

Washington County Sheriff's Office Latino Advisory Commission
October 6, 2021
Meeting Minutes

Commission Members Present: Olga Acuña, Maria Caballero-Rubio, Daniel Guzman-Catarina, Joann Hoffman, Ricardo Moreno, Mark Shah, Pablo Valenzuela

Commission Members Absent: Pat Garrett, Fernando Lira, Fernanda Pantoja

Moderating: Brandon Lee, Training for Transformation (T4T)

Guest Speaker: John Koch, Undersheriff with Washington County Sheriff's Office
Caprice Massey, Jail Commander with Washington County Sheriff's Office

Guests attending: Nansi Lopez, Washington County Chamber of Commerce
Karlyn Degman, Chief Deputy with Washington County Sheriff's Office

Held via Zoom

CALL TO ORDER

Olga called the meeting to order at 4:02 p.m.

Introductions

Co-Chair Garrett is out of town and unable to join today.

Co-Chair Acuña Introduced Nansi Lopez as our newly appointed commissioner. Ms. Lopez will fill the vacancy left by Juan Carlos Gonzalez beginning in November. Ms. Lopez currently works for Washington County Chamber of Commerce.

Approval Meeting Minutes

The members present constituted a quorum. Maria made a motion to approve the September 1st minutes. Ricardo seconded and the minutes were approved.

Public Comment

No public comments

Jail Overview

Undersheriff Koch began by inviting the commission to come visit the jail once Covid restrictions have lifted.

Commander Massey gave the presentation of the Washington County Jail. She explained that we transitioned away from using the term inmate to using the term "AIC" - Adult in Custody.

The Washington County Jail is the only jail in the entire county. Currently, we do not lodge more than 450-460 adults due to Covid restrictions. All AICs are quarantined upon arriving to the jail.

Our jail is inspected every two years. Inspectors talk to AICs, contracted staff and employees. At our last inspection we received a score of 100%. This March our score was 99.7% due to the fact that we could not accommodate staff training, also due to Covid. The Washington County Jail was the first jail in Oregon to have obtained a body scanner. This alleviated the need for body searches.

Commissioner Caballero-Rubio asked how the body scanner works and what are they looking for. Commander Massey and Undersheriff Koch explained that the body scanner allows Deputies to noninvasively see any contraband being brought into the jail. Commissioner Guzman-Catarina explained that the body scanner itself and the images it presents look similar to those at airports.

Commissioner Caballero-Rubio asked if there is medical staff on site 24/7. Commander Massey responded that there is.

Ms. Lopez asked about the new booking photo laws. Commander Massey said that since the recent law passed, we only release booking photos after someone is charged.

Serious measures have been taken within the jail due to Covid. We work with county judges to release those that are least dangerous to public safety and those that are at highest physical risk to Covid. Since we cannot send work-crews out, we are using them to sanitize the jail on a regular basis.

Commissioner Caballero-Rubio asked if all AICs are tested for Covid and are offered vaccines? Commander Massey responded Yes, all are tested and quarantined. However, only about 40% of AICs accept the vaccine, which is offered to everyone. Signs are posted in English and Spanish throughout the jail offering the vaccine. Ms. Lopez asked if we have the demographics of AICs and vaccines. We currently do not. Commander Massey is going to look into getting those numbers from our medical partners. Commander Massey did say that currently, 355 AICs have been vaccinated by the jail. 22 AICs have arrived Covid positive and three AICs have contracted Covid within the Jail.

Co-Chair Acuña asked about exceptions to receiving the vaccine per the October 18th deadline. How are we mitigating those challenges for AICs and staff? Commander Massey confirmed our medical staff are mandated to comply with the deadline. Undersheriff Koch advised that the Sheriff's Office along with the County Administrative Office will wait for publication of the federal rule by the U.S. Department of Labor to determine its impact on county staff before considering whether to take additional vaccine measures.

Ms. Lopez asked about the mandate decision that may come from the Presidential office. Does the Sheriff's Office have a plan in place if staff choose not to be vaccinated and if there is a staffing shortage? Undersheriff Koch said we don't have hard numbers yet of those that would leave the county if vaccinations are mandated. The county did a staff survey regarding vaccines and mandates.

