



Okaloosa County Public Safety Coordinating Council

Committee Meeting Minutes

Meeting: April 28, 2022 12:00 PM

Courthouse Annex Extension, Fort Walton Beach

Public Safety Coordinating Council Members

Present	Name	Agency
x	Paul Mixon	Board of County Commissioners
x	C. Eric Esmond	Chief Corrections Officer
	Judge Polson	Circuit Judge
	Judge Mason	County Judge
	Craig Coffey	Deputy County Administrator
x	Michelle Sandler	Assistant State Attorney
	Charles Russell	Assistant Public Defender
x	Robert Kemp	Circuit Administrator, Florida Department of Corrections, Probation and Parole Services
x	Kelli Huckabee	Pretrial Services
	Tina Ferland	Judicial Corrections Services, County Probation Provider

Other Attendees:

Desiree Hartwig, Department of Corrections
 Dennis Knighten, Department of Corrections
 Susan Priddy, Corizon Health Services, Department of Corrections
 Lisa Roy, Corizon Health Services, Department of Corrections
 Larry McFarland, Bridgeway Center, Inc
 John Anderson, Okaloosa Clerk of Court Office
 Valerie Broxson, Clerk of Court Administration
 Jessica Trimboli, Sergeant, Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office

Meeting opened at 12:03 pm.

Welcome:

Minutes/Commissioner Report

1. a. Commissioner Mixon opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. He briefly discussed PSCC being held in person only going forward rather than via Zoom.
- b. Chief Esmond read and discussed the purpose of the PSCC meeting bringing all key facets of the system together in the interest of public safety. He provided that the Judges were unable to be present today.
- c. The minutes were approved as sent by the majority

2. Old Business

- a. Chief Esmond discussed the restrictions COVID-19 placed on counties, regarding DOC sentenced inmates. Some Sheriffs and Jail Directors attempted to pressure the State for funds for inmates who were unable to be transferred due to State restrictions which included testing 48 hours prior to transfer and additional testing at DOC. The restrictions sometimes led groups of inmates to be returned to counties if results were positive. There were also restrictions on the number of inmates per week each county could send. The plan has been improving. As of 03/28/2022, testing is no longer required unless inmates are symptomatic. Chief Esmond thanked the judiciary for being mindful of these challenges throughout and trying to keep the ADP at the jail low. Judge Stone previously suspended weekend sentences, but those are back on with the jail able to accommodate 5 male and 3 females per weekend.
- b. Chief Esmond reported the 2nd video Courtroom. It has been completed, but has only been used twice. Judges are wanting inmates to be present in the courtrooms again. As a result, the Department is back to doing many transports and prefers it that way, as it is better for the inmates understanding of courtroom proceedings.
- c. Chief Esmond asked that discussion on the Cadet Academy be held until New Business.
- d. Chief Esmond indicated that the Department is still offering testing, vaccinations, and boosters for inmates and staff. The last positive results for an inmate/officer, respectively, were 01/22/22 and 01/23/22.

3. Jail Report

- a. Chief Esmond presented the statistics report and attendees had no questions.

4. Pretrial Services Report

- a. Kelli Huckabee provided a report for review on pretrial services statistics. Their average between 80 and 90 cases on GPS—during COVID it was only around 40 cases. The majority of defendants on GPS would likely be in jail, so their numbers have had an impact on the jail population. She expects these numbers to continue. The mental health cases are still high, currently at 12 with a max of 15. Two recent graduations were completed. The program is going well. Mr. McFarland reported that felony cases are now being considered, as the PDO and SAO are trying to use this program more due to positive feedback. Early tracking has shown 75% of graduates have not been rearrested within first year post discharge. The program is nearing the third year of State funding. Mr. McFarland recommended the continued use of this program. He also suggested adding detox and CSU units. Miami-Dade has made use of all three and their SO directs inmates directly from jail to these programs/units. Finally, he believes Miami-Dade is setting a good example spending more funds on treatment rather than incarceration, as it lowers recidivism and saves the county money in the long run.

