

**MINUTES**  
**THURSDAY, AUGUST 20, 2009**  
**10 AM TO 1 PM.**  
**EVERETT STATION**  
**WEYERHAEUSER BUILDING**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Russell Hauge  
Kecia Rongen  
Brad Meryhew  
Anna Aylward  
Bev Emery  
Sheriff Mark Brown  
Brooke Burbank  
Carey Sturgeon  
Mary Ellen Stone  
Dennis Thaut

**MEMBERS NOT PRESENT:**

Lynda Ring Erickson  
Ida Ballasiotes  
Andrew Neiditz

**STAFF PRESENT:**

Shoshana Kehoe-Ehlers  
Andi May  
Jennifer Jones

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Lindsay Palmer, KCSARC; Amy Pearson, OCVA; Dave Fuller, Everett Assistant City Attorney; Valerie Steele, Local Task Force Member and Bayside Neighborhood; Pat McClain, City of Everett; Kate Reardon, City of Everett; Lourdes Turner, DOC; Gary Rink, DOC; Thad Allen, DOC; Dusty Olson, Providence Intervention Center for Assault and Abuse; Norman G. Nelson, Snohomish-King Counseling, LLC; Sally J. Neiland, DOC-SOTP; Detective Dave Coleman, Snohomish County Sex Offender Unit; Monique Neal, USPO; Angela McGlynn, USPO; Sally VanBeek, Everett P.D.; Betty Campbell, Everett P.D.; Shani Bauer, Senate Counsel; Rashad Morris, Senate Democratic Caucus; Jacky Hopper, RTS; Mark Roe, Snohomish County Prosecuting Attorney; Dan Templeman, Everett P.D.; Amber DeJesus, Snohomish County Juvenile Probation; Pam Jones, Snohomish County Prosecuting Attorney Diversion; Leanne Easterling, JRA YSO Treatment Coordinator; Joe Neussendorfer, Everett P.D.; Connie & Michael Westford, CM Thor Corp.; Seth Dawson, Washington State Coalition for the Homeless; Katrina Lindell, DOC; Joel Estes, DOC; Frederick Bletson, SONLITE-PA; Sharon Harris, WATSA; Michael O'Connell; WATSA.

## **I. Call to Order**

SOPB Chairman Russell Hauge called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m. Mr. Hauge provided introductory remarks to the Board and audience, including stakeholders and members of the public.

## **II. Introductions**

## **III. City of Everett – Sex Offender Local Task Force Presentation**

David Hall, Everett Assistant City Attorney provided some background on the City of Everett Local Sex Offender Task Force. It was formed about a year ago after the public expressed great concern about sex offenders moving into the community in a few concentrated areas of the city. The situation that led to the concern resulted from a couple landlords renting some apartment units to sex offenders. Overall, the task force turned out to be a very positive experience with the community. The hope is to build on that experience and keep the process moving forward.

### *The Function of the Task Force*

The members were appointed by the City. Valerie Steele from the community was on the task force. Her role was to go to the local community and listen to their concerns about the situation. She then expressed these concerns to the Task Force. The Task Force found that this method of communication, neighborhood advocates speaking with residents of the neighborhood was very effective.

The task force was very broad based. When the Local Task Force reached the end of their tenure, they felt like the decisions they made were well researched. The task force met for about six weeks. The task force had a strong support staff to provide the most accurate and best information and evidence available for the discussions.

The City and the Task Force members unanimously adopted the report put out by them and included in this SOPB meeting handouts.

### *What the Everett Task Force Learned From Their Experience*

The Task Force was struck by the stark difference between what they thought were risk factors versus what actually are risk factors. They were surprised to learn the sex offender criminal class has the lowest recidivism rate. It was valuable to have the community understand the reality of the situation, instead of getting caught up in the emotional nature of it.

The Task Force felt strongly that communities need a single source of evidence based information about sex offenders that is easily accessible to the public

#### *Legislating Density Restrictions*

They would like DOC to consider not placing a SO in an area where there is already a large density of them, when SO's address has been approved. This would go a long way to keeping the community members engaged if this request is considered.

#### *Task Force's Role in following Up with the Community*

They did not follow up after the task force issued their report primarily due to budget constraints

The Task Force acknowledged that advocating for residency restrictions can create more barriers for sex offenders resulting in possible recidivism. The task force supports creating housing opportunities in rural areas, they just want to avoid having RSO centrally located in neighborhoods. They recognize they are not the experts and are looking for assistance in identifying the best solution for this problem.

