

Alaska Criminal Justice Commission

Meeting Summary

Monday, October 7, 2019

10:00 am – 4:30 p.m.

Alaska Mental Health Trust

3745 Community Park Loop, Anchorage

And audio-teleconference

Commissioners Present: Sean Case, Samantha Cherot, Matt Claman, Nancy Dahlstrom, Shelley Hughes (Regina Largent served as proxy for Sen. Hughes for the first half of the meeting), Amanda Price, Greg Razo, Brenda Stanfill, Trevor Stephens, Steve Williams

Commissioners Absent: Joel Bolger (Doug Wooliver served as proxy for Chief Justice Bolger), Kevin Clarkson (Deputy AG John Skidmore served as proxy for AG Clarkson), Adam Crum (Deputy Commissioner Al Wall served as proxy for Commissioner Crum), Stephanie Rhoades

Participants: Regina Largent, Kelly Howell, Brad Myrstol, Troy Payne, Tony Piper, Lizzie Kubitz, Renee McFarland Julia McDonald, Lauree Morton, Tyra MacKinnon, Travis Welch, Eugene Carl Haberman, Gennifer Moreau, Teri Tibbett

Staff: Teri Carns, Susanne DiPietro, Staci Corey, Brian Brossmer, Susie Dosik, Barbara Dunham

Approval of Meeting Agenda and Previous Meeting Summary

Commissioner Williams moved to approve the meeting agenda and Commissioner Stanfill seconded the motion. The meeting agenda was approved without objection.

Commissioner Razo moved to approve the summary of the previous meeting and Commissioner Stanfill seconded the motion. The previous meeting's summary was approved without objection.

Commission Participation at AFN and Tribal Conference

Barbara Dunham, project attorney for the Commission, explained that the Commission would be hosting a victim listening session at the Alaska Federation of Natives Convention on Saturday, Oct. 19 and would also be presenting to the Tribal Conference just before the Convention on Wednesday, Oct. 16.

Chair Claman said that the presentation on the 16th was open to topics; he thought something to do with the VPSO program might be good, and he welcomed any thoughts. Ms. Dunham explained that as a placeholder, staff had proposed presenting on the Commission's recent activities (the sex offenses report and the victim listening sessions), crime rate data, criminal justice system data, and what's changed in the law after the passage of HB 49.

Commissioner Razo thought that providing a brief update on data, Commission activities and the law was a good idea, noting there was not a lot of time, and there was a lot of material from the annual report. The update on the law would probably be most beneficial. He noted that he wouldn't be able to make this particular event.

Commissioners Stanfill, Dahlstrom, and Case said they were interested in attending.

Chair Claman said it sounded like the will of the group was to provide an update on the law and data, and there was no objection.

Commissioner Stanfill also thought it was a good idea to give update on what the Commission has been doing, in part to let people know about the victim listening session later in the week. On that note, she asked if other Commissioners wanted to go, and encouraged attendance. Commissioner Razo said he would be there.

Commissioner Williams seconded Commissioner Stanfill's encouragement. As someone who went to the previous listening session in Fairbanks, he heard a lot of good information, and thought it was helpful to attend. Chair Claman agreed, and said he thought his visit to Bethel was illuminating.

Review Annual Report Draft

Ms. Dunham explained that the draft of the annual report she had circulated was close to completion but some parts had yet to be completed. She walked the Commission through each section of the draft.

The first section was devoted to the Commission's activities for the preceding year, including the sex offenses report and the victim listening sessions and survey. Ms. Dunham noted that the Victims' Rights and Services Workgroup had decided that the Commission should also issue a separate report on the listening sessions and surveys.

The next section was devoted to criminal justice system data, with a focus on data relating to changes made by SB 91. Commissioner Williams noted that some charts had lines for SB 91 and SB 51 and thought that lines for HB 312 and HB 49 would be helpful too.

Al Wall noted the admissions and prison population data relating to drug offenses and thought it would be interesting to know what types of drugs are the basis of drug crime convictions. Ms. Dunham said that getting that information would be time intensive because that kind of data was not digitized it would likely require a case file review. John Skidmore said that the Dept. of Law also did not have that information digitized and would also need to do a file review to get that information.

Mr. Wall said he was also interested in knowing the average sentences for drug crimes compared to sentences for other crimes. Ms. Dunham said that was possible. Chair Claman thought including that information would be helpful.

Ms. Dunham explained that rising prison admission rates seemed to be driven mostly by an increase in non-violent pretrial misdemeanor admissions. Commissioner Stanfill noted that crime rates had been increasing too and wondered if that information could be included alongside admissions information. Ms. Dunham said that it could.

Commissioner Stanfill was also interested in knowing more about the Pretrial Enforcement Division, including what kinds of cases are being assigned to supervision and how many people are supervised. Commissioner Dahlstrom said her department could provide that information. Commissioner Razo thought it would be helpful to have a section describing what PED does. Judge Stephens said he also thought that information would be valuable. His impression was that judges like having PED as a new tool, but that it might be overused. He would like some data to see what's been happening with that division.

Chair Claman said that getting that information was a question of how easily accessible the data was for DOC as well as timing—if it was not realistic to get this information for this report, it could be put on the agenda for January. Commissioner Dahlstrom said DOC was happy to get the information to the Commission and would try to get as much as possible for the report. Chair Claman also suggested planning to put the topic on the agenda for January; there seemed to be interest among Commissioners, and anecdotally he had heard the same as what Judge Stephens was reporting.

Susanne DiPietro, executive director of the Alaska Judicial Council and staff to the Commission, said she wanted to draw the Commission's attention to the data on probation and parole. Every measure that staff looked at improved, and she thought it was a good demonstration of how the reforms were successfully implemented by DOC. She thought DOC was to be commended.

Commissioner Stanfill noted that the report also showed that recidivism is down, which was equally impressive.

Ms. Dunham explained that this was the first time the Commission's annual report had a recidivism section, since it had now been roughly three years since criminal justice reform was implemented. Commission research analyst Brian Brossmer had done a lot of work putting together the recidivism data, and there was more to report than what would fit in the annual report. Staff wanted Commissioner input as to whether to issue a separate recidivism report.

Ms. Dunham noted that the Commission's recidivism measure was different than that reported by DOC. DOC has always reported recidivism measures for people who have served time for a felony from the date of release. They look at whether those people return to prison.

The Commission wanted to cast a broader net, particularly because under criminal justice reform, not everyone would be going to prison and a lot of the changes were to misdemeanor offenses. Therefore the Commission's recidivism data looked at re-arrests, returns to prison, and reconvictions for people convicted of both misdemeanors and felonies, and studied the cohorts from the date of conviction. If people in a cohort spent time in prison after conviction, the analysis took that into account.

