

**MINUTES**  
**LANCASTER COUNTY-CITY OF LINCOLN JUSTICE COUNCIL**  
**CITY-COUNTY BUILDING, ROOM 112**  
**FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2021**  
**7:30 A.M. – 9:00 A.M.**

*Advanced public notice of the meeting was posted on the County-City Building bulletin board, and the Lancaster County, Nebraska, website and emailed to media on February 3, 2021 and published in the Lincoln Journal Star print edition and website on February 1, 2021.*

*A copy of the Nebraska Open Meeting Act was available on the wall at the back of the room.*

**PRESENT:** Rick Vest and Deb Schorr, County Commissioners; Kim Etherton, Community Corrections Director; Bruce Prenda, Chief Deputy County Attorney; Dave Derbin, Chief Administrative Officer; Pat Condon, County Attorney; Jeff Curry, Chief Probation Officer, Adult Probation; Jeff Reed, Probation Officer, Adult Probation; Dean Rohwer, Veterans Treatment Court Coordinator; Joe Nigro, Public Defender; Spike Eickholt, Government Liaison, American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU); Hassan Ramzah, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Police; Brian Jackson, Interim Chief, Lincoln Police Department; Yohance Christie, City Attorney; Jessica Kerkhofs, Chief Assistant City Attorney; Brad Johnson, Corrections Director; Ben Houchin, Chief Deputy Sheriff; Scott Etherton, Mental Health Crisis Center Director; Bennie Schobe, Lincoln City Councilman; Laurie Yardley, County Court Judge; Terry Wagner, County Sheriff; Sara Hoyle, Human Services Director; and Dan Nolte, County Clerk

Commissioner Schorr opened the meeting at 7:30 a.m. Copies of meeting materials were made available.

Introductions were made by those in attendance.

**AGENDA ITEM**

**1) APPROVAL OF JUSTICE COUNCIL MINUTES FROM NOVEMBER 6, 2020**

**MOTION:** Vest moved and Johnson seconded approval of the November 6, 2020 meeting minutes. Motion carried unanimously.

**2) COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS UPDATE – Kim Etherton, Community Corrections Director**

Kim Etherton said she is hiring a new Testing Coordinator due to a recent staff departure.

She reported the program working with 18 to 30-year old male reentry population is going well. A presentation on the program will be presented to the County Board of Commissioners at a future date. There are grant opportunities available for continued funding for the program.

Regarding legislation, Etherton said LB271 (Adopt the 24/7 Sobriety Program Act) would allow for additional sobriety programming to assist individuals with Driving Under the Influence (DUI) charges.

Also, LB663 (Require the Nebraska Commission on Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice to create a mental health indicator in a criminal justice information system to alert emergency dispatch operators), would allow for the sharing of mental health information between law enforcement, community providers and corrections to more efficiently find suitable programming and assistance for individuals with known mental health needs. Schorr added she testified at the legislative hearing and said the senators commented positively on the County's work and leadership in the criminal justice system.

### **3) CORRECTIONS UPDATE – Brad Johnson, Lancaster County Corrections Director**

#### **A. Population Statistics and Charts**

Johnson reviewed a PowerPoint presentation (see agenda packet). He stated the female population has decreased dramatically.

Regarding the State sentencing revocations, Curry noted the average number of days per individual is 14 days revocation. Johnson added the average cost for an individual is \$110 per day.

Johnson said the jail has been able to maintain cohort groups during the pandemic as long as the population in the jail is lower than 570. If it is higher, the cohorts are more difficult to properly distance.

Condon requested data on the racial and gender inequalities of individuals in the jail. Johnson said he would like to hire a consultant to look at those data points within the jail and all of the other law enforcement agencies to have a scientific, data-driven analysis of the affected individuals. There was continued discussion to look at the entire criminal justice system, including bills and laws, penalties, agencies and departments.

Eickholt stated LB657 (Require the office of Legislative Research to prepare racial impact statements for legislative bills) would require impacts to be made available, and that the County may be interested in following the bill.

Prenda said the juvenile justice system stakeholders have a monthly meeting in which they discuss the impacts on the youth of various regulations and programs. He and Hoyle would be able to assist if anyone wanted to do a similar process with the adult system.

#### **B. State IDs**

No updates were given.

### **4) LINCOLN POLICE DEPARTMENT UPDATE ON INCREASE IN VIOLENT CRIME – Brian Jackson, Interim Chief, City of Lincoln Police Department**

Jackson gave a presentation (Exhibit 1). When asked if the homicides number includes deaths at the penitentiary, Jackson answered no, the homicides are police investigated deaths. He added Lincoln has a lower homicide rate than other cities its size.

He noted Lincoln's violent crimes were higher for 2020 than previous years. An increase in aggravated assaults (assaults that have the use of a weapon and/or result in serious injury) is impactful to the department's resources that could be directed at other efforts. He did not know if that trend is true for other areas of the country.

Jackson stated in 2018 the Lincoln Police Department (LPD) began educating the public about the importance of locking vehicles, doors and valuables, which has resulted in a lower larceny from autos statistic.

Schorr asked if there has been an increase in auto thefts with the increase in gun sales. Jackson said there is a City ordinance that requires weapons to be secured in vehicles, and there have been citations issued for that. There were weapons stolen from vehicles.

Nigro asked for the breakdown between violent and nonviolent crimes in 2020. Jackson answered there were more thefts and burglaries.

## **5) AGENCY AND ORGANIZATIONAL UPDATES**

### **A. Courts**

Yardley reported jury trials will be resuming. The communication of pending warrants to those affected individuals was stressed to get those resolved before needing to be lodged in the jail. Johnson said if a large number of individuals were to come into the jail on older warrants it could disrupt the cohort efforts.

### **B. City Attorney**

Kerkhofs said a Warrant Night is planned for February 18.

### **C. County Attorney**

Condon stated he and Kim Etherton are working on a Treatment Diversion program, which helps individuals with drug charges to get into the best programs for them to succeed. Individuals who have been in Diversion before will not be prohibited from being in the Treatment Diversion program.

Concerning the DUI Court, programs are being reviewed. Condon was hopeful the 24/7 Sobriety Program legislation will pass, which will allow program participants to be eligible for driving privileges similar to the interlock system privileges.

### **D. Public Defender**

Nigro reported the text message reminder system for individuals with upcoming court dates will be going live on Monday. He is hopeful this will reduce Failure to Appear (FTA) charges.

### **E. Law Enforcement**

No updates were given.

## **F. Probation**

Curry said Probation is looking forward to DUI Court beginning soon.

## **G. Service Providers**

There was general discussion about a public notice detailing the availability of Zoom court sessions. Yardley added Zoom court sessions have been very efficient.

Scott Etherton reported admissions at the Mental Health Crisis Center have decreased the last six months. Additionally, access to beds at other facilities has been limited.

## **H. Other Community Partners**

No updates were given.

### **6) NEXT MEETING – FRIDAY, MAY 7, 2021**

Informational only.

### **7) ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 8:57 a.m.

Submitted by Leslie Brestel, County Clerk's Office