5. New Business

- a. Chief Esmond discussed the FMJS inspection. Both the medical and operation sections were conducted on 04/18/2022. Of 225 standards, both sections were found to have no deficiencies. These results are a good indicator of how the Department will perform on the upcoming FCAC reaccreditation. Chief Esmond stated the Department “does a lot with less” concerning some of the infrastructure challenges, but reported Commissioner Mixon is conducting a plan to improve some of these challenges.
- b. Chief Esmond discussed the inmate programs department and stated they do a good job of using viable programs for the inmates. So far, two OSHA classes have been completed with 17 and 25 inmates receiving their card. Programs are still conducting ServSafe and HVAC classes as well. Shelter House has also started coming in for weekly meetings. Mr. Knighten and Miss Hartwig discussed a possible new program, which was budgeted for, 2nd Opp. The program is a goal setting and life skills program and will be conducted via inmate tablets, Zoom meetings with the program facilitators, and will provide ongoing support/resources for inmates who complete the program and reenter the community. It was also reported that Corizon has been aligning inmates with mental health services upon release.
- c. Chief Esmond discussed Spring Break 2022. There were 659 NTA’s issued, which is more than when Spring Breakers were being booked into the jail (last time was 593). Most of the 693 were issued in the South End and were from southern universities on Spring Break. Both the Department and the SO appreciate this process, but local defense attorneys have not, as there is an option for online deferred prosecution; 590 of the 659 did this, which is a loss of revenue for local defense attorneys. The Clerk’s Office also had issues, as defendants were sending in checks for the NTA prior to the Clerk’s Office receiving them. Additional staff had to be assigned to care for this. Mr. Anderson suggested making some changes in the way these will be filed next year due to these challenges.
- d. Chief Esmond expressed concern for the recent difficulties and shortages in hiring additional staff for the department, largely due to the State receiving raises and bonuses which led certified individuals to apply there rather than locally. It was learned that other counties were using a Cadet Academy program to employ individuals and “sponsor” them through the academy. With the help of Commissioner Mixon, the Department has started an academy. There are currently 13 individuals starting at Okaloosa Technical College on 05/11/2022. They have already been working at the Department as TEA’s. They are being paid \$18/hr. and will receive increases once they have become certified and completed probationary period. Chief Esmond would like to continue this program going forward.
- e. Commissioner Mixon offered some additional information. He wanted to start including the South End booking numbers into the statistics report. He added that he is working on a new plan for a new location for the jail, as the State is looking to switch to “Mega Prisons” and will be closing down some of the local prisons. OCI is on the list of potential facilities to be closed and

could become the new OCDOC if that happens. This could save the county millions of dollars, as updating (30-50 million) would be much cheaper than new construction (150 million). OCI is already equipped with a juvenile facility, training grounds, and program buildings. More to come on this in the fall of 2022.

6. Closing Announcements

- a. Commissioner Mixon indicated the PSCC meetings will now alternate between the North and South Ends. The July meeting will be in the North End and the October meeting will be in the South End.
- b. Chief Esmond reminded everyone of the Food Truck Frenzy upcoming in May for National Correctional Officers and National Nurses week.
- c. Chief Esmond advised a new Major of Jail Operations was chosen, Nolan Weeks. He is a former SO employee with much experience and will be starting at the jail next week.
- d. Mr. McFarland reported an ambulatory detox program is opening on Shell Ave. due to some grant funding. This will be up and running soon and the program will need nurses; he invited everyone to share with their nurse friends and family. He also reported Bridgeway will be hiring 2 peer support specialists to help with the MH Pretrial clients as a support.
- e. Miss Broxson that registration for the DL Clinic opens on Monday. They have a goal of 150 people, with 10 being inmates. Registration may be completed via Eventbrite 2022 Okaloosa DL Clinic. The actual Clinic date is set for 10/14/2022.

Meeting ended at 1:03 pm.