

**COMMISSIONERS' MINUTES
KITITITAS COUNTY, WASHINGTON
CONFERENCE ROOM
SPECIAL MEETING**

MONDAY

10:00 AM

AUGUST 10, 2026

Board members present: Chairman Brett Wachsmith; and Vice-Chair Laura Osiadacz.

Others: Jodi Larsen, Office Administrator; Eileen Murphy, Director of Public Defense; Sue Higginbotham Chief Admin Auditor.

CITIZEN COMMENTS: NONE

SPECIAL MEETING

PUBLIC DEFENSE DIRECTOR UPDATE

COMMISSIONERS

At 10:00 a.m. Chairman Wachsmith opened a Special Meeting with the Director of Public Defense, Eileen Murphy and the Auditor's Chief Administrator, Sue Higginbotham. Ms. Higginbotham requested approval on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Kittitas County and Local 792CH (Courthouse) to recognize and classify an Elections Manager. Vice-Chair Osiadacz moved to approve the MOU Between Kittitas County and Local 792CH. Chairman Wachsmith seconded. Motion Passed 2-0.

Ms. Higginbotham then left the meeting.

Director of Public Defense Eileen Murphy provided a quarterly update on the Office of Public Defense. The Public Defense team is responsible for managing cases in the County, as well as all City municipalities. Ms. Murphy reviewed the caseloads that she and her team are currently working on, as well as staffing, grant applications, approvals and funding.

Ms. Murphy reported that, as of the end of June, the Countywide felony caseload totaled 120 cases. Lower District Court misdemeanor and lesser-charge cases totaled approximately 300, and Upper District Court accounted for approximately 200 cases, for a total of more than 600 cases throughout the County.

Ms. Murphy reviewed her grant application efforts and incoming funds. She stated that the Office of Public Defense received a \$99,000 Washington State legislative grant and is currently on track to receive more than \$500,000 in legislatively allocated grant funds.

Ms. Murphy also explained that the County has signed a \$200,000 contract with the City of Ellensburg for Public Defenses services.

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9/1/2026

The OPD is actively seeking contracts with the other municipalities.

Ms. Murphy reviewed current staffing levels and concerns. She stated that all three new hires, including one bilingual legal assistant, are performing excellent work and that she is pleased with their progress. Attorney Paul McBride has resigned effective June 30 but is finishing out his assigned caseload. Ms. Murphy is currently working to replace those services.

OTHER BUSINESS - NONE

The meeting concluded at 10:57 a.m.

OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR



Jodi Larsen

**KITTITAS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
KITTITAS COUNTY, WASHINGTON**



Brett Wachsmith, Chairman