Chair Claman asked if the first chart in the recidivism section showed the cumulative recidivism rate. Ms. Dunham said it did. Chair Claman said that seemed to indicate that most recidivism happened within the first two years. Ms. Dunham said that was the case, and that data aligned with other studies of recidivism both in Alaska and nationally. Commissioner Stanfill said she had a hard time understanding that the chart showed cumulative recidivism.

Teri Carns, Judicial Council researcher, said that it made sense that the highest recidivism rate was for remands to prison, because that measure includes people remanded for probation/parole violations. Re-arrests are almost entirely new offenses. Reconvictions are also for new crimes, and that rate does not include adjudications for probation/parole violations. Each measure is important because it involves the use of justice system resources; reconviction uses the most.

Chair Claman asked the Commission's opinion as to whether more information on recidivism should go in an appendix to the annual report or in a separate report released at a later date.

Commissioner Razo thought a separate report issued the first quarter of next year would be appropriate. This is a topic people are interested in, and he thought a separate report was warranted. Commissioner Williams agreed and thought that was most realistic given the time.

Ms. Dunham also asked Commissioners to think about whether the recidivism information already presented in the annual report was too much and whether having two different ways of looking at recidivism was too complicated.

Commissioner Stanfill suggested putting in more explanation. She also questioned putting recidivism rates by ethnicity in there. Commissioner Razo thought that including that information was not offensive but rather informative, if shocking. He suggested making it clearer that the analysis didn't control for other factors. He thought people would ask about ethnicity if it wasn't included.

Ms. Dunham explained that in SB 54, the legislature had asked the Commission to look at risk factors among people in prison. DOC administers a risk and needs assessment called the LSIR, and the data from that assessment was collected for the Commission to analyze. The legislature was most interested in assessing what ACES factors were prevalent among people in prison, with an eye toward prevention; the LSIR data does not necessarily get at that directly but is related.

Ms. Carns noted that staff had prepared a 30+ page report on this as well. The report notes there is a study by DHSS on ACES in Alaska, other studies connect the LSIR to ACES, and there is more information on the LSIR itself. She thought it was well worth a separate report.

Commissioner Razo said it sounded like there was a great deal of information, enough to fill an appendix and another report at a later date. There was general agreement among the Commission to have a summary in an appendix and a full report next year.

Ms. Dunham explained that the next section contained information on crime rates, but this was underdeveloped since the crime rate data for 2018 just came out. Pertaining to the section on vehicle theft in Anchorage, Mr. Wall wondered whether there was a way to see if vehicle theft was correlated to drug crime. Ms. DiPietro said staff could look into it.

Commissioner Stanfill said she would like the report to include information on the Suspended Entry of Judgment. Ms. Dunham said staff had some information on that and could add it to the report.

Public Comment

Members of the public are welcome to comment at any time by emailing bdunham@ajc.state.ak.us.

Sen. Fred Dyson explained that he was a former member of the Commission, a former legislator, and currently served on the Anchorage Assembly. He thought it was worth looking back over the last five years to assess what went wrong with criminal justice reform. The Commission sailed into a perfect storm. He thought the previous administration didn't take enough of a leadership role in seeing the project through, the timing was bad, and the rollout should have been more deliberate. He thought legislators pandered to constituents rather than defend the law they voted for. Law enforcement officers were ill prepared for reform, and there was a gap in knowledge of how to operate under the new system. There was also a crime wave with an opioid epidemic. Reform didn't get PR it should have. He believed the Commission was on the side of

truth, mercy, data, and second chances. Going forward, he encouraged making use of federal efforts at criminal justice reform, and to pick low-hanging fruit. As a fisherman he knew it's always good to catch a weather window with the tide running your way. The cost of incarceration is huge. Ultimately reducing recidivism saves money and serves the cause of justice.

Cathleen McLaughlin explained that she is the CEO of Restorative and Reentry Services, and formerly the director of Partners for Progress. She wanted to speak to solution-based ideas. Most fragile people cannot be neatly packaged into one category: people experiencing homelessness, people with mental illness, and victims of assault can all be the same people. If service providers only address one aspect of what a person is experiencing, they are not going to really help those who are marginalized.

To illustrate this, Ms. McLaughlin shared her experience on Saturday helping out with the Lullaby Project at Hiland Mountain. This year they are starting to work with people who are in prison long-term. The women she worked with this past Saturday had been foster kids, probably had high ACEs scores, and had untreated mental health issues; those issues led them to self-medicate, which led them to become homeless or housing-unstable, which led them to become victims of sexual assault, which led them to commit minor crimes, which led to larger crimes—and now their children are starting on the same cycle while their mothers are in prison. These problems are cyclical and if Alaska does not break the cycle, it will not move the needle. Service providers need to change from a program-centric model to participant-centric models, and need to work together to provide holistic care.

Butch Moore explained that after his daughter was killed by her boyfriend in 2014, he discovered crimes by her killer's parents. He developed a video about this which he sent to the attorney general's office, but it has not resulted in any action for prosecution. He showed the video to legislators who wrote to the attorney general voicing their concerns, but there was still no action. He received a letter in response from the attorney general's office that misstated facts. He brought documentation with him today including a description of the video, the attorney general's office response and documents that disprove that response. He was here today in part because he saw Judge MacDonald's recent order about delays in the criminal justice system. Tough-on-crime laws don't mean anything if no one is able to back them up. He wanted to ask the Commission to review the video, and to direct the governor to respond and prosecute the case.

Commissioner Stanfill asked whether Mr. Moore was asking the Commission to make recommendations for a change in the laws, or whether he felt like existing laws should be enforced.

Mr. Moore said that there were laws on the books that should be enforced and are not. On the Commission's website, it says the Commission can make recommendations to the legislature and governor. He has spoken to federal prosecutors and Taylor Winston of the Office of Victims' Rights, and they believe these people should be prosecuted. He thought there might be some reason they are not being prosecuted, though he didn't know what. Given the lengths he has gone to pursue this, he wondered who else is not getting justice. He encouraged the Commission to watch the video and make a recommendation to the Governor.

Eugene Carl Haberman explained that he lived in the Mat-Su and was a follower of the public process. He attends a lot of public meetings. At the last Commission meeting he attended, The Commission advertised a different meeting time on its website than when it actually started. There was an apology but the law is the law. He noticed that there were materials provided for the meeting and that the agenda had been posted on the website but not the other materials. He observed that the staff was also the staff of the Alaska Judicial Council, which nominates judges, and those meetings have also been inappropriate. The criminal code was a hot topic in the legislature, and there was no video or audio recording of these meetings. There was no fair chance for public participation. If the process is done right, the public will be more comfortable with the decisions made. He noted there were other presentations scheduled after the public comment period. But the public would not be able to comment on those. How can public be heard? Email comments were not good enough.

