



Law and Justice Council of Thurston County  
Meeting Minutes  
Thursday, April 16, 2020  
4:30 pm – 6:00 pm

Welcome and Introductions:

The Council Meeting was conducted over Zoom for Council members, and over the phone via conference call for members of the public to call in. Public Defense Director Patrick O'Connor called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM. Welcome and introductions were made and an electronic sign in sheet is on record.

The minutes from the January 23, 2020 meeting were approved.

COVID-19 Council Member Update

Patrick O'Connor lead a discussion about changes and preparations happening at the County level due to COVID-19. The Supreme Court published a series of emergency orders, directives, guidance and processes and procedures were put in place internally as a result of that. There is a suspension of jury trials. The Public Defense Department and the Prosecutors Office are working to reduce jail populations and have been successful to reduce it by 30%. There are many challenges ahead but there has been joint effort to manage the justice system the best we can given current circumstances. Judge Schaller explained that there are several challenges ahead for resuming court, the size of the courtrooms and social distancing and effects related to jury deliberations and trials.

Other council members were given the opportunity to provide an update. The Olympia Police Department has also seen a reduction in jail numbers using discretion in arrests and trying to refer as much as possible. The City of Tumwater has noticed an uptick in calls from concerned constituents, has seen an increase of tagging of property, mail theft and domestic violence calls. The Olympia Police Department has also seen an increase in domestic violence calls. Thurston County Prosecutor Jon Tunheim explained that the domestic violence related calls were not significantly higher than last years numbers, but as restrictions start to ease there may be more reports of child abuse. There has also been an uptick in shelter care hearings. The City of Olympia has been in daily discussions, looking into what other courts are doing nationally to be in the best position to resume operations.

Department of Social and Health Services Director Schelli Slaughter expressed her encouragement seeing reductions in cases in Thurston County but explained that we need to be prepared for a not return as normal business plan. She expects this to last for a year or more, and her Department is working towards ensuring proper personal protection equipment is provided, screening is in place and further guidance from the County's health officer is communicated well.

Commissioner Menser and County Manager Ramiro Chavez both expressed they were proud of the work the justice teams are doing in response to COVID-19. County Manager Ramiro Chavez also explained that the County is still trying to put our hands around the impacts in 2020 and beyond. Expecting to see those impacts coming in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter primarily from the general fund, sales and property tax.

### Regional Jail Group Discussion

Commissioner Menser provided an update regarding the idea around a regional jail. He explained that he attended a stakeholder meeting with the County and other officials in Tumwater and Lacey. All expressed interest and are currently working on a structure to interview other stakeholders to develop a proposal with the hopes of a plan. The flex unit in the jail was put on pause and based upon financial considerations it is no longer responsible to proceed. Another reason why the regional jail makes sense.

### Lead Grant Update

Thurston County Prosecutor Jon Tunheim provided an update regarding the County's application for an Arrest and Jail Alternatives Law Enforcement grant with the Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) National Support Bureau. He explained that there was a meeting yesterday with the state's Health Care Authority and there was feedback provided from the application that needs to be addressed. County stakeholders will reconvene to prepare a response to the Bureau.

### LFO Update:

Public Defense Director Patrick O'Connor discussed the planning and work that had been done to prepare for the Legal Financial Obligation (LFO) day for Thurston County. It was originally planned for June but will be postponed for when it is safe to do so.

With no further business the meeting was adjourned at 5:39 pm.

**Please Note: All minutes & materials from the Law and Justice Council meetings can be found online. Go to [www.co.thurston.wa.us](http://www.co.thurston.wa.us) at top of page, click on commissioners and on left hand side, scroll down and click on Law and Justice Council.**