

Missoula City Council Public Safety and Health Committee Minutes

December 15, 2021

11:20 AM

ZOOM Webinar

Members present: Stacie Anderson (chair), John P. Contos, Heather Harp, Jordan Hess, Gwen Jones, Julie Merritt, Jesse Ramos, Amber Sherrill, Sandra Vasecka, Bryan von Lossberg, Heidi West

Members absent: Mirtha Becerra

1. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

1.2 Approval of the Minutes for December 1, 2021

Approved as submitted

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

None

3. COMMITTEE BUSINESS

3.1 Referral-Community Justice Department Update

Julie Merritt introduced Community Justice Department presentation. Jenny Daniels spoke regarding the change in title from Relationship Violence Services. They merged with the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council. She is now the Justice Initiatives Manager. The presentation is on the Safety and Justice Challenge.

Chantelle Gaynor is the Director. Jenny is Justice Initiative Manager. She coordinates the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council which includes Just Response and Safety and Justice Challenge.

In 2019, they created an intercept map where there are several areas where they can support people that are coming out of jail or prevent people to go to jail to begin with. They are collaborating with behavioral health groups and stakeholders.

Quinn Ziegler talked about jail population monitoring. It is a barometer of justice system health. 2020 and 2021 highlighted population changes in the jail. There is a shift towards felony level defendants. There was a drop in the number of folks going into the jail. Domestic violence has remained stable. The volume of warrant and violations fell significantly. The jail population stayed the same. The reason is because the decrease in bookings was offset by the number of days remained in jail. The pandemic was tough on the courts and the backlog was a factor to consider. In 2022, they want to dive deeper into racial and ethnic disparities. They want to build capacity to leverage case management software and analytics.

Heather Harp asked Quinn Ziegler about impoverished citizens, and there is no data to support or deny that. Is there capacity to add that question to the survey when that work is happening? Quinn said they are working on more demographic profiles.

Julie Merritt wanted to comment on the average length of stay matrix and was questioning that matrix being misleading.

Chelsea Whitman, Safety and Justice Challenge Coordinator, spoke on the Criminal Justice Stakeholders. There other stakeholders than are on the slide. There are twelve SJC strategies as listed on the slide. All of the strategies are interconnected. They are looking at small improvements that can be made now and can accumulate in the future.

The Community Supported Reentry Program was given by Kim White, who is the Community Supported Reentry Program Coordinator. It was identified as a strategy to address some of the areas identified as a need in the community. It is an opportunity to address the pretrial population and the racial and ethnic disparities. It is run by the Missoula County Sherriff's office. It also pays particular attention to the Native American adult population. The goal is to release them in the community and give them access to resources in the community prior to their sentencing. They are expanding their program by adding another individual to their team, and moving to a new building. This is a brand new program, and this will continue to evolve.

Sandra Vasecka and Heather Harp said they are happy about the Community Supported Reentry Program.

Chelsea Whitman talked about the strategies.

Strategy #2 is to improve court reminders. They are using the Office of the Public Defender which represents 90% of defendants. They have a new case management system includes a court reminder system. They have also invested in providing cell phones to OPD so they can provide cell phones and monthly use plans to defendants.

Strategy #3 is a dully-licensed evaluation for probation and parole. It proves clients with community resources and alleviate probation and parole officers' workload.

Strategy #4 is to implement public safety assessment. This is a pre-trial screening assessment. They want to make it an improved process to use.

Strategy #5 is to address conditions of release relative to risk level. They will take the PSA score and use it in according to Montana's decision-making framework.

Strategy #6 is a pretrial substance testing. This examines the best use of resources. It affects the expense of the pre-trial process.

Strategy #7 is to reduce case backlog. They have been incredibly busy in the justice system. There is COVID-related backlog. They are examining barriers to disposition.

Strategy #8 is improving the court calendaring process. The rate and speed of processing has been relative to office capacity. There are agencies stepping up and shifting staffing.

Strategy #9 is to encourage remote hearing attendance. This is a great thing that resulted in the pandemic. All courts developed a robust system for remote appearances and have continued that. They are providing phones and laptops to several agencies in Missoula.

Strategy #10 is to have a Native American Peer Support Specialist. Misty Haran was hired to work specifically with Native Americans and build relationships with them.

Strategy #11 is the race and ethnicity dashboard. It is on the Missoula County Website, and it is useful to identify disparities. Other dashboards may be developed.

Strategy #12 is ensuring equitable criminal justice policies. Jamar Galbreath is the JEDI Coordinator.

There will be a collaborative effort for the Missoula City Attorney's Office and Municipal Court. There is a prosecution-led traffic diversion court.

Julie Merritt talked about listing the stakeholders. She wants them to add victims and victim advocates to the stakeholders list.

Gwen Jones thanked the committee and said the community is very supportive of this.

Heather Harp appreciates the innovative approach to criminal justice.

Information only

4. ADJOURNMENT

Adjourned