Lenny Moran explained that she drove in from the Valley, and was speaking on her own behalf. She was one of the founders of STAR, was also the survivor of a machete assault in 2007, and her son was the victim of a murder. The trial for her son's murder took three and a half years. She was very disappointed in the results. She met with the governor before he was elected. She didn't believe in the death penalty but agreed in sentences that were 99 years without parole. She thought that sentence should be an option for all murders, not just the murder of a police officer. The governor promised he would work on that, but nothing has happened yet. The person who assaulted her also murdered her fiancé in the same attack, and he got 400 years. The man who shot her son will be released when he is a year younger than she was now. For her this was agonizing. She found it very frustrating to seek justice over and over again. The man who shot her son point blank on Christmas Eve didn't even know her son. Another man handed him a loaded gun, and he's walking around free. She thought that didn't make sense, and was looking for help as to who to talk to and what to do.

Commissioner Stanfill asked Ms. Moran if she knew about the Office of Victim's Rights. Ms. Moran said she was working with OVR and attends their support group, which she found very helpful. Chair Claman told Ms. Moran that he appreciated her coming forward; he knew it took a lot of courage to speak up, and it meant a lot to everyone on the Commission to hear what she had to say. Everyone there wanted solutions and the solutions were not easy.

Talia Eames from the Central Council Tlingit-Haida said she wanted to touch base about reentry simulations. CCHITA and the Juneau Reentry Coalition will host one in Juneau at end of the month, and at the last Commission meeting there was talk of doing one during session in January. She was willing to work with the Commission on this. Chair Claman encouraged her to get in touch with staff. Ms. Eames said she would.

Chanta Bullock said she hadn't heard the whole meeting. She wondered whether in the new year the Commission would do anything about mandatory sentencing, or whether everybody should have access to discretionary parole. Chair Claman noted that this subject had already been the subject of extensive legislation in last couple of years, and that the annual report would contain a summary of recent changes. The Commission would discuss where its focus for next year would be later in the meeting, and Ms. Bullock was welcome to stay on the line and listen to that discussion.

Reinvestment Discussion

Ms. Dunham explained that the Commission was statutorily required to report on how savings from criminal justice reform should be invested. Since criminal justice reform was enacted, however, DOC has had a flat fiscal note, meaning that there is no pot of money waiting to be spent. DOC cites increased per-prisoner costs and the costs of some more expensive facilities being used more.

Chair Claman added that costs would now increase with the passage of HB 49, which had a significant fiscal note; he thought the report should reflect that.

Ms. Dunham explained that there were averted costs, since the projections before reform were that Alaska would have to build a new prison. That has been avoided, but it was hard to put the avoided costs into a dollar amount. There was also the extra revenue from the marijuana tax; it was unclear from the statute exactly how that should be used.

Commissioner Stanfill said she would like to see the Commission look into making a recommendation on how that tax money should be used. She would hate to stay stuck at the original investment amount (the amount allocated from the recidivism reduction fund as projected by SB 91's fiscal note) when there was more need for investment.

Commissioner Razo noted that the recidivism reduction money has gone to three different entities, he would like the report to detail how that money was used. Commissioner Stanfill said she would like that information broken down by how much was spent on each program. Ms. Dunham said she thought she could get that information.

Commissioner Williams said he wanted to echo what Commissioner Stanfill said about there still being a need for more investment. He noted that reentry services are also preventive services. He believed the community-based system was the key to slowing the flow into the criminal justice system and will allow better use of criminal justice resources. If Alaska continues to bolster its reentry and community-based services, it could see continued reductions in recidivism.

Updates from Agencies on Current Projects

Chair Claman noted he had asked for updates from the agencies to give the Commission some background on the discussion in the next agenda item.

Gen Moreau, director of the Division of Behavioral Health at DHSS explained that she had brought handouts on the behavioral health continuum of care as it will operate under the Medicaid 1115 Waiver. The substance use disorder (SUD) portion of the waiver was approved in November 2018 and Medicaid coverage started July 1. There are approximately 100 locations providing 1115 SUD services now. On September 3, the Behavioral Health portion of the waiver was approved, and DSB anticipates implementing these services by January 1.

Doug Wooliver, deputy administrator for the Alaska Court System, conveyed an update from Justice Bolger on the mental health and criminal justice summit. It would be a day and a half, and bring together mostly judges and lawyers, both civil and criminal, and would take place at the end of February. Chair Claman asked if this was a postponement of the summit tentatively planned for December. Mr. Wooliver said it was.

Commissioner Williams explained that the Trust, in conjunction with DHSS and other stakeholders were in the process of developing a pilot project based on the Crisis Now model. Many of those involved have gone to see this model, and the Trust and DHSS have contracted with Recovery Innovations International on how to get started. Elements of the Crisis Now model are covered by Medicaid under the 1115 Waiver. The model has three main elements. The first is a call center (different from emergency dispatch) that can respond in real time to people experiencing a behavioral health crisis. In Phoenix, their call center was able to resolve 70% of crises on the phone. The second element is having someone to send out into the community to deescalate situations. And the third element is the crisis stabilization center. This center should have a no refusal policy and be open 24/7. RII, the technical assistance provider, is now meeting with folks in Anchorage and the Mat-SU.

Facilitated Discussion

Chair Claman explained that Commissioners had made several proposals for projects for the Commission to work on, some at the previous meeting. He has been talking with staff on how to get consensus on the Commission's priorities for the year ahead. In past the approach has been somewhat ad-hoc. He wanted to take a slightly different approach this year by putting a plan for the year ahead in the annual report. He note that in previous years many of the Commission's recommendations were consensus based. He decided to engage a skilled facilitator who can help develop a consensus on this.

Thea Agnew Bemben explained that she was with Agnew::Beck and that the goal for the discussion was to come to a consensus about two to three proposals for research priorities. There was a handout with all the projects the Commissioners had proposed; the Commissioners who made those proposals would speak to them to explain them to the group. She explained the handout categorized the proposals by existing workgroups and "other", which was not to say that the proposals needed to stay in those categories; it was just a way to look at them.

