted to make sure that the group stayed focused and would agree to make decisions soon.

The Council asked that costs be shown per square foot as well as per bed.

Dean said that he was looking forward to putting costs into perspective so that they could explore financing options. He believed that sales tax should be considered since it would capture funds from individuals living outside Skagit County as well.

Michael and Steve compared the different kinds of risks between a flood event and a large crime incident. Tim said that all issues being discussed related to public safety: the jail, flood protection, and the EMS Levy. Tim said that public safety is expensive. Bryan encouraged the Council to approach public safety in its entirety.

**Next Steps (02:16:08)**

Lisa discussed what to expect at the next meeting.

The meeting ended at 2:00 p.m.

Next meeting: Thursday, October 11, 2012, Skagit County Commissioners Office, 1800 Continental Place, Mount Vernon.

*Notes finalized and approved October 11, 2012*