

Law and Justice Council

June 2, 2026

3:01 p.m.

Present: Commissioner Pollock, County Manager Ryan Barrett, Becky Butler, Rieva Lester, RW Buzzard, Andy Caldwell, Jerry Clark, Duane Crouse, Scott Dickinson, Shad Hail, Josh House, Rachel Hunt, Jeff Hursh, Marissa Jay, Randy Kaut, Tim Lang, Kate McDougall, Jonathan Meyer, Julie Plahuta, Vickie Raines, Chris Sweet, Marni Larson, Andrew Toynbee, Allen Unzelman, Kevin Engelbertson

Guest: Jacob Moore

Recorder: Kate Chatterton

Public comment: None

Purpose and Role of Law and Justice Council

Ryan Barrett reviewed the purpose of the Public Safety Tax Advisory Council, including its intended role, responsibilities, and membership structure.

It was clarified that only members formally appointed by the BOCC, or their designated representatives, are voting members of the council.

Ryan also provided an overview of the proposed Public Safety Tax, including:

- Potential benefits and challenges
- Revenue allocation options
- Timing considerations
- Alternative funding options for consideration

OPMA and Public Records Training

Rieva Lester, BOCC Clerk of the Board, provided an overview of:

- Robert's Rules of Order
- Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA)
- Public Records Act (PRA) requirements

The council was informed that:

- A quorum consists of nine members.
- All members must complete OPMA and PRA training within 90 days of appointment.

Funding Challenges

Ryan invited public safety partners to discuss current funding challenges within their respective agencies.

Lewis County Sheriff's Office

Undersheriff Engelbertson discussed staffing shortages and recruitment challenges.

Chehalis Police Department

Chief Kaut discussed the impacts of annexation and potential future service and cost considerations.

Centralia Police Department

Chief Caldwell highlighted costs associated with:

- Body-worn cameras
- Flock Safety technology
- Replacing equipment at the end of its useful life

Lewis County Jail

Chief Sweet discussed:

- Rising medical costs
- Competition with neighboring agencies for staff
- A shrinking pool of medical providers willing to serve correctional facilities
- Challenges obtaining competitive RFP responses for jail medical services

Washington State Dept. of Corrections

Tim Lang discussed:

- State budget constraints
- Rising healthcare and medication costs
- Costs associated with preventing contraband from entering facilities, including scanners, K-9 programs, and related medical impacts

County Risk Pool Costs

Becky discussed increasing county risk pool rates and how those costs contribute to broader public safety funding concerns.

Lewis County 911 Communications

Jeff Hursh identified technology-related challenges, including:

- System upgrades and replacements

- Cloud storage expenses
- Ongoing technology maintenance costs

Prosecuting Attorney's Office

Jonathan Meyer discussed:

- Costs associated with Green Hill School
- Staffing pressures
- Potential future staffing increases driven by state requirements

District Court

Judge Buzzard discussed legislation that has reduced the court's ability to recover costs through fees. Staffing remains the largest operational challenge.

Superior Court

Judge Toynbee discussed wage competition with neighboring counties and the resulting recruitment and retention challenges.

Public Defense

Becky Butler discussed:

- Increasing public defense costs
- Limited state funding support
- New caseload standards that will likely require additional attorneys
- The importance of identifying sustainable funding sources

Several public defenders also shared their experiences and concerns regarding workload and funding pressures.

General Discussion

Ryan summarized the overarching theme of the discussion: costs continue to rise while revenue sources remain relatively flat, highlighting the importance of exploring long-term public safety funding options.

Vickie Raines shared her experience as a former Grays Harbor County Commissioner, discussing implementation of a 0.3% public safety tax and the county's use of a 60/40 revenue distribution model.

Becky explained that under a 60/40 allocation model, 40% of revenues would be distributed to cities based on population.

Commissioner Pollock shared reasons for supporting further discussion of a public safety tax.

Meeting Schedule

Motion: Hold regular meetings on the first Tuesday of each month at 3:00 p.m.

Motion by Judge Buzzard, seconded by Jonathan Meyer.

Motion passed unanimously.

Election of Chair

Rachel Hunt was nominated to serve as Chair.

Motion: Elect Rachel Hunt as Chair.

Motion by Judge Buzzard, seconded by Jonathan Meyer.

Motion passed unanimously.

Election of Vice Chair

Rachel nominated Kate McDougall to serve as Vice Chair.

Motion: Elect Kate as Vice Chair.

Motion by Rachel, seconded by Judge Buzzard.

Motion passed unanimously.

Secretary

Rachel appointed Rieva Lester to serve as Secretary.

Next Meeting

July 7 at 3:00 p.m.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn made by Jon Meyer, seconded by Judge Buzzard.

The meeting adjourned at 4:04 p.m.