

Regional Law
Safety & Justice
Committee



REGIONAL LAW SAFETY AND JUSTICE COMMITTEE

Thursday, December 7, 2017

7:15 – 9:00 A.M.

Seattle City Hall, Bertha Knight Landes Room
600 4th Ave., Seattle, WA 98104

AGENDA

- Coffee and networking: Beginning at 7:15 am
- **Interjurisdictional Unified Payment Program**
 - Judge Kimberly Walden, Tukwila Municipal Court
 - Trish Kinlow, Tukwila Court Administrator
 - Judge Donna Tucker, King County District Court Presiding Judge
- **Seattle Court Resource Center**
 - Leah Pastrana, Seattle Municipal Court Probation Services
 - Jason Pina, Seattle Municipal Court Probation Services
 - Mekka Robinson, Seattle Municipal Court Probation Services

1. Interjurisdictional Unified Payment Program

- Judge Kimberly Walden, Tukwila Municipal Court
- Trish Kinlow, Tukwila Court Administrator
- Judge Donna Tucker, King County District Court Presiding Judge

Judge Walden presented the King County Interjurisdictional Unified Payment Program. This program was started in October 2017 as a 6-month pilot to simplify court payments for residents who owe traffic tickets in multiple King County jurisdictions.

Prior to implementation of this program, 60,000 people in King County owed enough in fines to qualify for license suspension. A single traffic incident can snowball and result in huge costs to the court and the offender. The average traffic fine is \$315, and typically includes multiple infractions. If someone requests a hearing and fails to appear, an additional \$52 charge is added. The 37 jurisdictions and 17 court locations in King County handle these infractions differently – for example, some initiate license suspension and prosecute subsequent driving while license suspended offenses (which can result in a jury trial and 90 days in jail) while some don't. If an offender had fines in multiple jurisdictions, they

would have to go to each court individually to address unpaid fines or arrange a payment schedule. This program is designed to relieve the burden on both courts and offenders by simplifying the payment processes and making it easier for offenders to meet their legal financial obligations.

Under the pilot program, which encompasses all of King County's courts of limited jurisdiction, all offenders with tickets in multiple jurisdictions are eligible. The program works as follows:

- Offender goes into any of King County's courts of limited jurisdiction
- The court identifies all eligible fines in all KC jurisdictions
- The offender is given a cover letter explaining the unified payment program and inviting them to apply
- The offender applies online (or by phone if necessary)
- The applicant and court come up with a reasonable payment plan, which can be as low as \$25/month
- Any additional interest and fees beyond the original face value of the infraction are waived
- After the 1st payment is received, the courts release their license holds, and the applicant can get a new license if it has been revoked

The program is administered by a law firm in Texas, which designed the website and retains a \$7 administration fee which is added to the applicant's total fine. The amount collected is divided equally among the courts who are owed money after the administration fee is paid.

Since the pilot program began in October, 600 cases have been brought into the program, \$200,000 has been pledged and \$2000 in payments have been paid.

2. Seattle Municipal Court – Court Resource Center

- Judge Karen Donohue, Seattle Municipal Court Presiding Judge
- Leah Pastrana, Probation Counselor
- Jason Pina, Probation Counselor
- Betty McNeely, Probation Director
- Carol Bell-Daniel, Probation Manager

Seattle Municipal Court (SMC) operates a Court Resource Center (CRC) that brings together multiple social service providers addressing a wide range of issues including housing, healthcare, employment assistance, chemical dependency, transportation, literacy, and veterans issues. These providers typically staff the CRC on a regularly weekly schedule. The CRC also has a clothing bank and a supply of professional clothes available.

The CRC is available to anyone at any time during business hours. The CRC just recently received direct funding from the City for the first time; in the past it run entirely by volunteers in conjunction with the Court's probation counselors.

When clients enter the CRC for the first time, they are typically greeted by an intern, volunteer, or probation officer to see what they're there for. The objective is for clients to leave with something tangible, not just leaflets from various providers.