Ms. Dunham reminded the Commission of its obligations and factors to consider when making recommendations. The Commission's enabling statute requires the Commission to "make recommendations for improving criminal sentencing practices and criminal justice practices, including rehabilitation and restitution." The statute also requires the Commission to consider:

- "(1) statutes, court rules, and court decisions relevant to sentencing of criminal defendants in misdemeanor and felony cases;
- (2) sentencing practices of the judiciary, including use of presumptive sentences;
- (3) means of promoting uniformity, proportionality, and accountability in sentencing;
- (4) alternatives to traditional forms of incarceration;
- (5) the efficacy of parole and probation in ensuring public safety, achieving rehabilitation, and reducing recidivism;
- (6) the adequacy, availability, and effectiveness of treatment and rehabilitation programs;
- (7) crime and incarceration rates, including the rate of violent crime and the abuse of controlled substances, in this state compared to other states, and best practices adopted by other states that have proven to be successful in reducing recidivism;
- (8) the relationship between sentencing priorities and correctional resources; [and]

- (9) the effectiveness of the state's current methodologies for the collection and dissemination of criminal justice data.”

The statute also requires the Commission’s recommendations to be based on:

- “(A) the seriousness of each offense in relation to other offenses;
- (B) the effect of an offender's prior criminal history on sentencing;
- (C) the need to rehabilitate criminal offenders;
- (D) the need to confine offenders to prevent harm to the public;
- (E) the extent to which criminal offenses harm victims and endanger the public safety and order;
- (F) the effect of sentencing in deterring an offender or other members of society from future criminal conduct;
- (G) the effect of sentencing as a community condemnation of criminal acts and as a reaffirmation of societal norms;
- (H) the elimination of unjustified disparity in sentences;
- (I) the sufficiency of state agency resources to administer the criminal justice system of the state;
- (J) the effect of criminal justice laws and practices on reducing the rate of recidivism in the state;
- (K) peer reviewed and data-driven research; and
- (L) the efficacy of evidence-based restorative justice initiatives on persons convicted of criminal violations and offenses, the victim, and the community.”

Ms. Bemben said the commission should also look at the following criteria:

- Is this well-aligned with the Criminal Justice Commission’s purpose and role?
- Is this within the Commission’s powers and duties and does it fall within the methodology in statute?
- Is this related to the work of ACJC working groups?
- What timeframe does this require: short term (1 year), medium term (1 to 3 years), long term (3 years+)
- What resources are needed (and available) to support or implement this action?

She said the group would walk through each proposal, and Commissioners should feel free to voice their opinions. There were many proposals and the Commission clearly couldn’t move forward with all of them.

Proposals- Victims of Crime

The first category of proposals related to the Victims’ Rights and Services Workgroup, and the first item on the list was the victim listening sessions. Commissioner Stanfill explained that Commission had already hosted four listening sessions as well as an online survey, and that the Commission would be hosting another listening session at AFN. The question was whether to do more. Attendance at the listening sessions hadn’t been great, but the participants who did show

up shared helpful information. Each session has seen a lot of the same themes. That said, , maybe some places would appreciate the Commission going to places it hadn't yet been.

The next two proposals had been identified as priorities by the workgroup. Commissioner Stanfill said one priority was to improve communication to victims with navigation services or call centers; the second was to address pretrial delay as it relates to victims.

Ms. Bemben asked if the question for the listening sessions was whether to keep doing them, and if so, she wondered what the research goal for that would be. Commissioner Stanfill confirmed that was the question, and said that she wasn't sure what the research goal was yet but to make recommendations to address what the Commission has heard.

Commissioner Case thought that many of the same themes were coming out of the victim listening sessions, and not a ton of people were showing up. Pretrial delay was a huge issue; APD officers are subpoenaed for 12 months of the year. He was not sure what the workgroup could do on that, other than improving communication, and getting people to services. He supported the communication proposal.

Mr. Skidmore said he also supported the communication proposal. He was working with UAA on some of those issues, and would fill the workgroup in at its next meeting.

Chair Claman said the Commission needed to think about resources in terms of the victim listening sessions. He wondered what the Commission could do about communication. Commissioner Stanfill said that the workgroup had already gathered a lot of data, and now needed to look at the policies that were driving the issues. She thought a lot of policy recommendations could be made, perhaps a victim's bill of rights. It was about addressing gaps.

Commissioner Razo noted that Justice Bolger had said in his speech to the legislature earlier this year that his focus would be on pretrial delay, and that the courts would make every effort to shorten that period. He wondered whether there was an update on the courts' efforts.

Ms. DiPietro said the courts came up with a pilot program in Anchorage, making a commitment to make judges available no matter what, and to reduce unnecessary hearings. That pilot project hadn't been evaluated yet. She agreed it was a huge topic. Her sense was that the Criminal Justice Working Group would want to see how the pilot plays out and evaluate it, and perhaps the Commission could pick up the topic for the next annual report.

Commissioner Razo said he hated to duplicate efforts, but he had no information about this program. More information about this would be helpful. He encouraged the court system to publicize it. He also knew of a legal navigator project using AI that had been in the works for three years, and had made some progress. He didn't suspect it was widely known, and thought that it could have potential benefits for victims as well, a way to connect victims with resources.

Mr. Skidmore said one concept the Dept. of Law was working on is was a criminal justice concierge service, in partnership with the University. The service would provide victims and others an actual person to talk to. They were hoping to launch the service in January.

Ms. Bemben said she was hearing that maybe the Commission would not do more listening sessions, there was lot of support for the communication piece, and also support for the pretrial delay piece but that it was a big project.

Mr. Skidmore explained that the last proposal in this category was something he had raised at the last meeting. There was a pilot project in Fairbanks to share bail conditions with law enforcement, so that if an officer contacted someone who was on bail in the community, the officer could know what their conditions are. His proposal was to expand the program statewide. Sharing criminal justice data had always been a big topic for the Commission in the past. This an example that allows officers to be more responsive, and also gives the public more confidence in pretrial release. Chief Justice Bolger was interested in this as well, though they hadn't been able to meet yet.

Ms. Bemben wondered if research was needed for this project. Mr. Skidmore said no, it would involve expanding a project that exists, and the logistics of how to expand it to other areas.

Commissioner Stanfill said the project works great in Fairbanks. She wondered if it was a resource issue. Mr. Wooliver said yes, it was a resource-intensive project. He hoped that when the court system's electronic filing system was complete, it would be easier to implement. Commissioner Stanfill asked if he could put together what resources were needed. Mr. Wooliver said he could follow up on that.

Chair Claman said it sounded like the victims' workgroup could choose whether to do more listening sessions. Improving communication for victims was a project that would involve research and analysis. The pretrial delay issue was something the court system was already working on. It also sounded like commission resources were not needed for expanding the Fairbanks bail project.

Mr. Skidmore agreed that resources from the Commission were not needed, but it would be helpful to have the Commission's support. The Commission's support would be meaningful if resources were required from the legislature.

