

# WEEKLY REVIEW

BENTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
October 1, 2019



*This document is a weekly review of the Board of County Commissioners meeting, Tuesday, October 1, 2019. Information related to agenda changes, Consent Agenda, and Public Comment are on the [website](#).*

## Main Topics Discussed

### *Award of NeoGov Agreement for HR and Risk Management Online Application System – Lexi Wingfield, HR Manager & Paul Schut, Risk Manager*

Earlier this year, the County requested proposals for a comprehensive system that could link Human Resources (HR) and Risk Management. NeoGov, the County's current online job application system, was chosen to provide that system. The system will incorporate the online job application system, onboarding, e-forms, and a training platform. The HR Manager and Risk Manager plan to work closely together to ensure that the system provides benefits to all employees, Elected Officials, and Department Managers as well as make their departments more effective and efficient. This agreement is effective immediately upon approval until September 30, 2024 and will have a total cost of \$61,147 for the first year and \$49,147 per year after for the services provided. **The Board moved and seconded to approve the agreement with NeoGov for the services and to authorize the Chairman to sign the agreement. Motion carried.**

### *Wheeled All-Terrain Vehicles on County Roads Discussion – Matt Rasmussen, County Engineer*

Recent reductions in speed limits on certain roads has prompted renewed interest in allowing Wheeled All-Terrain Vehicles (WATVs) onto eligible County roads. Staff presented and discussed with the Board this topic and requested direction on how to proceed. In 2013, the Washington State Legislature changed the law to allow WATVs to be used on county and city roads/streets with speed limits of 35 miles per hour (mph) and less ([RCW 46.09.455](#)). Counties over 15,000 residents and all cities must pass an ordinance to specifically allow the use of WATVs. In 2014, the Board considered such an ordinance but decided against the issue, citing potential risk and a lack of an interconnected network of eligible roads. Earlier this year, the County reduced speed limits on certain roads surrounding Prosser, renewing public interest in the matter. While the number of eligible roads has increased since last review, there is still not a complete pathway through the County and there are large pockets in the County where no eligible roads exist. Eligible areas include those in and around the City of Prosser, the Reata Neighborhood, and the Finley area. **The Board gave direction to staff to move forward with drafting an ordinance, in partnership with the Sheriff's Office, to allow WATVs on County roads in the areas surrounding the City of Prosser, with other areas in the County tabled for later consideration.**

### *Payment Authorization to Southern Folger Detention Equipment Company for the Security System Retrofit Project – Robert Blain, Public Works Manager*

An application for payment for the Security System Retrofit project has been prepared and needs approval by the Board, as the contract for said project has already expired. In December 2016, the Board approved Resolution 2016-954 to execute a contract with Southern Folger Detention Equipment Company for the Security System Retrofit project in the amount of \$2,671,800.00 plus WSST. Three change orders were approved for a total contract amount of \$2,738,768.41. The contract expired on August 31, 2018 with \$403,040.59 remaining on the contract and work still to be completed. Said work has recently been completed and the contractor submitted Application for Payment No. 12 in the amount of \$235,656.68 including WSST, which has been reviewed by staff and is being submitted for payment. **The Board moved and seconded to authorize payment to Southern Folger Detention Equipment Company, LLC for the Security System Retrofit project in the amount of \$235,656.68 including WSST. Motion carried.**

### *Office of Public Defense Mid-Year Report – Eric Hsu, Public Defense Manager*

The Public Defense Manager presented to the Board the department's Mid-Year Report, including notable trends and news, the department's project to improve community and client perception of the department and its staff, the implementation of an initiative to transition to the use of digital tools to improve workflow and systems, and more. In addition, the Office of Public Defense (OPD) has seen an increase in caseload in Superior Court and, surprisingly, a decrease in District Court. In 2019 (January-June), 63% of District Court cases and 90% of Superior Court cases were assigned a public defender. In contrast, the caseload trend in Juvenile Court has been steady and downward, and the department anticipates 2019 as having the lowest caseload on record since 2011. OPD also reported a welcome reduction in OPD-funded mental health evaluations. The number of these cases has dropped significantly, likely due to the number of mental-health-related programs available: Mental Health Court, Prosecutorial Diversion, Transitions, and Veteran's Court. Despite improvements locally, the department is still experiencing significant delays on the state level for mental health evaluations and admissions to Eastern State Hospital for restoration. A detailed version of this report is available on the [County website here](#). **No Board direction or vote.**

### *Establishing Classification & Salary Grade for Chief Staff Defender - Eric Hsu, Public Defense Manager*

The HR Manager worked with the Public Defense Manager to create a Chief Staff Defender job classification description and establish the placement of said position on the Benton County Administrators, Managers, and Assistant Managers salary schedule as a grade 10. This position would be responsible for planning, organizing, and supervising day-to-day operations of the Office of Public Defense, would assist the Public Defense Manager in analyzing and addressing public defense standards and policies issues, would develop training and professional growth programs for staff Trial Attorneys, and would directly supervise the work-product of staff Trial Attorneys. **The Board moved and seconded to approve the job classification and salary schedule placement of the Chief Staff Defender position as presented. Motion carried.**

### *Classification & Salary Grades for Public Defense Attorneys - Eric Hsu, Public Defense Manager*

Resolution 09-619 established classifications of Public Defense Attorneys employed by the Office of Public Defense (OPD) and was done in such a way as to ensure pay-parity with Deputy Prosecutors. However, since that time, it has become apparent that entry-level salaries for Public Defense Attorneys is quite low, which has made it difficult to recruit new Public Defense Attorneys, since many other local employers pay much more. In addition, the last two hiring processes for Public Defenders yielded a very low number of applicants. Since the classifications and salary schedules for Deputy Prosecutors has been recently adjusted for similar reasons, the Public Defense Manager is requesting an adjustment to the job classifications and salary grades for Public Defense Attorneys as well. This shift would maintain pay-parity as well as place the County in a better recruitment position for entry-level Public Defense Attorneys and retaining experienced, felony-qualified staff. **The Board moved and seconded to adjust the classifications and salary grades for Public Defense Attorneys as presented and authorize the Public Defense Manager to determine the initial placement and/or advancement of Public Defense Attorneys. Motion carried.**

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