

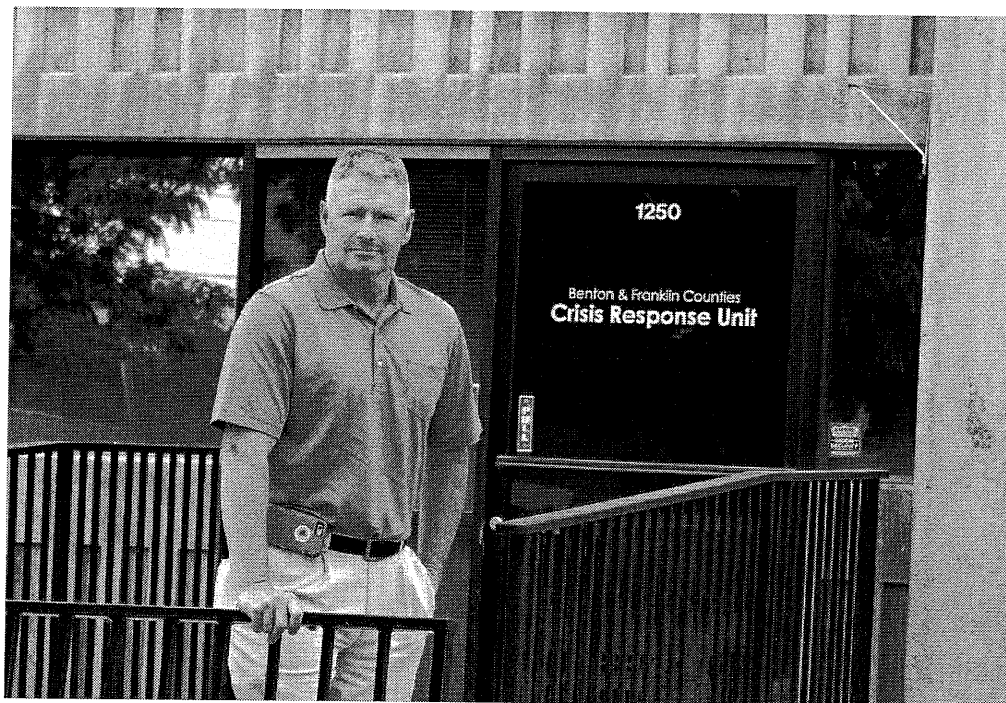
Exhibit A

NEW ARTICLES MAY 11, 2015

Benton County commissioner leads charge to privatize crisis care

HIGHLIGHTS

Commissioner Shon Small said the switch would provide more efficient and improved services to mentally ill people, reduce the county's liability and free up an estimated half-million dollars for enhanced care.



Tyler Richardson - Tri-City Herald

Commissioner Shon Small is leading a charge to privatize mental health services in Benton County, a move that would eliminate the Crisis Response Unit in Kennewick.

The county would no longer provide crisis response and other mental health services. Instead, a private agency would create a "one-stop shop" for a range of services.

Small contends the switch would provide more efficient and improved services to mentally ill people, reduce the county's liability and free up an estimated half-million dollars for enhanced care.

It also would put Benton County in line with the state's vision to combine its chemical dependency, mental health and health care systems by 2020, he said.

Crisis response officials declined to be interviewed about Small's proposal, but several spoke out at a recent public forum, questioning if it would improve services. And it's unclear if Franklin County would follow suit.

The Crisis Response Unit is a bicounty agency that specializes in crisis intervention, often referring clients to other providers for long-term mental health care. It operates as part of the Benton-Franklin Human Services Department and had more than 18,500 contacts and calls for service in 2014.

Some of the 26 employees would lose their jobs, Small said. The number of positions that would be cut has not yet been identified.

The county would not have to pay rent on the new Crisis Response Unit building on North Morain Street, which staff recently moved into.

That money, Small said, would then be "put back in the community" to improve mental health care programs.

The commissioner says the idea is in the "investigation stage" and there is no time frame for a change.

"I have had some time to take a look at the big picture of things," he said. "I truly believe this is in the best interest of the consumers."

Neither of the other commissioners, Jerome Delvin and Jim Beaver, would return calls to talk about the proposal. However, at a recent meeting, both said it should be studied more.

Linda Robb, director of the Benton Franklin Human Services Department, declined to talk about the issue with the Herald. She expressed concerns at the same meeting, saying funding would be lost, positions erased and longtime staff affected.

Gordon Cable, Crisis administrator, also could not be reached by the Herald. Kyle Sullivan, a supervisor at Crisis, said he was not permitted to talk about the issue.

Some Crisis staff spoke out at the recent community meeting, addressing concern over their jobs and whether the move would actually improve services for mentally ill people.

William Hanning told Small and others he is concerned the move would throw off his treatment plan and lead to a potential mental breakdown.

Hanning has battled bipolar disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, general anxiety and a panic disorder for years, he said. The mental health issues have led to suicidal and homicidal thoughts.

Over the last six months, Crisis staff and others have helped Hanning begin to turn his life around, he said. He is scared new staff and a building switch could lead him back down a dark path.

"I was really beat up when I got here. I was scared, I was hurt, I was lonely, and they showed me compassion and I began to get better. I began to heal," Hanning said. "If I start feeling paranoid or depressed, I have no one to go to if they take Crisis away."

