



Okaloosa County Public Safety Coordinating Council

Committee Meeting Minutes

Meeting: April 2021 12:00 PM

**Courthouse Annex Extension, Fort Walton Beach/
Zoom**

Public Safety Coordinating Council Members

Present	Name	Agency
x	Paul Mixon	Board of County Commissioners
x	C. Eric Esmond	Chief Corrections Officer
x	Judge Gontarek	Circuit Judge
	Judge Grinsted	County Judge
x	Jay Jones (Jeremy Miller)	Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office Designee
	April Madden	Assistant State Attorney
x	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:

Craig Coffey-Deputy County Administrator
 Tammy Matthews, Department of Corrections
 Desiree Hartwig, Department of Corrections
 Dennis Knighten, Department of Corrections
 Susan Priddy, Corizon Health Services, Department of Corrections
 Valerie Broxson, Clerk of Court Administration
 Cassie Reed, State Attorney's Office
 Dale Carter, Court Security
 Don Allgood, Okaloosa Clerk of Court Office
 Bonnie Barlow,
 Rodney Owens,
 Someone Kemp,

Meeting opened at 12:02 pm.

Meeting conducted via Zoom.

Welcome:

Chief Esmond opened the meeting. Introductions were completed by everyone in the group.

Minutes/Commissioner Report

1. a. The minutes were approved as sent.

2. Old Business

- a. Chief Esmond indicated the tele-nursing pilot project is proceeding well. Ms. Priddy indicated that Charlotte and Leon counties are soon to join. Remote nurses have been doing intakes, physicals, etc.
- b. Chief Esmond reported that there were 700 spring break arrests for 2021. Previously, under Sheriff Ashley, all these individuals would have been transferred and booked in to the jail. Sherriff Aden is alternatively using Notices to Appear which have been extremely helpful due to COVID quarantine restrictions and workload on ACR officers. Dep. Jones reported this also assists the SO to cut down on transports to the jail. Chief Esmond indicated that this will remain in effect so long as it continues to go well. There were 597 spring break arrests in 2020.
- c. Chief Esmond reported that he would provide updates on this under new business.

3. Jail Report

- a. Chief Esmond presented the statistics report and opened it for questions; no questions were posed by the attendees regarding the statistics report. Chief Esmond indicated the average daily population has remained in the low 600's for the last month or so. All facets of the judiciary have been outstanding and helpful in keeping the population down and moving inmates through the system quickly. Ms. Reed inquired as to how long DOC transports have been taking. Chief Esmond reported that the original plan only allowed 8 males and 3 females per week to be transported. Presently, 11 males per week can be transported and the females are on a first come first serve basis.

4. Pretrial Services Report

- a. Ms. Huckabee reported GPS numbers have increased again; there are currently 70 cases. Participants are typically people who would be in jail for an extended period of time pre-trial due to their charges, so placing them on GPS monitoring and releasing them does help with population control. Pretrial has implemented a new risk assessment tool which has been helpful in identifying additional participants. Ms. Huckabee indicated they appreciate the judges' help and cooperation with this and believes the cases will continue to rise with continued support from the judges.

5. New Business

- a. Chief Esmond shared that there are still a few moving parts to the expanded dockets. Previously, the jail only had one room; therefore facilitating multiple dockets at one time was not possible. Ms. Broxson came to the jail with others for a tour and to gain better understanding on the process and inmate movement required to facilitate these dockets. The jail has purchased modular hearing booths to serve as additional court areas; one booth is fully constructed and ready for use. There will be an initial test run next week. The jail is waiting on a computer to get the second module operational. Hopefully,

the jail will be able to run 2-3 dockets at a time once both new booths are functional; this will give everyone involved more leverage to move people through the system as quickly as possible. Chief Esmond added that additional staff will be required to monitor the inmates using the modules. The department will come up with an expected start date for implementation of the booths following the initial test run next week. Judge Gontarek indicated that he loves zoom court and feels it is better than having inmates transported, as it is much faster. He plans to continue to use zoom court for bond and plea hearings and believes the SAO and PD offices agree as well. This updated technology has been a silver lining of the COVID pandemic and has been helpful in alleviating stress on the SO and jail for transports. Everything seems to be working well and he appreciates the new method. Finally, Judge Gontarek reported that they are not facilitating civil jury trials, so they are filling dockets with misc. hearings to move inmates through the system faster.

- b. Chief Esmond indicated that if an inmate is ordered to complete a MHE at 1st App and it does not uncover anything, that inmate can go back to 1st App the next day. However, if mental health issues are revealed, the Baker Act process is started. Typically, FWB Medical Center assesses the inmates to see if they meet criteria for a Baker Act. There is an MOU with FWB Medical Center in place which dictates the Judges issue ROR bonds to the inmates so they can be released to FWB Medical Center. Once the inmate has been stabilized, they are able to be sent back to the jail. FWB Medical Center has decided to change this procedure without prior coordination with the department or an update to the current MOU. The changes have come about due to the fact that FWB Medical Center has been unsatisfied with having inmates sent to their crisis stabilization unit. While the department would not take an inmate there who would be a grave and imminent threat, FWB Medical Center is not wanting to take on any inmates without having 2 officers onsite at all times. Ms. Wright has scheduled a meeting with FWB Medical Center to discuss these changes and related issues. Ms. Fagen indicated she is interested to see what this meeting will uncover. It is possible that FWB Medical Center could provide crisis stabilization services to inmates here at the jail via tele-doc. The department does not want an unfair burden placed on officers due to FWB Medical Center not fulfilling their requirements of the MOU. Commissioner Mixon indicated the department may have to utilize out of county services to take those inmates to other crisis units for stabilization.
- c. Commissioner Mixon provided current vaccination numbers. Chief Esmond reported that Ms. Priddy corresponded with the health department for those inmates who received their 1st dose, but not the 2nd in order for follow up to occur. The jail and the health department have a good tracking mechanism in place.
- d. Commissioner Mixon explained that the Food Truck Frenzy event was scheduled in honor of National Correctional Officers week (May 2-8) and National Nurses week (May 6-12). He reported that all staff would be receiving 2 free meals and that there were also giveaways involved. Chief

Esmond advised that the event would occur from 11am-7pm the whole week and encouraged everyone to attend. He stated the department was excited to celebrate in this new way, as they previously only did pizza parties for the shifts.

- e. Chief Esmond expressed great appreciation for the continued support of the SO, as they have always been active in planning for court proceedings related to spring break, etc. He also thanked them for their unsolicited assistance when heavy storms damaged the jail parking lot last week. The department typically closes the front gate if this happens in order to protect the public and officers from parking there; however the department did not need to do so this time, as the SO provided a deputy to divert traffic away from the area. Dep Jones expressed that they are happy to help and it is always easier when everyone helps each other.
- f. Mr. Kemp indicated that Probation will be back to doing drug tests and searches that were previously scaled back on due to COVID. He reported they are “content” in their office at this time. While they had been using zoom for reporting, they are going to start resuming in-person procedures.
- g. Commissioner Mixon thanked everyone for attending the meeting and working together. Chief Esmond encouraged all parties to call him if they require any assistance he can provide.

Meeting ended at 12:43.