

Minutes of Meeting
Public Defense Commission
February 16, 2022
2:00 p.m.

The Kootenai County Board of Commissioners: Chair Pro Tem Leslie Duncan and Commissioner Bill Brooks met to discuss the following agenda item. Also present were Public Defender Anne C. Taylor, Client Services/Investigations Administrator Jennifer Jenquine, Finance Director Dena Darrow, BOCC Communications Coordinator Jonathan Gillham and Deputy Clerk Tina Ginorio. Also present was Idaho State Public Defense Commission Regional Coordinator Jennifer Roark. Ms. Roark was present via Zoom. Chairman Chris Fillios was excused.

- A. **Call to Order:** Chair Pro Tem Leslie Duncan called the meeting to order at 2:03 p.m.
- B. **Changes to the Agenda (Action):** There were no changes to the agenda.
- C. **Business:**

Idaho State Public Defense Commission Updates with Regional Coordinator Jennifer Roark (Discussion)

Idaho State Public Defense Commission (PDC) Regional Coordinator Jennifer Roark stated that her department was conducting its annual review of counties' Public Defense Office. She said this would be documented in their annual report, which would be provided to the counties on April 15, 2022.

- Ms. Roark asked if there had been any changes in Kootenai County's Indigent Defense operations since last year.

Chair Pro Tem Duncan and Commissioner Bill Brooks stated that there had not been.

- Ms. Roark asked if there were any significant changes planned to take place during the next two years.

Chair Pro Tem Duncan said there were not.

- Ms. Roark asked if there were plans to increase the number or to improve the retention of attorneys in Indigent Defense.

Chair Pro Tem Duncan stated that the County was pursuing a wage study to address issues of retention and compression among all County employees.

- Ms. Roark asked if this study was internal or had been outsourced.

Chair Pro Tem Duncan explained that Ameriben had been selected to gather data for the study from selected market areas. She said that, once the data was received, it would be reviewed and analyzed by the County's Human Resources staff.

- Ms. Roark asked if starting salaries had been increased for Indigent Defense attorneys.

Chair Pro Tem Duncan reported that starting salaries had been adjusted for all County employees and all staff had been placed on Salary Matrices, which included step-advancement.

Finance Director Dena Darrow provided additional details regarding the Salary Matrix system.

- Ms. Roark asked whether any improvement in retention or recruitment had been observed after the implementation of this system.

Public Defender Anne C. Taylor responded that they had seen some improvement and hoped to see more.

- Ms. Roark asked if the Board had made plans to reduce the institutional attorneys' caseloads down to the recommended limit.

Chair Pro Tem Duncan asked for additional information on the recommended caseload limits and the current caseloads of individual attorneys.

Ms. Roark provided a screen shot of the current list and explained that the limit was set at 210 felony-case-equivalents per attorney. She noted that several of Kootenai County's attorneys were over that limit. She said that Ms. Taylor had explained that this was primarily due to high staff turnover.

Chair Pro Tem Duncan said that the Board's plans included moving forward with wage adjustments when the wage study was completed. She said they also hoped to help the Public Defender's Office in recruiting new staff.

- Ms. Roark remarked that many issues had arisen due to complications caused by the COVID pandemic. She asked if the County had experienced any new problems in this area.

Chair Pro Tem Duncan stated that the County had needed to rent a larger office space to house the expanding Public Defender's Office. She said that they had needed to absorb the increased cost of the rent, which had come from property tax dollars.

Chair Pro Tem Duncan also commented that the County had to obey the instructions from the State Supreme Court regarding whether or not jury trials were able to be held.

- Ms. Roark asked if there was anything that the PDC could do to help support the County's Indigent Defense Department.

Ms. Taylor suggested that an increased level of communications between the PDC and herself would be helpful.

Ms. Roark and Ms. Taylor agreed to have an additional meeting in March.

Ms. Roark said that the Board would receive an email from the PDC by March 30, 2022 regarding the FY23 financial assistance available. She stated that the County's request would be due by May 15, 2022.

Chair Pro Tem Duncan asked whether the PDC would consider covering part of the additional cost for the Public Defender's Office's rent, since the expansion was due to the additional of required Workload Attorneys.

Ms. Roark explained how the PDC calculated its financial support to the counties.

- D. Public Comment:** This section is reserved for citizens wishing to address the Board regarding a County related issue. Idaho Law prohibits Board action on items brought under this section except in an emergency circumstance. Comments related to future public hearings should be held for that public hearing. There were no public comments.

- E. Adjournment (Action):** Chair Pro Tem Duncan adjourned the meeting at 2:24 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

JIM BRANNON, CLERK

BOCC SIGNATURE

BY: _____
Tina Ginorio, Deputy Clerk