

From: [Lilliquist, Michael W.](#)
To: [SAC](#)
Subject: question for Sheriff Elfo.
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Attachments: [image002.png](#)

SAC members,

I had a number of questions that came to mind during Sheriff Elfo's portion of the presentation this week. I thought it would be easiest to submit my questions by email, and then the Sherriff or others could reply at their convenience, and could be included in the discussion at our April meeting of the SAC.

One of the main issues over the last few years has been the "right size" for the jail. I think it is now the consensus that an important goal is to not overbuild capacity based solely on demographic trends from the past. Rather, the idea is to create and support programs and policies that reduce the number of people facing arrest and possible jail time – to reduce the "demand" at its source, so that a smaller jail is possible and prudent. That is a central question of the community needs assessment.

Relating to this, one question is "what is the current *functional capacity* of the Whatcom County Jail under Covid conditions, and the related restrictions on bookings? How "small" is our jail, and how much smaller is it that during pre-Covid times. Basically, I am assuming that due to Covid and other facility shortcomings, the jail is operating as if it has a lower capacity. What is that capacity?

The Sheriff reported that during Covid the *average* jail stay is longer than before. Why is the average down? This could be due to the fact that inmates are held pre-trial and trials have been delayed. Or it could be due to the fact that short-duration cases are down, maybe because the overnight stays or two-day stays are less frequent, due to changes in bookings and arrests. The first possibility is that jail stays are actually longer, the second is that the average is longer due to fewer short stays.

Some of the recent developments that were mentioned actually reduce demand on the jail, in a good way, and they simultaneously increase demand on treatments and supportive, restorative approaches. They shift where people interact with the system. Shouldn't that be taken as a sign of progress, not as another aspect of the problem?

I assume that the discussion of medically assistant treatment (MAT) for drug addiction was about "in house" treatment in the jail, rather than community-based treatment. Is this correct? How much money is spent on in-jail MAT, and how much MAT is available in the community? My point is that in-jail MAT is an indirect way of increasing outcomes in alignment with the Principles adopted by the County, whereas community based treatment is in full alignment.

Thank you for considering my questions. I look forward to a fuller discussion on the issues in April.

Best regards,

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