



Law and Justice Council of Thurston County  
Meeting Minutes  
Thursday, July 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 April 16, 2020 meeting were approved.

Presentation from Washington Supreme Court Justice Steven C. González

Patrick O'Connor introduced Supreme Court Justice Steven C. González as a starting point of conversation of the State Supreme Courts important position piece. Justice González started his discussion, touching on a statement in the second paragraph of the letter, "the injustices faced by black Americans are not relics of the past. We continue to see racialized policing and the overrepresentation of black Americans in every stage of our criminal and juvenile justice systems. Our institutions remain affected by the vestiges of slavery: Jim Crow laws that were never dismantled and racist court decisions that were never disavowed."

Justice González then spoke about the Supreme Court's recent decision to vacate a 1916 (State vs. Alec Towessnute) ruling that allowed a prosecutor to bring criminal charges against a tribal fisherman as racist and unjust. He talked about how the courts have been a part of such strife and mistrust, and how it's said that in order to form a perfect union we secure the blessings of welfare. We put justice in front of tranquility, this is not an accident, without justice there is less to defend. We are a part of the problem, whether intended or not.

Justice González continued his discussion stating that it is important to be involved in civics education for our kids, and how they are shortchanged. They are not trusted with the truth of who they were. Not meaning removing statues, or symbols, but to understand what these people are with flaws and their strengths. Justice González ended his discussion by acknowledging our past and thinking carefully about our future. He then opened discussion to the rest of the council.

The Council discussed issues such as release decisions, bail, bail reform, the bail industry and politics involved, balancing free speech, racism and hate speech. The Council thanked Justice González for his time.

Council Discussion on Next Steps – Group Discussion.

Patrick O'Connor started a discussion regarding the council's desire on next steps regarding these issues. Jon Tunheim stated that we have great diversity and perspective, public and private, policy is all here. He explained that it might be worth looking at a subcommittee to create a workplan for this. Steve Tilley explained that he would like to be a part of that group, and that Mary Ann O'Gara may be of help.

There was more discussion about having the appropriate forum and where it needs to sit, it was noted that everyone on the Council is white, how do we get people with lived experience and how do we structure that. Chief Jelick discussed a series of forums he participated in that

were held from different communities to bring those voices to the room. Patrick O'Connor explained that he spoke with the County manager who was a member of cultural rights, possibly look to a refreshed council with community groups for an opportunity to address the Law and Justice Council. Will send out email for volunteers and set a meeting.

#### COVID-19 Council Member Update

Members of the Council provided updates, jury trials were suspended through July 6<sup>th</sup>. Court was prepared, but no trials as of yet because they have been resolved short of trial. Very few courts have been ready, being held on bail they can't make.

Patrick O'Connor stated that a member of the public was trying to call in and be heard, but there was technical difficulty. He will follow up with that person to get this corrected.

With no further business the meeting was adjourned at 5:55 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.**