The Task Force has completed its mission. However, the recommendations continue. They introduced legislation to the State Legislature during the 2009 session that ended up not advancing. They invited the SOPB to Everett to hear their concerns and proposed solutions.

#### *Public Comment*

Mike Westford, one of the landlords who rented to sex offenders in the City of Everett, addressed the Board. He originally brought the housing to the community because he wanted to assist registered sex offenders who were also struggling with chemical dependency issues. Mr. Westford also expressed his strong feelings about how mistreated he felt during the aftermath of the community's reaction to the sex offenders moving into his housing.

Mr. Hall acknowledged that there are differing opinions and that this task force helped vet those in a constructive fashion.

Law Enforcement expressed concern that that their role to educate the public about public safety and sex offenders the community needs to be in conjunction with an organized neighborhood effort to educate each other. The education needs to be much more concentrated, ongoing and done in a community friendly format.

*Task Force's Fair Share Recommendation.*

The task force found the education about laws requiring sex offenders be returned to their county of origin helpful when understanding that all counties must accept sex offenders into their community.

The Task Force acknowledged that were there no actual problems caused by sex offenders after they moved into the neighborhood, it was more of a shock to the community. The task force found it very helpful to learn that a sex offender with stable housing is far less likely to recidivate than a homeless sex offender. What caught Everett by surprise was the sudden high sex offender residency concentration resulting from the two housing apartment complexes.

The Task Force recognized that those who have experience working with registered sex offenders (RSO) and RSO themselves can be very helpful to each other in living situations. It has been found that this type of housing model contributes to the success of RSO and their recidivism. The Task Force supports that education amongst each other was and continues to be a very good model for addressing fear and safety concerns in neighborhoods.

#### **IV. SOPB Presentation**

Chair Hauge provided the history of the SOPB and the work currently underway by the Board. He expressed that travelling to other jurisdictions around the state and hearing from various stakeholder has been invaluable for the Board. He then introduced the Committee Chairs, Bev Emery, Benchmarks, Mary Ellen Stone, Sex Offender in the Community, and Kecia Rongen, Registration and Community Notification. Each Chair provided the background of their committee; what their tasks were; and what their committees are currently doing to accomplish these objectives.

#### **V. SOPB Forum**

A variety of stakeholders in the sex offender management system from Snohomish, Skagit and Whatcom County participated in a forum where they addressed the Board about what works in their community, what challenges they face and what they would like to see in the future. The following comments were made:

- Will money be set aside to house sex offenders? It was expressed that there has been some funding re-funneled into some housing vouchers for offenders. The Board is looking at partnerships with different private organizations and private sectors as one solution to providing safe, effective housing for RSOs.

- Concern was expressed that the majority of RSO need to be labeled in some other way, because currently the way they are characterized and portrayed scares the public, which in turn makes reentry and creating housing opportunities very difficult. It is critical to change the perception of RSOs in order to effectively promote public safety. It's important to dispel the notion that most sex offenders are strangers.
- Some law enforcement feel a high concentration of RSO in an area is actually more effective and promotes public safety, because it's easier to monitor them.
- The current community notification meetings are not a good forum for education because the public audience is often scared and angry at that point in time.
- The current number leveling system is not effective because it does not represent the actual risk level of the offender. A descriptive label would be much more effective and capture what the actual individual risks are.
- There was concern expressed that after a Level 3 offender, for example, who has completed supervision, treatment, and passed a polygraph is not having his or her level reduced by local law enforcement.
- There are jurisdictions that have created models to lower RSO levels, including the Seattle Police Department, Spokane PD and Minneapolis/Saint Paul PD.
- Concern was expressed that Community Notification, at least in Snohomish County, is not being used for its original intent. Less and less people are going to the meetings. It appears that members of the public are going to the website for information more and more. Not sure if less attendance is a good thing or a bad thing. Meetings may not be the answer; may need to use technology to get the information out to the public.
- While we may be shifting our focus to the worst of the worst RSOs; we still need to protect the community from the person who has offended against a family member's child and could still be at risk to reoffend if in a relationship with someone who has a child.

## **VI. New Business**

There were no new business matters raised by the Board members or the public.

**VII. Adjournment**

Chair Russell Hauge Adjourned the meeting at 12:44p.m.

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Russ Hauge

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Date

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Shoshana K. Kehoe-Ehlers

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Date