



King County

Public Defense Advisory Board Meeting

**Thursday, Oct. 3, 2019
9:30 a.m. – noon**

Dexter Horton Building, Conference Room 245

MINUTES

1. Welcome

Attending in person – Chair Kim Ambrose, Vice Chair Lou Frantz, Matt Adams, Safia Ahmed, John Strait, Sophia Byrd McSherry

Attending remotely – Marc Boman

Not Present – Jeffrey Robinson, Adam Chromy, Sharon Armstrong

Meeting called to order by Kim Ambrose at 9:38 a.m.

2. Approval of Minutes from Aug. 1 2019 meeting

Minutes approved.

3. SEIU Report

Molly Gilbert, vice-president of the local SEIU chapter, said there has been a lot of good collaboration lately and that progress has been made in improving on-call duty and making changes to senior attorney (what). Biggest concern now are administrative staffing levels. We're seeing a lot of turnover, and those who stay say they're overwhelmed, stressed, and unappreciated. SEIU is hoping PDAB can stress the need for more administrative staffing in its next report.

4. Department of Public Defense Director's Report

Director Anita Khandelwal said she and other members of her management team would discuss the following topics:

- Introduction of La Rond Baker, DPD's new special counsel for affirmative litigation and policy
- High-Barrier Individuals Working Group
- Hiring
- Interns
- Annual Conference
- Parity Report
- Felony filings

Introduction of La Rond. Anita introduced La Rond, noting the substantive work she's already doing, including a site visit to the jail at the MRJC to try to address visitation issues, her work on inquests, and her research into the use of restraints at ITA Court.

High-Barrier Individuals Working Group. Anita described why this task force, appointed by the Seattle mayor, was convened, how it worked, the four pilot projects it proposed, and her role on the panel. DPD did not endorse the group's final report. Anita said her role was to act as a subject matter expert and to keep some of the proposals that would most harm our clients, such as enhanced probation, from moving forward.

Hiring. Rick Lichtenstadter described recent hiring efforts. After many interviews, DPD has hired six experienced lawyers and started seven of the nine 3L hires. We're also about to begin the interviewing process for the next 3L class; we'll be interviewing about 30, nine of whom were interns at DPD last summer.

Interns. Tara Urs discussed recent outreach activities as part of our effort to recruit a diverse and talented class of 2020 interns. Anita has visited top law schools in California and in the Northeast, including Berkeley, Hastings, Yale, NYU, and Columbia. She also went to University of Texas, Austin, while visiting family in Texas.

Annual Conference. Tara talked about the annual conference; though non-mandatory, about 250 people showed up. Very successful. Leslie Brown did a quick slideshow, with photos of several of the speakers and panel discussions.

Parity Report. Anita explained that this report – a look at parity between the PAO and DPD, drafted by the county's budget office – was undertaken at the County Council's request. DPD, in its response, agreed with the budget office that for the most part one can't do an apple-to-apple comparison of the two offices. However, we did choose to focus on the need to increase investigator staffing as a step towards parity.

Felony Filings. Gordon Hill, using charts to indicate trends, talked about a significant increase in felony filings over the past two months – an extremely difficult development for DPD, made more difficult because we don't have enough lawyers on our assigned counsel panels to pick up extra cases. The uptick is due to the PAO deciding to clear some backlogs. Gordon discussed ways the Director's Office has tried to address the increase in filings, including bringing new lawyers onto the assigned counsel panel, making internal moves among attorneys, and looking for additional ways to be more creative and nimble. The situation underscores problems with our staffing model, which presumes a year-long average, when in fact filings come in unpredictable waves.

5. Chair's Report

Kim Ambrose discussed PDAB's interactions with the Charter Review Commission. She noted that she sent them a letter saying PDAB would like some additional language about independence in the charter; she and Lou Frantz showed up at the last meeting to discuss this. But it appears the commission is not interested in PDAB's recommendations.

Kim said she and Lou have also talked about the ordinance that created DPD and the need to make some minor language changes. The board will discuss this further at its next meeting.

Kim and the board then discussed how best to draft its next annual report. Kim noted that the role of the report is to focus on the *state* of public defense in King County and to make recommendations for how it could be improved. Board members discussed several issues that could be covered in the next report, including flaws in the staffing model, ESJ and the issue of “high-barrier” individuals, parity and investigator staffing, and more. Kim and Lou will also hold 30-minute meetings with key judges; Christina will immediately begin scheduling those.

6. **Executive Session:** The board goes into executive session at 11:32 a.m.
7. **Adjourn:** 11:50 a.m.