

Justice and Public Safety Committee

February 5, 2019 | 1:30 pm - 3:30 pm

Riverside Hotel | Boise, ID | Juniper Room

MEETING MINUTES

Call to Order

Chair Wilde called the meeting to order at 1:30 pm.

Minutes

Johnson made a motion to approve the minutes from September 2018. Bolen seconded. Motion carried.

Public Defense

Seth Grigg is looking to gather feedback from the members on Public Defense. The Public Defense Commission (PDC) is working on rules for caseload standards. The original caseload standards were going to be hard for the counties to comply with and the PDC amended their rules to say that counties wouldn't be required to comply with the standards if the legislature didn't provide funding.

The Governor's Budget recommended \$11 million to PDC, most of which will go to counties. Last year's appropriation was \$5 million and about 4.5 went to counties.

The counties position has always been that counties would be willing to part with the current funding for public defense to let the state start their own statewide system, similar in concept to what Montana has.

As Seth Grigg has talked with legislators about public defense, the prospects of transitioning to a state-based system would take several years and wouldn't happen in one session. One talking point that is that the state could divert revenue sharing dollars away from counties to provide a state-based system. The general consensus of the committee was that the counties would be willing to give up some of their revenue sharing dollars to switch the responsibility to the state. IAC will continue the dialog with legislators.

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Justice Fund

With Medicaid expansion on the table, the legislature is throwing a rock in the pond to cause ripples throughout the state. Many counties are paying for public defense costs out of their indigent fund because the justice levy is capped. If the legislature expands Medicaid and reduces the indigent levy, some counties will lose their funding for public defense.

Last year IAC was able to get the justice levy issue to the house floor but it died. This year, the legislators are beginning to understand the interconnectedness of the levies and the services provided by counties. There might be an interest to increase the justice levy when the legislature decides what they are going to do about Medicaid Expansion. At this time, this is our only viable option to increase the justice levy.

Collection of fines and fees through Odyssey

There are four pieces of legislation that are focused on the courts and how to reconcile some of the challenges with Odyssey. IAC staff is working to amend the statute to authorize a pretrial program and work with the courts to collect a fee that would be collected through Odyssey through the district court.

In late fall, courts informed the clerks that they would no longer be allow juvenile probation fees to be collected through Odyssey. So, IAC is working on legislation to similarly authorize a district judge to establish a fee for juvenile probation services.

Courts are allowed to intercept income tax refunds to pay fines and fees. This statute would clarify that fines and fees can be collected of any amount, not just \$50.

The court also has some language in the magistrate court funding statute they would like to amend. They don't believe they have the authority to release the information to the liquor division at this time. By amending a few words, they should be able to release the information to the liquor division and funds would be distributed to the counties.

Driver's License

Right now, most counties are getting by with their current system, which is a workaround system that county staff and ITD have put together.

Counties did get some relief when ITD agreed to do renewals by mail. In November/December, 3500 renewed by mail in Ada County and it helped county staff get back on track from being so far behind. ITD stopped renewals by mail in January and ISA approached ITD to ask if they would bring back the renewals by mail and they said they would reopen in February.

Currently the legislature has to set fees for driver's licenses.

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Idaho Department of Correction – Director Josh Tewalt

Director Josh Tewalt gave a brief overview of his background. He started on December 1. When he began they needed \$650 million in prison infrastructure. He started looking into the department and thinks that they don't need more beds. 70% of the people in IDOC are those that have failed on probation or parole.

IDOC does need more beds but they also need to create ways for inmates to leave and return to their communities. There needs to be more treatment options in the community. IDOC is also struggling with staffing. When the economy is up, they tend to experience high turnover.

Director Josh Tewalt wants to continue to drive home the point that there aren't enough mental health options and those struggling with mental health issues are ending up in jails and prison.

Idaho Department of Juvenile Correction – Director Monty Prow

Director Prow has been with the department for 17 years. He introduced some of the Juvenile Probation officers that he works with at the counties and explained how important the counties are to IDJC. IDJC has experienced a reduction in juvenile arrests and a decrease in juvenile detention center populations. There is great success in Idaho right now.

The Board adjourned at 3:30 pm.