

RESOLUTION NO. 2016-09

A RESOLUTION ADOPTING A STATEMENT OF INCARCERATION PREVENTION, CRIMINAL JUSTICE, AND JAIL PLANNING PRINCIPLES FOR WHATCOM COUNTY'S CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SYSTEMS

WHEREAS, Whatcom County, the City of Bellingham, and its other municipalities and Tribes desire to coordinate, contribute, and cooperate in enhancing public safety, and in particular our communities' criminal justice and behavioral health systems; and

WHEREAS, the Whatcom County Executive has recently asked for input and leadership by the County Council and other legislative bodies to guide future jail planning, and has sought constructive engagement with other elected officials throughout the county; and

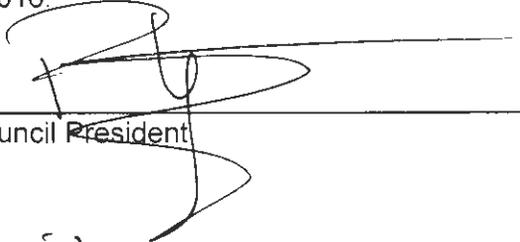
WHEREAS, all parties believe there is a need for an improved County jail, and that voters will approve a proposal that addresses the communities' full range of needs and values.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Bellingham City Council adopts the attached Statement of Incarceration Prevention, Criminal Justice, and Jail Planning Principles.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that due to the ever escalating costs of such investments, time is of the essence for drafting a new collaborative proposal to be put before the voters as soon as feasible.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that the City of Bellingham supports this Statement of Incarceration Prevention, Criminal Justice, and Jail Planning Principles that make clear how incarceration prevention, criminal justice, and jail planning need to proceed.

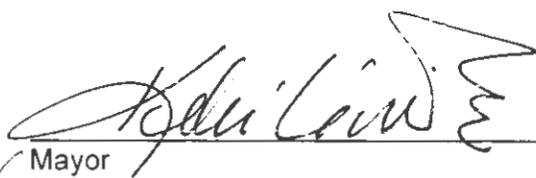
PASSED by the Council this 11th day of April, 2016.



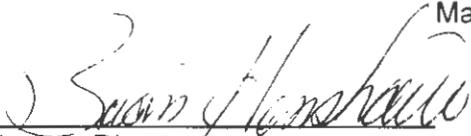
Council President

APPROVED by me this 15th day of April, 2016.

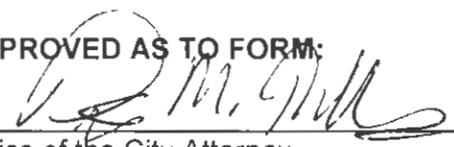
City of Bellingham
City Attorney
210 Lottie Street
Bellingham, Washington 98225
360-778-8270



Mayor

ATTEST: 

Finance Director

APPROVED AS TO FORM:


Office of the City Attorney

City of Bellingham
City Attorney
210 Lottie Street
Bellingham, Washington 98225
360-778-8270

Statement of Principles on Incarceration Prevention, Criminal Justice, and Jail Planning

The Bellingham City Council would like to establish guiding principles for incarceration prevention, criminal justice, and jail planning similar to those already adopted by the Whatcom County Council, and requests the participation of the Lummi Nation, Nooksack Tribe, and all the Cities of Whatcom County.

We believe our communities are united in our commitment to public safety, justice, fiscal responsibility, harm reduction, healing, and prevention as public priorities.

While there is a national discussion on incarceration and behavioral health, we see an opportunity to improve our criminal justice system and rebuild our jail. We will strive for conditions where the cycle of incarceration is broken rather than perpetuated.

We are fortunate that the process of thorough analysis is underway, with the creation of the Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force. Subcommittees of the Task Force are focusing their efforts on creation of a Crisis Triage Facility, Behavioral Health Programs, and Criminal Justice System procedure and process reforms.

Therefore, in order to guide the public process and administrative plans and actions, we do hereby endorse the following set of Incarceration Prevention, Criminal Justice, and Jail Planning Principles:

1. The people of unincorporated Whatcom County, the Lummi Nation, the Nooksack Tribe, and the Cities are best served by a shared jail facility or a combination of shared facilities, and by a coordinated and integrated response to behavioral health issues that can help alleviate the use of the criminal justice system.
2. The following are inextricably linked: responsible stewardship of public funds, ensuring public safety, and providing adequate countywide behavioral health services.
3. In recognition of the importance of prevention, treatment, re-entry and jail alternatives, the County Council established the Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force (IPRTF). The IPRTF's specific recommendations should influence the direction of our future crisis triage facility, our jail facility, pre-booking and pre-trial diversions, jail alternatives, and behavioral health programming.
4. We support funding towards community-based preventive services. We need post-release support to maximize successful re-entry and minimize recidivism. These actions now can hold down recurring criminal justice costs in the future.
5. We support construction and operation of an enlarged triage facility, implementation of criminal justice process reforms, and creation of relevant behavioral health programs regardless of the outcome of jail proposals.
6. City of Bellingham departments will provide data to decision-makers and the public, including relevant demographic, statistical, and jail usage information. The Bellingham City Council endorses Whatcom County Resolution 2015-042, calling for spreadsheet models for jail utilization, jail financing, and jail size to be made available to the public for examination and incorporated into decision-making.
7. The size of jail facilities should be based on a comprehensive analysis of local criminal justice policy. While accurate measures of current incarceration rates adjusted for future population growth are important, we also must consider national, state, and local trends towards improvements in prevention, alternatives, behavioral health, and re-entry support.
8. We support the location of any new jail facility where it can work best for all of our partners, the

public, and related businesses (attorneys, bail bonds, etc.). We need to examine the facts behind the decision to locate the jail in Ferndale and discuss whether alternatives, such as a downtown Bellingham option, should be pursued.

9. We consider the Irongate minimum security facility as a valuable piece of the criminal justice continuum. This facility could be retained for certain existing jail populations and programs, or expanded to include a crisis triage facility, a re-entry support facility, a behavioral health facility, or medical facility. Final decisions on the location of this facility should be informed by the ongoing work of the IPRTF.
10. We support the apportionment of construction and operating costs separately and fairly among jail users based on actual use or best estimates of actual future use.
11. We will work with Prosecutor's Offices, Bellingham Municipal Court, the District Court, Superior Court, and Lummi Tribal Court leadership on bail setting practices and probation procedures, as well as broader criminal justice issues that affect the size of the jail population but which are not under County or City legislative control.
12. We request that the County issue an RFP for a Criminal Justice Planner. While the work of our IPRTF and community groups remains valid and vital, it is essential to hire a professional Criminal Justice Planner to evaluate the additional aspects of our system and our jail needs. Considerations such as financial commitments, jail location and size, diversion programs, and bail and prosecution reforms must be examined and reported on by an established, impartial expert.
13. We recognize the need to provide a safer, more secure, and healthier environment for those who work, visit, and are incarcerated within the jail; therefore, we will work to have a funding proposal on the ballot with a goal of no later than November 2017.