Commander Massey showed us all the educational self-improvement programs that are offered within the jail. Commissioner Caballero-Rubio asked if the GED program is offered at no cost and in English and Spanish? Commander Massey said Yes, they are.

Ms. Lopez questioned the rule about AIC's 1-year maximum time within a county jail and how they can complete programs with that limitation. Commander Massey explained that although a maximum 1-year jail sentence exists, many AICs are in custody awaiting trials and that process can take longer than one year.

Commissioner Caballero-Rubio asked about the authority of a release officer and if they make the decisions of when and who to release? Commander Massey explained that a Jail Corporal serves that function and they make those decisions based on court orders. The Court Release Officer has higher authority (given to them by judicial staff) and they are in the office Monday through Friday, and sometimes on Sunday. The court release office is within the Law Enforcement Center right next to the jail.

Commander Massey showed the demographic breakdown of the AIC population within the Washington County Jail. Mr. Lee spoke to the difference in percentage of black people represented within the jail (12%) compared to the overall black population of Washington County, which is 1.9% according to Google. Commissioner Moreno asked if we have data on how many AICs are brought in by Washington County vs the other police agencies, with the purpose of comparing arresting practices between agencies within Washington County.

Commissioner Moreno spoke about a tour he received of the Jail. He was surprised to see only one deputy working alone in an entire pod. He asked if, from a staffing perspective, do we have what we need? Commander Massey said that we do not. She explained that we are not receiving the same level of interest in law enforcement as we once did. People have said that "there are safer jobs out there". Undersheriff Koch added that our jail was built 20 years ago, and staffing numbers remained unchanged until very recently. We've seen an increased workload as we handle different custody levels. He gave the example of some AICs needing a two or even three deputy escort to court to maintain the safety of staff, the AIC, and the courts. This puts a strain on the assigned areas those deputies are coming from. Commissioner Guzman-Catarina also voiced that there are often incidences when an AIC is disrupting the pod. Often times, that AIC just wants someone to listen to them. Deputies will make it a point to just listen, as this is the way to deescalate the situation. It is helpful, in the case of the medical unit, to have two deputies staffing at once. This allows one deputy to listen to the AICs and the other to make the necessary rounds.

Commissioner Valenzuela mentioned that staffing has become tight within the Coffee Creek Correctional Facility. They have had to put people closer together and more people in the same building to accommodate the staffing shortage. He asked if this is a trend that's been going on for a while. Undersheriff Koch responded that when the job market is low, we usually see higher recruitment, but that has not been the case this last year. However, we are optimistic about the quality of people we are hiring, but numbers aren't high. Commander Caprice added that we are hiring for character first and we do not offer a position to everyone that applies. Regardless of having difficulty staffing, we are not going to lower our standards. Our quality service to Washington County is our priority.

Sheriff's Office Updates

Undersheriff Koch informed the commission that this would be Commissioner Mark Shah's last meeting. Corporal Shah has transitioned to graveyard. We thank Mark Shah for his service to the Latino Advisory Commission.

The Sheriff recently made a difficult decision to terminate an employee a couple of weeks ago. This employee did not represent the values of the Washington County Sheriff's Office.

We also wanted to apologize for the lack of communication on the Enhanced Sheriff's Patrol District (ESPD) listening sessions. The listening session for the ESPD levy were new to this year's levy planning. Sheriff's Office Community Outreach staff worked quickly along with the County to put them together. The listening sessions were focused on county residents who live or work within the ESPD boundaries.

A few commission members felt left out of the process for the listening sessions. They ask that any community outreach done by the Sheriff's Office include the LAC.

Next steps

Due to time constraints, Co-Chair Acuña suggested we hold our P.O.P. Discussion for our November meeting.

Mr. Lee also offered to hold his agenda item and we all agreed to discuss the Public Health Response Model at our next meeting.

Commissioner Caballero-Rubio requested the community lists that were used to reach out regarding the ESPD Listening Sessions and Survey.

Meeting adjourned at 5:34 PM