

## Minutes

### Harris County Criminal Justice Coordinating Council

Wednesday October 14, 2015

1001 Preston Street, Houston, TX 77002

Commissioner Radack called the meeting to order at 12:45 pm. Council members in attendance were: Commissioner Steve Radack, Devon Anderson (District Attorney), Tom Brooks (Juvenile Probation), Judge Susan Brown, Alex Bunin (Chief Public Defender), Judge Margaret Harris, Sheriff Ron Hickman, Dr. Teresa May (CSCD), Dennis Potts (Pretrial Services), Constable Alan Rosen, and Vince Ryan (County Attorney).

#### 1. Approval of September 2015 meeting minutes

A motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made and seconded. The motion carried.

#### 2. OCJC Jail Population Report

Clarissa Stephens reported that the average daily jail population housed declined for the second consecutive month to 8,638 and that we are on track to reach the same level as last year this time. The special needs population (those identified as being homeless and/or with a mental health history) remains at about 40% of the overall population. A copy of the jail population report is included with the minutes.

#### 3. Reports

##### a. Mac Arthur Foundation Safety + Justice Grant: Chicago All Sites Meeting

Judge Susan Brown reported that members of the planning team took part in a two-day meeting in Chicago for the twenty Round One grant recipients. The conference focused on how to be successful in the second round application. Although only ten sites will be selected to receive the \$2M award for two years, the MacArthur Foundation will provide funding and support to the other ten sites to continue some aspects of their work. Presentations from jurisdictions successful in reducing their jail population were made by the San Francisco District Attorney and Judge Leifman of Miami-Dade County Court. The planning team is scheduled to visit Judge Leifman, who presides over the Miami-Dade Criminal Mental Health Project, at the end of October. The point was made that simply reducing jail population does not necessarily reduce racial and ethnic disparities in the system. Proposed projects should impact this aspect of the problem as well. Many of the Challenge sites are focusing on the pretrial release decision point, as is Harris County. Applications for the second round are due in early January and the grant announcement will be made in March 2016.

The grant site coordinators will facilitate two additional community meetings during their next visit in early November. The planning team learned from the September community meeting that the community is not fully aware of the various reform efforts underway in Harris County and that there are some misconceptions of how the criminal justice system works. The key takeaway points were the need for more communication, greater outreach, and stronger partnerships with communities.

*Planning Team Attendees: Devon Anderson, District Attorney; Susan Brown, Administrative Judge District Courts; Alex Bunin, Chief Public Defender; Tim Cannon, Chief Deputy, HCSO; Troy Finner, Executive Assistant Chief, HPD; Margaret Harris, Presiding Judge County Criminal Courts; Dr. Teresa May, Director, CSCD; and Dennis Potts, Interim Director, Pretrial Services.*

b. **Update:** Impact Court Initiative

Judge Brown reported that the new Impact Court began on September 14<sup>th</sup>, several weeks earlier than originally planned. Some two hundred aging cases have been identified as a court priority. 32 cases assigned to the court have been resolved thus far, including seven by trial.

c. **Update:** Cell phone number access initiative

Major Steve Marino reported that the Sheriff's Office pilot program began on September 30th.

d. **Initiative:** Jail population management team – Caprice Cosper

Caprice Cosper reported that representatives from County Criminal Court administration, District Court administration, the Sheriff's Office, and Budget Management have been identified to begin work on this initiative. Initial issues for consideration are inmates with inordinately long stays in jail, such as witnesses, parole violators, and those whose cases have not been resolved. Other areas for review will likely include those in custody with high medical and/or mental health expenses. The team will meet in the coming weeks to begin looking at data and identifying reports which need to be developed to track specialized populations.

4. **Evaluation Report: Jail Administrator's Position – Sheriff Ron Hickman**

Sheriff Hickman provided a quick overview of the report regarding the possible creation of a Jail Administrator's position, outside the Sheriff's Office, to oversee the daily operations of the Harris County jail system. Current Texas statutes make supervision of the jail the obligation of the Sheriff. The Sheriff's Office is also responsible for all inmate transport, the commissary, and any inmate movement from secured to unsecured areas. In order to fully implement a Jail Administrator's position, changes in legislation would be required. Other jurisdictions across the country known to have adopted or attempted this approach are referenced in the report. A copy of the report is included with the minutes.

5. **New Business.** None.

6. **Old Business.** None.

7. **Announcements**

Groundbreaking Ceremony for the new Joint Processing Center will be October 27, 2015 at noon.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:10 pm.