Senator Hughes said she had just recently joined the meeting. It sounded to her like both the pretrial delay project and the Fairbanks bail project were not things that required the Commission's resources but were items for the Commission to monitor and get updates on. She noted the victims' workgroup already got an update on pretrial delay. These were both things she would like to monitor.

Commissioner Case agreed with Mr. Skidmore that Commission support for expanding the Fairbanks bail project would be helpful. He added that APD's most common VCR charge is based on the condition "do not commit additional crimes" because they know that anyone with a case in pretrial status will have that condition.

Commissioner Razo said he was unclear on the relationship between pretrial enforcement and law enforcement—were they not same thing? Mr. Skidmore said they weren't; PED was assigned to monitor certain defendants. Others were not assigned. If someone was contacted by law enforcement in a community where they don't make bail conditions available to law enforcement, a police officer would have no idea whether that person was out on bail or what conditions of bail they might have. In Fairbanks, officers can call dispatch to have access to that information.

Ms. DiPietro said a few smaller communities such as Nome have a direct arrangement with the local court as well. Judge Stephens thought it was critical that officers know what bail conditions a person has. If an officer knows a person has a DV charge and is not supposed to be in the family home, that's key to keeping the family safe. He was surprised to learn at the last meeting

that this was not the case everywhere. He has this system in his town. It's also nice for judges to know that the conditions they set are meaningful.

Commissioner Stanfill said that the victims' workgroup did want this body to decide whether listening sessions should continue.

Chair Claman noted that the choice to continue listening sessions would cost resources but didn't need research. Same for the Fairbanks bail project—they could both be taken off the research list.

Ms. Bembien said it sounded like the will of the group was that the communication piece had the most support as a research priority.

Proposals- Sex Offenses

The first proposal in the sex offenses category was to update the legal definition of consent. Mr. Skidmore explained that during the last regular legislative session, there were concerns that the state statutes on consent were not up to date. A number of states have made changes in this area regarding their sex assault laws. Rep. Tarr would be hosting a community discussion on this on the 10th. He thought it would take additional research and there were a number of complicated issues involved. He would encourage the Commission to spend time on this. Commissioner Stanfill agreed. Sen. Hughes also agreed; it was important to get this right. The net should not be set too wide or too narrow.

Chair Claman said he was familiar with Rep. Tarr's work on this. The question was whether it might be duplicative of resources, if the legislature is already taking this up—whether the legislature will find it helpful or whether it will do what it wants to do.

Commissioner Razo said it was definitely within the wheelhouse of the Commission. Sexual assault is a pervasive problem, and he didn't think enough people could work on it. It is the #1 problem for the state of Alaska

Agreed that many people were already working on this issue anyway, but she felt that the Commission should be in front of this. This is the role of the Commission. She added that this tied into the next proposal in this category which was to conduct a thorough review of the sex offense statutes. The legislature directed the sex offense workgroup to review the statutes, then statutes were changing, so the workgroup put the review on hold because it wanted to see what the statutes looked like after the end of the session. A lot of changes were made but a lot of things can still be done. She knew of things other states were doing in this area.

Commissioner Williams wondered what the breadth or workload was for this project. Mr. Skidmore thought it comprised three or four areas: sexual abuse of a minor, sexual assault, offenses in 11.61 or 11.66 of the statutes (child pornography and similar crimes), and miscellaneous offenses. Ms. Dunham added that registration and related offense would be on the list as well. Mr. Skidmore said he would like to participate in that review.

Sen Hughes said that having such a review would be very helpful to the legislators, who have limited staff capacity. Last session the approach to sex offenses felt piecemeal, and she would like a broad look. She noted there had been recent headlines on tragic statistics lending some urgency to this discussion.

The final proposal in this category was to look at the human trafficking and sex trafficking laws. Mr. Skidmore said that other states are looking at this issue, and it also seems to be in the national conversation. He thought of this proposal as a subsection of the previous one.

Commissioner Stanfill wondered if looking at both human trafficking and sex trafficking involved two different projects that should be looked at separately. Mr. Skidmore said that was a good question though there was some overlap. Sex trafficking statutes cover more specific conduct. Human trafficking is broader. Chair Claman said his sense was that the public was more concerned about sex trafficking side.

Ms. Dunham noted the sex offenses workgroup had already considered a proposal to change the law on sex trafficking but waiting on feedback from a human trafficking task force. Mr. Skidmore said he didn't think that group had met recently.

Commissioner Razo said this issue was pervasive, and knew there were federal grants that CIRI and the Alaska Native Justice Center had to look into this—it would be good to hear from those groups. There is a lot of information on this we don't know.

Ms. Bembem said she thought the way to look at these proposals is that the review of all the sex offense statutes is really the research umbrella, and that the other two proposals come under that umbrella.

Proposals - Behavioral Health

The first proposal under the behavioral health category was to have statewide standards on Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) and oversight by the Alaska Police Standards Council. CIT is a national evidence-based model whose use continues to grow around the state. His concern was that as new locales adopt the model, they are not implementing the evidence-based model. He wanted to get the APSC to endorse the evidence-based model to get local police to use that model. The Commission could take position on endorsing this plan; he didn't think the Commission needed to take direct action now.

The next two proposals had to do with maintaining Medicaid enrollment for people while they are in prison and having Medicaid pay for behind-the-walls treatment. Ms. Moreau said she wanted to make clear that right now, Medicaid will only reimburse for services for people who are incarcerated if they spend more than 24 hours inpatient at a hospital. That is the only benefit available for people who are incarcerated; any other coverage is not available under federal rules.

Ms. Bembem asked Ms. Moreau to explain what happened to someone who had Medicaid upon entering prison. Ms. Moreau said their enrollment was not cancelled or suspended but the benefit was limited to just inpatient care. The problem with maintaining Medicaid enrollment while in prison is the requirement for yearly renewal. People in DOC facilities do not have access to the internet, so they have to use a paper application process. If they are able to do the paperwork every year, they are able to maintain eligibility. Commissioner Stanfill said it sounded like the question was how to ensure DOC offers everyone the opportunity to enroll. Ms. Moreau said it was. She noted the backlog of applications was being addressed and had greatly improved, and she also understood there was interest in getting inmates internet access.

Chair Claman said it sounded like this was largely governed by federal regulation, Ms. Moreau said basically yes, and noted there was some interest in expanding benefits to people in prison at a recent DC conference. Chair Claman was not sure the Commission could have much

impact on this. Mr. Wall suggested it might fall under the Commission's purview to write a letter of support for expanding coverage for people in prison.

Senator Hughes said she also brought this up at the last meeting – she thought the Commission could put pressure on CMS and the federal delegation. It would not have to be on the research list, just a resolution for a future agenda at some point. She would also support a legislative resolution to the same effect. The Commission could recommend the legislature pass such a resolution.

