

ALASKA CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMISSION
Meeting Notes from Thursday, December 10, 2015, 10:00– 11:00 AM
Endeavor Room, Hotel Captain Cook, Anchorage

Commissioners present:

Greg Razo, Stephanie Rhoades, Walt Monegan, Jeff Jessee, Trevor Stephens, Gary Folger, Wes Keller, Alex Bryner, Brenda Stanfill, John Coghill, Quinlan Steiner, Craig Richards, Kris Sell (telephonic)

Staff:

Susanne DiPietro, Mary Geddes, Giulia Kaufman (telephonic), Susie Dosik, Teri Carns, Brian Brossmer, Terry Schuster (PEW), Emily Levett (PEW), Len Engel (PEW), Melissa Threadgill (PEW), Abigail Walsh (PEW)

Public:

Nancy Meade, Carmen Gutierrez, Karin Thomas, Araceli Valle, Jordan Schilling, John Skidmore, Doreen Schenkenberger, Janet McCabe, Denali Daniels, Daryl Gardner and others not identified

1. Welcome and Remarks (Razo)

Commission Chair Greg Razo opened the meeting at 10:00 a.m. and welcomed all attending.

2. Action on the Draft JRI related Report and Recommendations

Chair Razo noted that the Commission had before it the final draft report and set of recommendations compiled by Pew under the Justice Reinvestment Initiative. If the package of 21 consensus recommendations were approved by the Commission and enacted by the Legislature, it could reduce prison population by 21% and save 424 million dollars over the next decade. The recommendations as drafted, follow the best research in the field, allow for safely releasing more pretrial defendants, diverting more low level and nonviolent offenders away from the prison sentences, and imposing swift certain and proportionate sanctions on violators. The proposals are reforms are in line with the reform efforts made by other states.

The report compiles the proposals forwarded to the full Commission by its JRI Subgroups (Sentencing, Community Supervision and Pretrial), as revised by the full Commission in plenary session on December 8. The report distributed in person at this meeting can also be accessed on the ACJC public website.

A motion was made by Commissioner Jessee to approve the proposed package of reforms as reflected in the final draft report circulated on December 9. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Monegan.

Chair Razo called for discussion. Commissioner Jessee urged the Commission to unanimously approve the package. Commissioner Coghill noted that public safety had been the paramount concern during the review of possible reforms. He had learned a great deal through the process and thanked his fellow Commissioners for their work. Commissioner Monegan stated that he was impressed with the successful effort to come together and agree, and that he was pleased to serve on the Commission. Commissioner Sell agreed with the sentiments expressed. Commissioner Bryner said that he wanted to thank the legislative nonvoting members of the commission for their initiative. He also wanted to thank staff for their assistance in locating authorities and research. Commissioner Rhoades wanted to thank legislators, the two chairs of the Commission, staff, and Pew and their “top-drawer team.” She has

learned a lot about our system and although it could have been very adversarial, it was instead cooperative, focusing on the needs of Alaskans. She was impressed that everyone involved in the effort was entirely committed to resolving the problems with the justice system. Commissioner Stanfill was honored to be involved and had learned a lot. One of the key aspects to the process had been bringing in the victims' perspectives through a statewide meeting in Fairbanks and a local meeting in Bethel. She was glad to offer the victims' perspective and appreciated that the focus had always been how do we make our communities health and safe. Senator (and former Commissioner) Dyson who was present was recognized for his support and work. Commissioner Stephens agreed with much of what had been said and would not repeat it. He did want to particularly former Chief Justice Fabe for appointing him to the Commission as it had been a very enjoyable process. He also appreciated the very considerable efforts of Commissioners Richards, Folger and now Monegan – who were not original members of the Commission – to quickly engage and contribute in the JRI process. He especially appreciated the efforts of the Department of Law in this regard as that staff had fully engaged in the process. Commissioner Keller stated that it had been an honor to serve alongside Senator Coghill and the other members of the Commission, and that he had been impressed how everyone had been able to get away from their 'silos' and come together. He noted that the process would be a continuing one and he looked forward to the support of the individual Commission members in the 'vetting' (legislative) process ahead. Commissioner Folger noted that the process and the report involved a paradigm shift. He was impressed with the process and struck by the commitment involved.

Chair Razo invited members of the public to offer their comments, and said that the public comment and input had been important. One change recommended to the report's language was submitted in advance in writing by Janet McCabe. She recommended that the reference to "24/7" monitoring be changed to provide a more generic reference to all day, every day monitoring.

The question was called. All voting members of the Commission stated "Aye."

3. Other Business

Chair Razo noted that at 12:00 PM a press conference involving the Governor and legislative leadership was planned for the purpose of publicizing the Commission's action and recommendations. Commissioners were asked to attend.

Commissioner Coghill noted that it was his intention to incorporate the ACJC-JRI Recommendations into Senate 91. He noted the historic nature of the bi-partisan process that had resulted in the JRI report and he credited Senators Ellis, French and Dyson with co-initiating the process. He noted that it would be lift to get the package through in 12 week, because of the number of committee referrals but that it could be done. It is significant to have the support of all three branches of government going into this process. The reforms will make Alaska safer and he will promote it.

Chair Razo thanked Senator Coghill and Representative Keller and their impressive staffs for their assistance throughout.

Former Senator Dyson asked to speak. He asked that the Commission work alongside the Controlled Substance Advisory Committee and that he hoped to see more work on restorative justice issues because restorative justice principles are traditional and consistent with pre-contact societal values, i.e. focusing on not just the restoration of material goods but the restoration of relationships.

Chair Razo noted that the Commission would be resuming work on non-JRI issues such as tribal justice and the expanded use of electronic monitoring, and that the Criminal Justice Working Group had asked the Commission to consider proposed reforms to the state's competency and commitment statutes. Commissioner Jessee said that those issues had been made more exigent by recent events. Chair Razo said that the Commission could begin to consider those issues in January. Interest in those subjects was expressed by Commissioners Jessee and Rhoades.

At the close of this discussion, Commissioner Rhoades moved for adjournment. Commissioner Monegan seconded. All were in favor.

The meeting closed at 10:50 AM.