

# Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force: Steering Committee

Meeting Summary for February 3, 2022

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## 1. Call to Order

Committee Chair Barry Buchanan called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m. The meeting was held via remote-only Zoom Webinar.

Members Present: Barry Buchanan, Caleb Erickson, Arlene Feld, Stephen Gockley, Dan Hammill, Raylene King, Mike Parker, Perry Mowery, Tyler Schroeder

Members Absent: Jack Hovenier

## 2. [Update on Justice Project and Stakeholder Advisory Committee \(01:10\)](#)

Buchanan gave a summary of the first meeting of the Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC). He said that the SAC members also were interested in working in smaller groups, such as the sub-committee structure of the Task Force. He brought up the idea of integrating SAC members into the existing IPRTF subcommittees and asked what the other committee members thought of this idea.

Feld asked if IPRTF Committee Chairs were also SAC members. It was determined that most if not all are.

Hammill asked about the logistics of the plan. Buchanan said that there would be a portion of each sub-committee meeting set aside for SAC business. SAC members would participate in that agenda item, but not other agenda items for that meeting. This structure would start before the next SAC meeting.

Members further discussed the possibility of adding in SAC members and SAC agenda items in the IPRTF committee meetings. They also talked about other ways they could integrate the work. Ideas and topics discussed included:

- Having IPRTF Committee chairs meet with key SAC members one on one or in small groups rather than combining the meetings.
- Holding a special meeting co-facilitated with both groups in order to transfer knowledge from IPRTF members to SAC members.
- Inviting SAC members to IPRTF joint committee meetings or all IPRTF meetings.
- The feasibility of the having a relatively short time slot for SAC agenda items considering the content that needs to be covered.
- The urgency of the current public safety situation and the need for more SAC meetings.
- The importance of public involvement in any meetings that SAC members participate in.
- Extending the meeting time for already scheduled IPRTF meetings in order to accommodate SAC-related agenda items instead of scheduling a special meeting.
- The need to put IPRTF information into a digestible format or creating a reference document before presenting to SAC members.

Buchanan suggested that he work with staff, consultants, and the planning team to develop a work plan and send it out to the other committee members

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King asked about liabilities involved if the SAC process doesn't work and a measure for a new jail fails again. She wondered if the public has been communicated with as far as what will happen if that happens. Buchanan replied that they have not yet, but he agrees it is important and expects it to come up at the facilities portion of their meetings.

### 3. [State Legislative Session \(36:57\)](#)

Hammill gave an update on State legislation. He said that he is unaware of where the bills modifying last year's HB1310 are at. He emphasized that it is essential for this legislation to be fixed and gave examples of dangerous situations that aren't being responded to currently.

King agreed that the State legislation is causing major problems and that officers don't want to open themselves up to liability considering that they know that they are not going to be able to do anything with certain individuals in the end anyway.

Gockley asked Buchanan to give a report on his recent work with Executive Sidhu, Representative Alicia Rule, and the Department of Corrections (DOC). Buchanan explained that he had gotten a call from Representative Rule letting him know that there was some money available through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) for behavioral health and asking him to put together a capital proposal. Working with others, he submitted a proposal to Executive Sidhu regarding an urgent care center. The deadline for the request was very tight. Buchanan asked Schroeder to give an update about what happened with the proposal after that. Schroeder said that the proposal, which was for about \$2.2 million, was sent to Representatives Rule and Shewmake. The proposal included capital funds and operational funds to possibly remodel the older crisis center at the Alternative Work Center, giving a space for the Ground-Level Response and Coordinated Engagement program (GRACE), the Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion program (LEAD), and some crisis responders to work out of.

Feld asked if there were any funds requested for urgent care. Schroeder replied that they had conversations about that, but the plans were not fully developed enough to submit a capital proposal. Buchanan expanded on that, saying that this would work towards the idea of an urgent care center for triaging behavioral health patients. He continued on the topic, saying that these funds demonstrate that the County is very serious about this. Feld emphasized how much need there was for a physical place for folks to be triaged and said that she was disappointed. Schroeder said that they would need to create a firmer vision and plan for the urgent care center in order to put in a large capital request. He further stated that this smaller proposal is still a step in the right direction.

Parker added that there is a need for housing that relates to the need for the urgent care facility. He said that people need a place to go after there is an intervention at a time of crisis. He encouraged members to think about "divert to where" when creating proposals such as these.

Feld and other committee members continued to discuss the needs of the County, including urgent care, improvements to existing buildings, future opportunities to fulfill needs on both behavioral health and corrections, the reasoning behind not doing a large capital request at this time, and disappointment in legislators for giving such a short turnaround for this proposal.

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Parker suggested that the IPRTF might want to start looking at forming a sub-group that would be responsible for planning an urgent care center and doing a parallel needs assessment in conjunction with the SAC. Buchanan said that it had also been on his mind and he thought that they might be able to shift the work of the Crisis Stabilization Facility committee to start planning for an urgent care center. Mowery described what other counties have in place and said he would like to be involved in what our county would need.

Erickson brought up the need to also focus on employment and food needs. He said that many people in our community are not having their basic needs met and that he has ideas of some ways that services addressing food and employment can be incorporated.

Feld said that it is essential to look for examples from across the country to find models of what will work for Whatcom County. She also emphasized that all of these services are interconnected.

#### **4. Rules of procedure for committees**

This item was not discussed.

#### **5. [IPR Task Force Communications \(1:10:28\)](#)**

Jill Nixon, Legislative Coordinator, provided committee members with a list of campaign topics generated by the committees. She asked committee members for guidance on how to move forward in selecting topics. Committee members discussed which items they wanted included from the list as well as broadly the categories of topics that should be represented. Nixon suggested that it may be best to pass the full list on to the chosen consultant once they are selected and discuss with them as part of their first meeting. Committee members agreed. Parker spoke to the goals he wanted achieved from whatever topics are chosen, such as education, public involvement, and diversity of voices.

#### **6. [Items for the next Task Force Agenda \(1:20:35\)](#)**

Committee members and Nixon discussed topics for the next full task force including a SAC update, confirmation of members' 2022 committee sign ups, discussion about transferring GRACE and LEAD to the Health Department, discussion of how we can take advantage of the County GARE membership, and a legislative update possibly presented by Representative Rule. Gockley requested that committee members be able to access the GARE member portal and e-mail lists.

#### **7. Other Business**

There was no other business.

#### **8. Public Comment**

There were no public comments.

#### **9. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 12:29 P.M.