Ms. DiPietro said staff would double check whether that was within the Commission's statutory authorization. Certainly it was appropriate to make recommendations to the state legislature.

Judge Stephens said there were two separate issues: one was expanding in-prison Medicaid coverage and the other was ensuring that people were enrolled or still enrolled when they leave the prison doors. He thought the latter was an issue for DOC. He knew reentry planning was already required but difficult to do when most people aren't in that long. He thought the Commission could consider recommending that the executive branch make efforts to ensure enrollment—this could also be an agenda item but did not entail research.

Ms. Bemben said the first three proposals in this category sounded more like future agenda items rather than research priorities.

The next proposal was to focus on behind-the-walls treatment and rehabilitative services. Judge Stephens explained that much of the Commission's focus had been on what happens before people step behind the prison walls and what happens when they step out, but not what happens in between. He thought the Commission could look at other state practices, and make recommendations to legislature and executive branch. The focus should be not just treatment but also education and other programming. While people are incarcerated there is an opportunity to get people into rehabilitative services. The goal would be to have the person who steps out of prison be very different from the person who steps in. He doubted the Commission could do the full Norway model directly, but other states have adopted some of Norway's approaches. A delegation from Oregon went with the delegation from Alaska; it would be interesting to see what they and other states have done.

Senator Hughes said this proposal could combine with the next one, to develop comprehensive rehabilitative programming within DOC facilities, housing high-risk and low-risk people separately, and providing reentry programming and coordination. She originally voted for SB 91 because she wanted to give people a chance to turn their lives around. Alaska has a responsibility to at least give people the opportunity to be in better shape. She had done some work with people in prison and watched the effect prison can have on some people. She didn't want to see that happen to low-level offenders especially. She thought having a different facility would be best. Helping people get their life back on track was not just benefit for them but for our communities.

Judge Stephens wanted to look into using the import model, which was part of the Norway model's principle of normalcy. The idea was that people would get the same services within prison as they would on the outside.

Ms. Bemben noted that the Results First study have information on what programs are effective.

Senator Hughes said she would also like to look into providing counseling services that would teach people how to manage anger, be a better parent, and create a value system.

Commissioner Stanfill observed that these proposals didn't necessarily belong in the behavioral health category, as the services they were discussing would be for everyone. Judge Stephens thought a new workgroup might look into these ideas.

Ms. Carns cautioned that maybe 25% of people who are incarcerated are in long enough for this to apply. Half the prison population consist of people in pretrial or supervision violation status, and those convicted of misdemeanor also don't spend much time in prison. The longstanding issue is that many people who are incarcerate don't qualify for these services.

Judge Stephens said that people can still engage in services when in pretrial status. He has conducted a lot of sentencing in which the defendant has been able to amass a bunch of certificates. He also hoped that structured probation conditions might help get people into services.

The next proposal was to research the efficacy of prison treatment programs, specifically looking at in-facility compared to out-of-facility treatment. Chair Claman had made this proposal and he said he saw it as overlapping with the previous two. He noted that Norway's system didn't get to be that way overnight. It required a massive change, and Alaska also would not be able to transform its system overnight. He thought a separate workgroup might be needed, and that group could can look at whether it makes sense to focus on treatment behind the walls or not. Ms. Carns' comment on most people not being incarcerated for long enough was well-taken. HB 49 increased the minimum post-sentence prison time for reentry planning to 90 days from 30, largely due to issues of DOC's capacity. So the question was whether it was the best use of resources to focus on programming in facilities or out. He thought Results First gives a lot of background, and Commission research could give the legislature guidance on priorities.

Commissioner Williams agreed these proposals were very interrelated. Together they represented an enormous task. Essentially they were all looking at intercepts 3, 4, and 5, and what's effective.

Senator Hughes observed that the wheels of the Commission move slowly, and she wanted to let the Commission know that her office is working with someone who is a PhD candidate on recidivism reduction, and she had also been contacted by a National Council of State Legislators project. She was planning to discuss this issue with Alaska stakeholders in a meeting in November. She envisioned that this group would produce solutions that the Commission could review over time. She would let the Commission know what she was doing, but she felt she had to get something going because there was eagerness in the legislature to do step 2. She did not intend to sidestep the Commission.

Ms. Bembem summarized the discussion: the three preceding proposals could all be grouped together for a new workgroup to tackle.

The next proposal in the behavioral health category was to look into the Title 12 statutes regarding competency and related topics. Judge Stephens reminded the group that this was discussed at the last meeting; the recommendations from the UNLV report had also been around for some time. He also noted that the statute governing culpability examinations requires two specially certified practitioners to perform them, but no such person exists in Alaska, and never

had. It was costing the court system thousands of dollars to find outside doctors who were qualified, and it was always a scramble to find them.

Commissioner Williams added that there were many Title 12 statutes, and the process of reviewing them using a contractor took well over a year. There were very specific sections that are outdated that Alaska is not complying with that could be changed easily. Many people “time out” while waiting for competency evaluation and their charges are dismissed. At that point they can walk away without help, or sit in DOC with a Title 47 hold with no charges pending.

Ms. Bembien asked what needed to be done next on this project. Commissioner Williams was not sure there was a need for more research; that work had been done.

Senator Hughes said that often people cycle in and out of API, and if they are not restorable, they are often released onto the street. There was a case in Anchorage where someone in that situation was released and murdered people. Mr. Wall said DHSS was working on proposals for legislation on this topic for this coming legislative session. There would be a proposals coming to address a number of things, including amending the statute governing culpability evaluators to meet national standards. Once these proposals are drafted, DHSS can bring them to Commission.

Mr. Wall also wanted to echo the concerns of many on the Commission on this topic. In February, 76 individuals had been waiting for a large amount of time for competency evaluations. DHSS found psychologists and psychiatrists who are licensed to practice in Alaska even if don't live here. They have a pool now and the backlog is reduced. There were 26 individuals waiting for an evaluation as of last Thursday and all of them were scheduled for an evaluation. That still doesn't resolve the restoration piece, however. They are looking into sending people out of state to be restored. They have sent one person so far to pilot the idea. If it works, they will look at doing more.

Proposals - Other

The first proposal in the “other” category was to conduct a reentry simulation for legislators in Juneau. Chair Claman reminded the group this was discussed at the last meeting. Commissioner Stanfill noted that there were things like this on the lists that didn't necessarily involve research but that the Commission should still keep on its to-do list. She thought the Commission should take part in the reentry simulation.

