



## BELLINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

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June 20, 2017

Whatcom County Council

311 Grand Avenue, #105

Bellingham, WA 98225

Dear County Council Members & County Executive Louws,

At the June 19, 2017, meeting of the Bellingham City Council, I was directed as the President to convey the City Council's areas of concern regarding the County's jail plan, generally and as they relate to the JFFUA. Broadly speaking, the following were discussed:

- Location away from the Courthouse
- Determination of Size
- Financial Commitments to Alternatives
- Booking and Holding Facility
- Local Housing of Pre-Trial Inmates

It remains the City's desire to participate in a unified Jail facility, and to reach agreement on the financing and use of the Jail.

For the record, the City Council would like to register our continued dissent and disagreement with the decision to locate the New Jail at some distance from the County Courthouse. In our view, this incurs costs and operational burdens for the City and for members of our community, including families of the incarcerated persons.

The Bellingham City Council believes that key decisions and agreements are being asked of all parties, including the County Council, prior to understanding and committing to identified programs, policies, and practices that will improve the criminal justice system, social services, and reduce incarceration and recidivism. Approval of the jail agreement in isolation of these elements is, for a majority of City Council members, difficult. For us, it is difficult to understand, or agree to, a jail of any particular size. Therefore, the Bellingham City Council makes the following requests of the Whatcom County Council:

**A.** To address size, timing, and alternatives to incarceration, the size of the jail should not yet be identified in the JFFUA. Instead, the County Council should determine the size of the new jail:

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- 1) After the County Council fully considers the Phase III report from the Whatcom County Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force, which will include specific operational plans and budgets for implementing crisis intervention, triage, and incarceration prevention and reduction programs, and the VERA Institute report; and
- 2) After the County Council identifies preferred incarceration and recidivism reduction recommendations and budgets resources to implement the preferred recommendations.

**B.** To address concerns regarding the sally port and holding space, the City Council requests modification of the JFFUA to include a statement that the construction of a holding space and sally port should include a cost estimate, design, and operational plan that will allow all Parties to utilize the holding space for booking. This design consideration should be a priority for the County and Cities Finance and Operations Advisory Board.

The City Council would like to reinforce the Mayor's request to implement practices and procedures for equal treatment of pre-trial inmates as soon as possible, based on classification rather than jurisdiction. We thank the Sheriff, who has already been taking steps to make this happen.

We appreciate that these requests, if agreement is reached, will require revisions to various provisions in the current JFFUA and would require approval by the cities that have already approved the agreement.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Lilliquist", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Michael Lilliquist, President  
Bellingham City Council