

MINUTES

BENTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' MEETING

District Attorney, Juvenile & Sheriffs' Office

July, 21, 2025

1:00 p.m.

Present: Nancy Wyse, Board Chair; Pat Malone, Commissioner; Gabe Shepherd, Commissioner; Rachel McEneny, County Administrator; Rick Crager, Assistant County Administrator; Derik Hering, Juvenile Department; Jamie Olsen, Juvenile Department; Ryan Joslin, District Attorney; Jef Van Arsdall, Sheriff.

Chair Wyse called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

1. Approval of Minutes: April 17, 2025

MOTION: Malone motioned to approve the April 17, 2025 minutes. Shepherd seconded the motion, which **carried 3-0.**

2. Juvenile Department Update– Rick Crager, Assistant County Administrator and Derik Hering, Juvenile Services Supervisor

The Juvenile Services Director resigned, Hering will manage operations and Crager will provide administrative leadership.

Juvenile is stabilizing during this transition, with partnerships and communications prioritized with the District Attorney and Sheriff's Office.

A reduction in FTE for the '25-'27 budget was managed via internal transfer, preventing layoffs (QMHA position filled in Behavioral Health Division).

Out of 12 full-time positions, there are two current vacancies: Director and a manager/navigator.

Current structure and roles are under reevaluation, with possible adjustments to be brought to the Board of Commissioners.

Budget review showed the department spent about 94% of its allotted budget, returning \$279,000 to the general fund, largely by managing vacancies.

Caseload is trending downward – now 66 youth under supervision, down 6–7% per year since 2018 (drop blipped in 2021 due to COVID).

The decline in juvenile cases is prompting more prevention work, summer activities (beach cleanup, hikes, public pool events), and group programs with schools.

The Work Crew program is strong, including partnerships with local organizations and county departments, firewood delivery for community benefit, and the possibility for youth to pay restitution through such work in the future.

Efforts are underway to increase Juvenile Department presence in local schools, not as law enforcement or probation officers but positive adult supports. Programs have run successfully on a limited basis at Philomath High School, with more expansion hoped for in upcoming school years.

Discussion around challenges partnering with 509J district, perceptions of law enforcement, and the discontinued school resource officer program locally.

County school partnership and SRO presence discussed as potential keys to referral rates; referrals from schools have declined as schools now handle more internally.

3. Sheriff's Department Update – Jef Van Arsdall, Sheriff

Three monthly reports submitted, highlights by month:

April: DUI Enforcement Agency/Officer of the Year awards, deputy training at OSSA academy, recognition of transferred and revoked handgun permits (mostly related to arrests/expungements), and new streamlined online licensing.

May: Several new deputies and promotions, participation in homicide prosecution, and hiring for background investigator.

June: Notable 31-year retirement in Parole and Probation; June marked the last month of FTA (failure to appear) stats reporting, now the responsibility of the courts (statewide change).

FTA rates have dropped from 33% to 11-14% monthly, due to staff follow-up and reminders, and closer work with courts and DA's office (including use of ankle monitors). Concern over continued accurate FTA tracking with new reporting structure.

Facility continues frequent operation at capacity but with no recent closures; judges make daily release decisions based on jail space, impacting the practical reliability of capacity statistics. Use of external beds at Clatsop County (formerly NORCOR) as-needed for overflow, offering cost savings via per-bed payment versus contract.

Marine Patrol maintaining strong service despite budget cuts, credited with recent river rescues and praised by public officials. Some adjacent counties paused marine operations; Benton fills the gap using reserves/on-duty staff.

Emergency management (Bryan Lee, Chelsea Chytka) highlighted for strong inter-agency coordination. Current work includes tracking/prioritizing rural evacuation routes and communicating with the community about recent disruptions.

Sheriff's budget showed \$550,000 remaining at the end of May; major purchases like armored vehicles postponed to preserve funds.

Regional traffic team lauded for interagency DUI enforcement efforts during local events (Seafood & Wine Festival, graduation, Frolic). Other outreach efforts include National Night Out, Citizens Academy, and law enforcement awards.

Parole and Probation recognized for service during National Week, though running with limited staff after recent retirements/injuries.

4. District Attorney's Office Updates – Ryan Joslin, District Attorney

Morale remains strong with annual staff events; office is not fully staffed but within budget due to open positions. The 10th DDA position will soon be filled.

Several creative justice programs highlighted:

Restorative Justice: Launching soon with Neighbor to Neighbor, beginning on a small scale within DA diversion. Non-violent, non-serious cases can enter the program, requiring offenders to meet with victims and a community member to agree on restitution/restoration. Successful participation results in case dismissal.

Deflection: In response to legislative changes, officers are now distributing cards with QR codes linking to treatment programs for low-level possession offenders (recently re-criminalized by law). Current participation is modest but includes both existing criminal cases and community referrals.

Both programs focus on diverting appropriate cases from prosecution/jail into support and restoration, with eligibility and criteria expected to evolve over time.

Discussion of efficiencies, such as allowing law enforcement to serve subpoenas rather than channeling through the DA's office.

Case management system (Axon Media) is working well, with revenue intake comparable to prior system despite earlier concerns. Legislative threats to revenue from media fees appear to have abated for now.

7. Adjournment

Jimmy Bell

Pat Malone

Julie Boyd

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