The next proposal in the other category was to hold coordinated training for agencies that work in the criminal justice system. Mr. Skidmore explained that he raised this at the last Commission meeting. He didn't necessarily think it would take research but further discussion amongst the Commission. Commissioner Stanfill wondered if this could dovetail with the proposal to improve communication with victims. Mr. Skidmore said this was different, the idea was to seek a certain degree of uniformity among people that work in the system. There is a lot of training that happens in the state, but none of it is coordinated. People have very different viewpoints. Not everyone has to have the same opinion, but some same basic training that is coordinated so that everyone is familiar with the same concepts: law enforcement officers, public defenders/advocates, prosecutors, and judges.

Judge Stephens wondered if this was a topic for the Criminal Justice Working Group. Ms DiPietro noted that group had been on hiatus recently, but that group is more operational, and it was a good topic for them. Judge Stephens recalled the prosecutors and defense bar had a joint

training a while back in Anchorage—it went over like a lead balloon. It sounded like this proposal was not a joint training but a coordinated one. Mr. Skidmore said that was correct.

The next proposal in this category was to address high recidivism rates for domestic violence (DV) offenders. Commissioner Stanfill said that the DV intervention programs in the state were required to follow a certain model, but were not exactly following the model required by statute, because there is evidence the statutorily-required program was not working. There was a need to help people who commit these crimes to change their behavior. We use trauma-informed practices in everything except with DV offenders. Alaska needed to look into how to address this in a different way. She knew CDVSA was also very interested in looking at things differently and would appreciate the Commission's involvement.

Commissioner Case said he just wanted to do something different. Alaska is using a 3-decade-old model. DV is different from all other crimes; it involves a complicated long relationship between two individuals, and it was not as simple as just putting people in a program. The system leaves victims hanging sometimes. He thought a new approach should address both the victim and offender. We know that 60% of people in a relationship involving DV get back together. That's something the legal approach should account for.

Ms. Bemben said it sounded like this was definitely a research project. Ms. DiPietro added that Judicial Council staff had done a lot of work on this recently, and could pull that research together.

The next proposal in the other category was to house first-time and low-level offenders in separate DOC facilities or modules. Senator Hughes said that this had already been discussed as part of the earlier behavioral health research proposal. She has been encouraging DOC just to start doing this.

The next proposal in the other category was to research and review experience in other states of criminal records accuracy, including looking at the Uniform Criminal Records Accuracy Act (UCRAA). Chair Claman said this was a statutory proposal, and had been enough of an issue in other states to warrant a model law from the Uniform Law Commission. He suggested perhaps the Barriers workgroup could take a look at this, but it was probably not a research priority.

The next proposal in the other category was to implement the existing Commission recommendation for redaction statutes. Commissioner Stanfill explained that the Commission had done a great deal of work on this. No additional research was needed. She just heard from Kara Nelson, a longtime advocate in the reentry field, who is continuing her education in the lower 48 but couldn't get into an AirBnB. She would like to ask legislators to look at this again.

The last proposal in the other category was to revise the law on juvenile auto-waiver. Commissioner Cherot said this proposal was really to revive previous work on this. Renee McFarland, deputy public defender, said that the Sentencing Workgroup had been considering a draft recommendation, but it seemed like the workgroup had just stopped meeting. The draft proposal dropped some offenses out of the automatic waiver, extended DJJ custody time, allowed for a reverse waiver, and proposed to house juveniles in DJJ custody regardless of their status (waived into adult court or not) until disposition of their case.

Ms. Moreau noted that Tracy Dompeling from DJJ was also working on this.

Ms. Bemben said in summary that it sounded like there was support for four main research projects:

- Under the victims' category, looking at improving communication with victims.
- Under the sex offenses category, looking at revising the sex offenses statutes, which would also encompass looking at the laws on consent and sex and human trafficking.
- Under the behavioral health category, looking at behind-the-walls treatment, rehabilitative and reentry programming, and the efficacy of treatment programs behind the walls and in the community.
- Under the other category, looking at alternative approaches to reduce recidivism among DV offenders.

Chair Claman said that sounded like at least two big projects. Ms. DiPietro reminded the Commission that it had 1.5 staff members, plus Judicial Council staff when they are able. She reminded the Commissioners that they were needed to keep the project going. Within the workgroups, staff can't move ahead with projects without Commissioner buy-in and attendance. Often this means agencies committing staff. Ms. Dunham said she was willing to staff four workgroups, but she needed Commissioner assistance to do so.

Commissioner Williams also wanted to highlight the Alaska Justice Information Center (AJIC) as a resource. These are meaty and complex topics, and the Commission should use the resources at hand.

The Commission discussed the workgroups already in existence. The workgroups that have met in the past year were Victim's Rights and Services, Sex Offenses, and the Behavioral Health Standing Committee. Past workgroups also included Barriers to Reentry, Restorative Justice, Restitution, Title 28, Sentencing.

For the projects in the behavioral health category, the Commissioners agreed that the topic was wider than just behavioral health, and would be best suited to a new workgroup.

Chair Claman thought 4 or 5 committees was a lot. He didn't want to be in this same place a year from now with nothing done.

Commissioner Stanfill noted that in the past, the workgroups have been staggered, so they're not running at the same time. Everything on the list needed to be addressed yesterday. She thought with staggering the workgroups, it was doable. It was a matter of everyone's commitment to the Commission. She didn't feel comfortable dropping any of the topics.

Senator Hughes noted that a victim workgroup and sex offenses workgroup were already active. The Commissioners agreed two new groups were needed for the remaining items. Chair Claman said he would suggest calling one a corrections management group and one a DV group. Senator Hughes suggested recidivism reduction

Ms. DiPietro said it would be important to have commitment from DOC on the corrections management group, and there was not a DOC representative present (Commissioner Dahlstrom had left at this point). She suggested putting it at the end of the legislative session to get Commissioner engagement. Ms. Bemben suggested that group meet for a few months and then take a hiatus to do DV. Commissioner Stanfill liked that idea, as she thought the train was moving on recidivism reduction.

Commissioner Stanfill added that any revision to the sex offense statutes, would likely not be for the next session but the one after, so that group could also meet later in the year.

Commissioner Razo agreed to chair the corrections management and recidivism reduction group, and Judge Stephens and Senator Hughes said they would join that group. Commissioner Williams said the Behavioral Health Standing Committee could take a hiatus since many of the issues in this new group were behavioral-health related.

Commissioner Case agreed to chair the DV workgroup.

For the action items identified during the discussion that were not research priorities, Chair Claman said he would like to put those on future plenary meeting agendas. He also believe the Commission still needed to make a decision on Victim Listening Sessions.

Commissioner Razo said he thought the Commission had a continuing obligation to host these sessions. It would be a mistake to stop listening to victims. There were many areas of the state the Commission hadn't been to yet—essentially all of western Alaska.

