
Ashland County

Criminal Justice Coordinating Council

January 7, 2021

Meeting Minutes

Present

Anne Whiting, Wellness and Recovery Court Coordinator
David Meany, Ashland County District Attorney
Chief Bill Hagston, City of Ashland Police
Pat Kinney, Ashland County Board Member
Laura Nagro, Ashland County Board Member
Clark Schroeder, Ashland County Administrator
William Appleton, Public Defender-Local Attorney Manager
Mackenzie Schemenauer, WI DOC-Probation & Parole Agent
Heidi Ungrodt, UW-Extension Educator
Deputy Chris Grubisic, Diversion Program Officer
Attorney Kenneth Ryder, President of Bayfield & Ashland County Bar Assn.
Cpl. Terry Wilber, Ashland County Jail Inmate Supervision Officer
Crystal Nordby, New Day Advocacy Center
Rhonda Frank-Loron
Sheriff Mick Brennan, Ashland County Sheriff
Terry Barningham, Ashland County Health & Human Services Director
Matt McKenzie, Ashland County Board Member
Lt. Tony Jones, Ashland County Jail Administrator
Elizabeth Franek, Ashland County Board Member
Abbey Johnson, Criminal Justice Coordinator
Hon. Kelly McKnight, Ashland County Circuit Court Judge

Agenda

Last Meeting Follow-up

1. None
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New Business

1. Judge McKnight spoke about the purpose and history of the Ashland County CJCC and explained the recent hiatus.
 - a. The committee will refocus on identifying local needs and using measurable outcomes to respond to those needs.
 - i. This will be done with careful attention to utilizing existing resources to achieve better outcomes and saving money while keeping the community safe.
 - ii. Ashland County has been a “data desert” - we have no idea what local recidivism rate is, what the jail population looks like in relation to status and risk level. Existing programs are successful but there is no data to prove it. This is an area that needs attention.
 - b. COVID 19 has worsened the deep financial hole of the county government including the Criminal Justice System
 - c. Bylaws were distributed - everyone should review the document and return with proposed changes. These need updating.
 - d. Judge McKnight took notice of the 4 county board members in attendance at this meeting - only two of which are assigned to the committee. There are currently two vacancies for community members on this committee so there is opportunity for their continued participation.
2. Clark Schroeder updated the status of the County Budget
 - a. Referendum vote for \$2 million.
 - b. County is currently having a hard time paying bills - running on credit cards rather than cash.
 - c. Reducing the jail population does not reduce the overall cost to the county - the major expense is staffing in the jail and that is a static cost. - Comments by Sheriff Brennan
 - d. Only minimal cost relief is experienced with reduced jail population - meals and medical costs are somewhat reduced.
 - e. Judge McKnight states keeping people out of jail is financially beneficial to everyone even if it isn't immediately saving the county money. Transport costs and officers' time are also considerations. A few days in jail may result in the loss of employment then failed child support payments and loss of homes etc.
3. Anne Whiting gave brief summary of Wellness and Recovery Court
 - a. Wellness and Recovery Court evolved from Ashland County Treatment Court which evolved from Ashland County Drug Court - The purpose continues to

be intention in the cycle of drug and alcohol abuse while assisting individuals find a more productive path.

- b. WRC is a coordinated effort by the Judge, DA, Public Defender, Law Enforcement, Mental Health Professionals, Health and Human Services and Treatment Providers. Each entity gives up a little individual power to approach and individual's situation as a coordinated team. Judge awards incentives for participants' positive performance.
 - c. WRC's new format started just before the onset of COVID and the team had just started to see positive responses to the changes by participants. It took some time to adapt to the precautionary measures put in place to protect the safety of Court Staff and the public but it is now working smoothly and participants are feeling comfortable and experiencing some of the intended positive effects of the WRC format.
4. Deputy Chris Grubisic gave a brief overview of the Diversion Program
- a. New to the position since January 2020.
 - b. The main focus of his effort is making sure individuals follow through with AODA treatment and community meetings.
 - c. Currently working on making programmatic changes to expand program participation
 - d. Judge adds the current structure allows individuals with non-violent felony offenses and AODA needs an opportunity to avoid jail and/or conviction by participating in the program and complying with set criteria. This is significant incentive to complete the program but it has been a struggle. WRC, Chris, CJC and DA's Office are putting a lot of work into revamping the program to impress the state and ensure ongoing funding. It is an important piece of the criminal justice response puzzle and hopefully the program will continue to receive funding.
 - e. Questions/Comments
 - i. Liz Franek: How can we as a county board help to get the state to fund the program and help with other needed improvements?
 - 1. Chris: The changes we are making are significant and not sure what the county can do at this time
 - 2. Anne: We hope we are targeting the areas the state wants
 - ii. Pat Kinney: Data collection could be part of the future plans.
 - iii. Judge: Is there a possibility data collection could be part of future programming allowable under the TAD Grant? Other counties have a

department dedicated to data collection. Are there partnerships that exist or that could be developed. Education Facilities?

f.

Comments / Questions

- Ruth Kressel responds to Liz Franek: One of the ways we are trying to improve TAD is expand eligibility to include offenses related to substance abuse, meaning an offense committed while drunk or high would be an eligible offense. This will hopefully bring in more people and offer the opportunity to dismiss/minimize more charges.
- Elizabeth Franek: Some county board members want to decrease arrests for THC. Can this be done on a case-by-case basis or left to officer discretion? Could THC encounters with juveniles serve as “scared straight” opportunity to change addictive behavior when individuals are still young? This would reduce the number of people going through the system. Is there anything the board can do to support referendum to allow this? This would allow officers more time to focus on other crime.
 - Deputy Grubisic: There are future plans for an officer-driven diversion program.
 - Judge: This is called “LEAD” = Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion. The county could adopt a uniform approach to small amounts of THC in the county.
 - Chief Hagstrom: The vast amount of THC possession is addressed by an ordinance or officer warning.
 - Sheriff Brennan: I can’t remember the last time someone was taken into custody for exclusively a small amount of THC.
- Laura Nagro: Can we talk about the jail population and alternatives to cash bond?
 - Judge: This is a big topic. We don’t have an effective detention statute in this state. There is an option for a pretrial program but we cannot use TAD funding for that. If we could use an alternative to cash bail that doesn’t eliminate the problem that arises when there is a violation and there is nothing except detention left as an option - We are motivated to work on this and this is a great example of a change target.

Next Steps

1. Judge: We will meet bi-monthly to improve participation and results. Hopefully this will allow the body to direct the coordinator to get work done. We will set goals eventually
2. I would like to see proposed changes to the bylaws by next meeting - changes should be directed to Abbey. Abbey will circulate bylaws, what a CJCC is supposed to do, development of CJCC, framework of EBDM grounded in the criminal justice system and list of change targets being utilized by other counties. These are things to think about while developing our goals. Plan for possible change targets. The data aspect is something we need to continue to talk about and continue to keep working on. Bring all ideas to Abbey as they develop. That is what I see being a priority between now and the next CJCC meeting. We will be moving forward in a completely different fashion than in the past.
3. March 4th meeting will be held virtually and we will decide how to proceed for subsequent meetings as more information is available.
4. Shannon asked about the July meeting - judge moves from July 1st to July 8th to accommodate holiday weekend.

Other Business

1. None

Next Meeting Agenda Items

- Changes to Ashland County Criminal Justice Council Bylaws
 - Mission/Vision
 - Membership
 - Citizen membership?