

Whatcom County Council Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee 2018 Draft Work Plan: Improving Criminal Justice in Whatcom County

The Whatcom County Council Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee formed in January, 2018. \$100,000 has been budgeted in 2018 for this committee's work. One of our first orders of business is to hear from the public regarding their opinions on our criminal justice system, how to make improvements and what ideas they may have. We will anchor our work in the 2016 Whatcom County Statement of Principles (Resolution 2016-008) and in the ongoing work of the Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force.

Goals:

- A well-integrated, effective and affordable criminal justice system that keeps our community safe.
- Hear from the public about their thoughts, concerns and ideas for improved criminal justice in Whatcom County. It should be noted that this is an iterative process: the Whatcom County Council wants to hear from the public and what we hear will inform our work moving forward.
- Compile those ideas.
- Share what we've heard on our website.
- Then, incorporating the Statement of Principles on Incarceration Prevention, Criminal Justice, and Jail Planning (2016-008), we will consider a range of programs and new or renovated capital facilities that will meet our needs into the future.
- Continue to support and integrate the work of the Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force.
- A comprehensive needs assessment to determine who can be successfully diverted from jail, who can be treated for behavioral health and/or substance abuse health problems and who should be in jail.
- Develop an overall capital plan for criminal justice. This may include a new sheriff's office, a renovated or new jail, the triage center, a sobering center and other evidence-based alternatives that reduce costs while making our community safer.
- As part of that plan, analyze three or more reasonable alternatives for a renovated or new jail, including long-range operational costs associated with any new or existing facility.
- Determine our overall budget.
- Move forward.

Primary phases of work:

- Countywide outreach and community input from Whatcom county citizens
- Analysis of provider capacity and needs assessment
- Capital and operational planning for our criminal justice system with guidance and input from the community and integrated with the work and recommendations of the Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force.

1. Community input and outreach from Whatcom County citizens

Phase one of the work plan involves hosting a listening tour with the goal of Whatcom County officials hearing from citizens in every corner of Whatcom County. We will hold public meetings in Lynden, Blaine, Ferndale, east Whatcom County, Sudden Valley, Bellingham and Lummi Nation. This committee will also be available for invitations from groups of citizens to hear from them.

Schedule for Listening Sessions		
Date	Location	Notes
April 3	Whatcom Library, Deming	6-8 PM
April 17	Whatcom Library, Lynden	7-9 PM
May 1	County Council Chambers	7-9 PM
May 15	Sudden Valley Dance Barn	7-9 PM
May 29	Whatcom Library, Ferndale	7-9 PM
	Fairhaven Library	
June 26	East Whatcom County Resource Regional Center	7-9 PM
	Lummi Nation	
Other Groups/Opportunities for Public Input		
Rotary Clubs		
Churches		
Neighborhood Associations		
Community groups & political meetings		
Door to door visits		

Draft Survey

Survey will be drafted to receive community feedback about criminal justice reform and the jail. This survey will be used as an online tool on the county's website and at the listening sessions.

Outreach plan

To be successful, we need to get the word out to citizens to attend the public meetings. Marketing and outreach efforts will include

- Whatcom County Website
- Email lists the county uses for announcing public events
- Posters
- Newspaper announcements
- Public Service Announcements on local radio

DRAFT Agenda for Public Meetings and Listening Sessions

1. Brief updates on where the county is at and the state of criminal justice reform.
2. Public input.
3. Information and prompts for the public at the meetings. Here are a few draft questions to prompt participants in the listening sessions:
 - What did you hear from people about why they voted yes or no?
 - What were your concerns about the previous jail ballot measures?
 - What would you like to see the county do differently?
 - Moving forward, what do you want the county to do or be focusing on?
 - What is a reasonable amount of money to spend?
 - Would you support a new property tax or a sales tax for a jail?
 - What kind of information do you want to hear going forward?
 - What questions do you have for the county at this point?
 - What do you believe the jail should be used for in our community?
 - What are the investments you would like to see the County make?

Providing Public Feedback:

We will compile and share the survey results. All the comments will be shared on the county website.

2. Phase Two: Needs assessment and feasibility studies

This should answer the question: what do we want to use the jail for? Who should be in jail? Once we answer that we can answer the question of jail size into the future. This must be informed by the work of the Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force and must work closely with them.

3. Phase Three: Jail Planning

Jail planning with guidance and input from the community and with the work and reports of the Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force.