

Okaloosa County Public Safety Coordinating Council
Regular Meeting
Thursday February 8, 2024

Present:

Commissioner Paul Mixon
Nolan Weeks, Chief Corrections Officer
April McDaniel, Major of Corrections
Judge Jonathan Schlechter, County Judge
Craig Coffey, Deputy County Administrator – Operations
Andrea Oliver, Accreditation Lieutenant, Corrections
Larry McFarland, Bridgeway Center, Inc.
Susan Priddy, Health Services Administrator
Mellony Kuester, Programs and Reentry Coordinator
Itza Andrade, Programs and Reentry Coordinator
Matt Harrison, Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office
Maria Everton, Clerk to Board of County Commissioners
Samantha Cutsinger, Legislative Aide
Kelli Huckabee, Pre-Trial Services

Location:

Okaloosa County Courthouse Annex, Jury Assembly Room, Fort Walton Beach, Florida

Minutes prepared by Maria Everton

Commissioner Mixon called the meeting to order at 12:07 p.m.

1. Approval Minutes

The December 5, 2023 minutes were approved as presented by the majority.

2. Old Business

a. Homeless Clothing and Blanket Drive – Lt. Andrea Oliver

Lt. Oliver said it was great and was conducted at One Hopeful Place.

b. Mental Health Task Force – ~~Tricia Fagan~~ Susan Priddy

Ms. Priddy said she coordinated with Janice George and some other community players to identify gaps in services. The first meeting was successful. She noted that some changes may be needed in the County's Transportation Plan. A second Mental Health Task Force meeting is in the works.

Larry McFarland stated he received a phone call from Jacqueline Beck, Executive Director of Behavioral Health, Fort Walton Beach Medical Center, regarding a meeting about the Baker Act and requested some clarification. Chief Weeks said it was very clear about what was being asked and that Ms. Beck is welcome to call.

Judge Schlechter said one issue from that meeting was getting a more recognizable order to use for inmates when a separate ex-parte order has been entered. The new order should be finalized soon.

3. Jail Population/Statistical Report: Q & A

Chief Weeks said the jail population is over 700 and available bedding is 594. The jail is booking more than releasing.

4. Inmate Programs Update – Itza Andrade and Mellony Kuester

Ms. Kuester said a couple of new programs have been added to the jail. Every other Monday, Shelter House comes in for domestic violence classes. Currently there are ten (10) individuals attending. Other organizations include Emerald Coast Life Center, Celebrate Recovery, Alcohol Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous.

There are a total of six (6) in-jail programs with a total of 219 participants and approximately 55 individuals on the waitlist. Career Source will be teaching a resume class on Feb 23, 2024 for inmates soon to be released. Classes in the works include yoga, trauma art, ServSafe, and anger management.

Ms. Kuester continued by stating that assistance with official forms was conducted (tax forms, birth certificates, DD-214, outside application program forms, social security cards, etc.).

Outside programs include Project Hope, Phoenix House, Haven House, Oxford House, Exodus Ministries, Bridgeway, and others.

Commissioner Mixon made note that the topics presented today are for informational purposes and nothing needing decision. He then asked what the delay was with the ServSafe program. Ms. Kuester replied by stating that the issue was with locating a proctor to administer the test. Discussion ensued.

5. Pre-Trial Information – Kelli Huckabee

Ms. Huckabee said the GPS electronic monitoring numbers continue to rise. 900 to 1,000 individuals are currently being supervised, including mental health cases.

6. New Business

a. Current staffing and retention update – Lt. Andrea Oliver

Lt. Oliver said there are currently six (6) open positions. Three (3) individuals are being sent to the EOT Program for Florida certification (partnered with the Okaloosa County Sheriff’s Office). A career fair will be held in March 2024 and a conference at George Stone this weekend.

b. Jail management system update – Major April McDaniel

Maj. McDaniel said a decision was made regarding the jail management system to move to ProPhoenix. A teleconference was held last week regarding the proposal and the advancement of the agreement. A potential go-live time frame of early summer 2024 is anticipated.

c. Okaloosa County Transportation Plan Meeting – Chief Nolan Weeks

Chief Weeks said multiple meetings were held in relation to the transportation plan. There have been issues with Fort Walton Beach Medical Center with not accepting the jail’s Baker Act individuals. Research into Florida Statutes revealed that the transportation plan was not in compliance. Janice George has made the necessary changes to bring the plan into compliance.

Chief Weeks said through research, he became aware that other Florida County Public Safety Coordinating Councils develop their transportation plans. He believes an entity who is not involved should create the transportation plan, which should minimize the risk/responsibility on the jail and foster transparency. Commissioner Mixon advised the Council that an issue may arise involving a Sunshine Law conflict. Discussion ensued.

7. Additional Comments

Craig Coffey – Jail site committee/selection committee
Chief Nolan Weeks – Inmate success story
Larry McFarland – One Hopeful Place participation fee

8. Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Council, the meeting was adjourned at 12:36 p.m.