Commissioner Stanfill thought it was interesting that the Commission was not getting the response it might like—she was not sure why. She thought perhaps the Commission needed to have community partners. She felt the Fairbanks effort was pretty successful. She did a lot of prepwork for that. Juneau only had a few people. Anchorage had a lot of notice and advertisement but only a few people showed up. She thought the Commission could perhaps partner with other agencies so it's their event too.

Ms. DiPietro said the Commission had spent a fair amount of money and talked to a few dozen people. She reminded the Commissioners of the list of community partners staff reached out to a few meetings ago. She thought perhaps it was worth retooling the format. Previously the Commission had good turnout in Nome and Kotzebue, but those weren't styled as victim listening sessions. Maybe it would be worth it to broaden the format.

Commissioner Razo agreed that by calling it a victim session it might narrow the interest. People who show up will also be people who target population.

Ms. Bemben agreed it would be beneficial to think about the language used. It had to do with how people self-identify; people may not want to identify as victims. She had had the most success in the past by really tagging on to local partners. She also noted that very small communities might be more successful because there is less going on there. Agnew::Beck put on an event in Hooper Bay and got 150 people. Planning the same event in Bethel had less success.

Commissioner Stanfill said it sounded like the Commission wanted to continue having listening sessions in places the Commission hasn't been to. Perhaps the Commission could work with Agnew::Beck on repackaging. But there was also a merit to signaling that it was for victims. It can be hard for victims to participate when a people who have been incarcerated are also talking. It was hard to blend populations. The was something to put thought into.

Chair Claman said it sounded like there was general agreement to keep going with the listening sessions.

Commissioner Stanfill said she would also still like to talk about what to do with the excess marijuana revenue. Chair Claman said that it might involve a bit of research—that would be something to look into for the December meeting.

Partners for Progress Update

Janet McCabe, chair of the board of directors for Partners for Progress, said she wanted to introduce Partners' main staff. Doreen Schenkenberger is the Executive Director, and Josh Sopko is the new director of the Partners Reentry Center. She noted that this summer marked the 20th anniversary of therapeutic courts in Alaska, which began as a collaboration with Partners, municipal prosecutors, and Judge Wanamaker. The underlying goal of the therapeutic courts is to make people whole; the same holds true for the Reentry Center.

Ms. Schenkenberger thanked the Commission for the opportunity to present. She wanted to share some thoughts about the operation of the therapeutic courts. One priority was to try to find more ways to get people into the programs. They were not working at their capacity. Dozens of slots remain open every month. The therapeutic court model was one of the best diversionary programs available in Alaska, and had considerable success with recidivism reduction by focusing on treating mental health and substance abuse problems. She noted that Nome had high rates of recidivism as well as high rates of substance use disorders and suicide, and thought that adding a therapeutic court in Nome would be a good idea. Such a program could serve the whole Bering Straits region. Partners would be happy to help; they offer a free training to those looking to implement a new therapeutic court. The deadline to apply for the next training was November 1.

Joshua Sopko explained that he was the new director of the Partners Reentry Center, though he had been working there since 2014. Reentry Center staff are able to help reentrants pre-release. They place an emphasis on housing, and require those receiving housing to look for work, follow their recommendations and conditions for treatment and aftercare. Since opening in 2013, the Reentry Center has provided transitional housing to 3634 clients and assisted 8711 clients with employment, housing, support groups, or referrals. They do a lot of referrals to treatment.

The Reentry Center also provides support, and talk to people about taking control of their lives. They emphasize accountability; receiving further assistance is always based on client follow-through. They recently just secured a pilot fund for emergency costs. All clients are moderate or higher risk, meaning they only deal with folks who are almost guaranteed to recidivate. They also facilitate peer support groups, such as one for people who spent a long time (more than a decade) in prison, and are starting a new group for opioid addiction.

They looked at 18-month recidivism rates for people who passed through their programs: the rate was 27% for those who were engaged with programming versus 48% for people who came into contact with the center but did not follow through or were not engaged. The most successful clients were those who had started treatment and reentry planning while in prison and continued on that plan once released.

Around three months of assistance for housing, bus passes, clothing, etc. for one person cost the Reentry Center around \$2800, compared to over \$150 per day per person in prison.

Commissioner Cherot asked how often they were able to do inreach in the prisons. Mr. Sopko said that they get to Goose Creek, Anchorage Jail, and Hiland Mountain at least monthly, and go to Spring Creek every other month. They need to reach out to Wildwood. They also working with people at the Cordova center (halfway house).

Commissioner Razo asked if the Alaska Nations Reentry Group was still meeting. Mr. Sopko said it was still meeting on Friday mornings. It was a self-advocacy group; they set their own agenda and the Reentry Center provides the space. Their Jesuit volunteer helps with that group too.

Senator Hughes asked if Mr. Sopko could get data on the number of people who are released compare to the number of people they are serving. Ms. McCabe noted that half of all prisoners are released in Anchorage.

Presentation on VPSO Task Force

Representative Chuck Kopp explained that the Legislature put together a VPSO task force last session to address recruitment and retention issues in the VPSO program, which was established in the late 70s. He knew everyone present was aware that rural public safety was currently very challenged. Members of the task force are Senators Olson, Bishop, and Shower, along with himself and Representatives Edgmon and Rauscher. Their task is to come up with solutions for the next legislative session.

The task force has met with officials from DPS who spoke about what was working what not. Their takeaway was that there was a certain amount of friction between VPSO and AST indicating structural problems. The troopers manage the VPSO grants, which is not really something they want to do. The regional nonprofits feel this is to some extent micromanagement, and they feel their mission is more than just having a VPSO position. They would like the program to be less bureaucratic and more decentralized. The troopers are obligated to issue the same grant for every place even though needs are very different in different locations. Grant denials seem arbitrary. The task force is therefore looking at grant management and more regional control, leaving DPS more as a technical advisor. The grants limit who can back up another VPSO, which is also an issue they're looking at.

All VPSO coordinators like program—they think it is challenged but worth fighting for. The coordinators have decades of law enforcement experience among them, and they are committed to doing the job well. So far they have had a listening session in Nome, and will have another panel at AFN and in Kotzebue. Their goal is to come back to the legislature with action items, both in terms of funding and in terms of statutes and program structure.

Future Meeting Dates and Tasks

The Commission agreed the telephonic meeting to approve the annual report would be on October 28 at 4:30pm. Commissioners were to get any additional comments to Ms. Dunham on the 14th, and she would get a new draft out on the 21st. The next full meeting would be on December 3 at 10:00am, and Commissioners expressed a preference for meeting at the Trust.