

DISTRICT/MUNICIPAL COURT LIAISON COMMITTEE

NEWSLETTER

On January 19, 2017 the committee had its regularly scheduled bi-monthly meeting, the first of the new year.

Chuck Ramey, Administrator from the Pierce County District Court indicated that Patti Roadhouse, of Pierce County District Court Probation, will be retiring end of February. Patti has for many years supervised 16 probation officers and a staff of 30 employees. She has been responsible for overseeing the alternative service programs, such as Work Crew; Day Reporting and Community Service. She has had a wonderful career at Pierce County and she will be sorely missed.

The Mental Health Specialist with District Court Probation are fully engaged. Currently, they are handling about 120 cases. Mentally challenged defendants require much more involved probation. To be eligible the defendant must have a diagnosed mental health condition. The supervision of the mentally challenged defendant is much more intensive than those not facing the same disability. The mental health specialist may call on behalf of the mentally challenged defendant to secure housing. They may also call to ensure that all appointments are kept, that would include appointments for the treatment of their mental health disorder.

The Committee received additional information on the DART program. Judge Ross' court is handling the acceptance of the re-filing in District Court. The committee learned that in addition to reducing the charge from a felony to a misdemeanor, if the defendant is compliant with treatment they may obtain a dismissal at the end of the case.

Congratulations to new Pierce County Executive Bruce Dammeier. Mr. Dammeier seems very motivated to work with the Pierce County Courts to ensure that they remain amongst the finest in the State of Washington.

Anthony Manzanares, long time DAC attorney for the Tacoma Municipal Court reported that with the advent of the Mental Health Court some mental health providers, such as Greater Lakes Mental Health have actually come into the courtroom to assist the parties with the mentally challenged defendants. Mr. Manzanares reported that in an informal unofficial survey of mentally challenged defendants confined in jail, mental health professionals found that the prevailing issue for the mentally challenged defendant was the need for decent housing.

Randy Hansen, Tacoma Municipal Court Commissioner, reported that Tacoma Municipal Court judicial officers now have the discretion to waive EHM fees to indigent defendants who qualify. He stated that the ability to waive the EHM fees gave the court more flexibility to decide what is best for each situation whether it be EHM, Ignition Interlock, or Incarceration.

There was a general discussion regarding the slow down on criminal filings. Some estimates the numbers decreasing for 4 years in a row. There may be as many as 15 vacancies in the Washington State Patrol in Pierce County from officers retiring and lateral moves to other jurisdictions.

The Pierce County Sheriff's Office currently has some vacancies. Chief John R. Batiste of the Washington State Patrol (WSP) informed one of the judges that they were expecting that a good number of this year's class of cadets and another class coming out this spring would assist in filling some of these vacancies. The Washington State legislature recently approved a salary increase for WSP officers and it is thought that it will assist in reducing the number of trained officers who leave the WSP for better pay and less travel in other law enforcement agencies.

Jean Hayes of the Tacoma City Attorney's office indicated that they have seen a reduction in officers and a corresponding reduction in emphasis patrols. The emphasis patrols were a means of preempting many alcohol related accidents. With the shortage of manpower, the Tacoma Patrol officers were put in a more reactive mode as they have to utilize their resources in responding to alcohol related accidents instead of prevention with the use of the emphasis patrols.

There was also a discussion about the use of electronic technology for warrants for blood draws for DUI cases both alcohol and marijuana. Tony Manzanares gave the committee a great practice tip. All of the content used for electronic warrants are discoverable materials and they are recorded in some form or fashion whether it be a recorded phone call or email. Practitioners should request these materials to see if it matches up to the actual language utilized in obtaining the warrant.

The District/Municipal Court Liaison Committee's next meeting is tentatively scheduled for March 23, 2017, 7:30 AM at the Harvester Restaurant located at 29 N Tacoma Avenue. We are hoping to have representatives from the Pierce County Probation Department to talk about the Mental Health program and all of the programs and services offered by Pierce County District Court Probation. All are welcome.