

The Bradenton Times

# BOCC Looks at Criminal Justice System in Work Session

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BRADENTON -- Four months ago Manatee County constructed an agreement with Sarasota County to assign their [Criminal Justice Policy Coordinator](#), Wayne Applebee, to join, Walt Smith (Administrator 12th Judicial Circuit) in order to develop a criminal justice policy model and coordinate recommended changes. The BOCC were brought up to speed at Tuesday's work session.

-- To set the stage for what Smith and Applebee have evaluated to date, Smith familiarized the commissioners and others with a verbal walk through on diversion vs incarceration procedures. He identified all options to one when arrested for a misdemeanor or felony, evaluating each step from bonding to re-entry and spoke of the heavy case loads public defenders carry, as well as the overloaded court dockets. Smith said that even though there is an extremely high rate of plea bargains, some cases just get pushed through, adding, "we realize people's rights to have an attorney, but we have to move on." He said conviction rates of felonies are running in the high 90 percentile.

-- Next up was Applebee's presentation, and the first recommendations on his list were to have the [BOCC](#) propose the Public Safety Coordinating Council ([PSCC](#)), define their purpose for existence, review their members, limit them to statutory responsibility and establish their mission. Applebee suggested the BOCC should request recommendations of the PSCC prior to making votes related to funding or policy decisions that may affect public safety or the criminal justice system and update the 1992 Resolution creating the PSCC.

The suggestions call for PSCC System Intercept Mapping that locates the gaps and deficiencies in the criminal justice system and establish priorities based on those findings, then adjust funding recommendations accordingly. Applebee also advised board members that the PSCC publish a list of annual criminal justice priorities to fund, prior to the notice of funding announcements and supply an annual report to the BOCC as to their needs.

Applebee told the commissioners that the PSCC should seek to involve broad input from other communities. He suggested the BOCC look for regional and bi-county solutions, where more opportunity might be available at reasonable savings and to indulge educational/vocational systems, faith-based systems and healthcare systems to regularly interact with the criminal justice system.

Key points to a successful model are: to continue with the implementation of the recommendations from the 2008 Carter Goble Study, commit to pretrial services programs, conduct a cost and service benefit analysis for misdemeanor probation and look into joint county collaborations, for both adult and juvenile facilities. Both Smith and Applebee will finish their advisory roles and submit their final report in a couple of weeks, and it will include specific reporting recommendations.

Next Work Session item: Nicholas Azzara, Manatee's [Information Outreach Coordinator](#), presented a legislative update on issues related to the criminal justice system. Azzara delivered the 12th Judicial Circuit Pretrial Services Program Statistics.

The daily cost per person incarcerated in Manatee county is \$67.00 -- in Sarasota, \$71.00. These figures are based on reported county cost from Oct. 1, 2010, to Sept. 30, 2011. Those same records show the cost per day for supervision in the Pretrial Services Program to be \$1.91 in Manatee and \$3.20 in Sarasota. During that year, Sarasota County spent \$1,215,323.27 and Manatee County spent \$549,956 on the Pretrial Services Program.

Defendants in the pretrial services programs are monitored regularly to ensure they will show up for court. While they await for a hearing, they may get treatment for substance abuse and mental health issues. Azzara is opposed to legislators taking shots at pretrial programs and thinks it is no more than an attempt to limit support and the ability for the county to keep the program going.

[Florida HB 875](#) reduces the flexibility and ultimately the success of the program, says Azzara, and adds, "We are opposed to any changes in the program. We need to keep the state out." He thanked Commissioner Michael Gallen for helping to open the eyes of state legislators.

-- Last on the list was an update report on the Financial Management System. Mike McLaughlin, Information Technology Director said current version of the IFAS will not be supported after Dec. 2012. New software and hardware will have all operations in sync and on the same page.

The clerk of the court, sheriff's office, Manatee County Government, property appraiser, supervisor of elections and Port Manatee will all be stakeholders. Purchasing, payroll, billing, inventory and fixed assets will be there with a click of the mouse.