Small has already identified Lourdes Health Network in Pasco as a good fit to take over providing services currently offered by the Crisis Response

Unit. However, the county would likely seek requests for proposals for the services.

Small is adamant that no deal between the county and Lourdes has been struck. Barbara Mead, vice president of behavioral health and physician clinics at Lourdes, confirmed at a community meeting that no deal is in place.

However, Small is optimistic that a majority of the positions at the Crisis Response Unit could be saved if Lourdes is awarded the contract.

His vision is to merge staff at Crisis with staff at Lourdes to create a "best-of-the-best" team of mental health professionals, he said.

"It would be a lot more conformed under a one-stop shop," Small said. "A person actually goes to one place and has their needs met. Right now you go to Crisis Response, get assessed, then subcontracted out to someone else. A majority go to Lourdes."

Franklin County commissioners have had discussions about the topic, though there has not been any formal recommendation or action, Commissioner Brad Peck confirmed. They also have expressed interest in seeing a request for proposals.

"The board is not adverse to considering privatization, but (also) we don't feel like we have the necessary information and data to determine if this idea is in the best interest of our constituents," Peck said.

Small would like to see Franklin County follow suit, he said.

"We would much rather go hand in hand and dissolve (Crisis) jointly so the people of our counties know this is right move," he said.

Small understands concerns from staff and others, but moving Crisis will lead to better care for mentally ill people, he said.

"The transition will be smooth," Small said.



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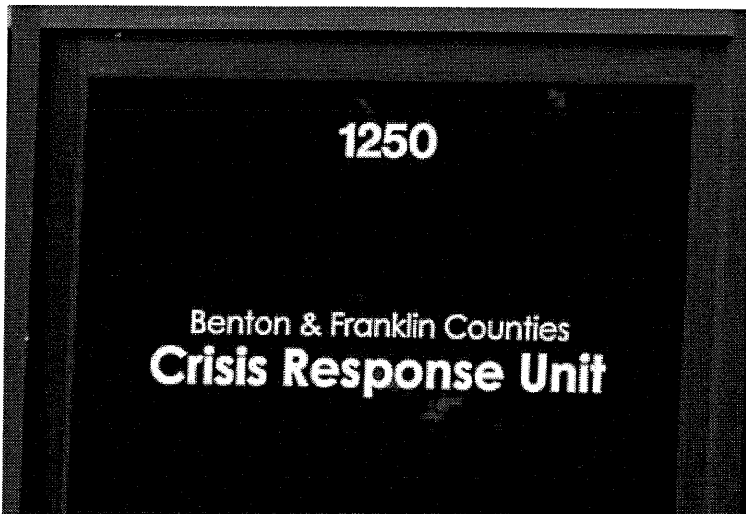
Exhibit B

NEW ARTICLES MAY 13, 2015

Benton, Franklin counties to meet on future of Crisis Response

HIGHLIGHTS

Benton and Franklin county commissioners plan a conference call Friday to discuss the future of the bicounty Crisis Response Unit. Franklin County wants more information on possibly privatizing the services.



Geoff Folsom - Tri-City Herald

Benton and Franklin county commissioners plan a conference call meeting May 15 to discuss the future of the bicounty Crisis Response Unit.

Benton County commissioners have discussed possibly privatizing mental health and crisis intervention services. Now they plan to share more information on the issue with Franklin County, said Benton County Commissioner Shon Small.

Small does not expect a decision to be made during the meeting.

"There are going to be a few stops on the journey to the final destination," he said.

Franklin commissioners briefly discussed the special meeting at their regular board meeting Wednesday. Commission Chairman Brad Peck said it is clear that Small and the Benton commissioners are the primary advocates for privatizing Crisis Response, a division of the bicounty Human Services department.

Peck said he's not generally opposed to privatizing services, but doesn't have enough information on the issue.

Human Services Director Linda Robb asked Franklin commissioners whether the meeting would be in open or closed session.

Peck said the Franklin commissioners had no reason to close the meeting to the public, but didn't know about Benton County.

"It wouldn't surprise me if they did," he said.

Small said later Wednesday that he might ask to go into executive session to discuss an "employee performance" issue related to Crisis Response.

The state public meetings law allows the commissioners to receive or evaluate complaints or charges against a public employee behind closed doors unless the employee asks for the session to be open.

They also can review an employee's performance in private, but any action from hiring and firing to setting a salary or disciplining an employee must be done in public.

Small has said privatizing Crisis Response would help put Benton County in line with the state's vision to combine chemical dependency, mental health and health care systems by 2020.

He contends the switch would provide more efficient and improved services to mentally ill people, reduce the county's liability and free up an estimated half-million dollars for enhanced care. The savings would come from cutting some of the agency's 26 employees and from not having to rent an office.

Small has identified Lourdes Health Network of Pasco as a good fit for taking over services now offered by the crisis unit, but he said the county likely would seek bids for the services. Crisis Response had more than 18,500 contacts and calls for service last year.

How the other programs operated by Benton-Franklin Human Services, including a system that serves as a one-stop shop for homeless people seeking housing, would operate in the future has yet to be determined, Small said.

"These other branches that Human Services is the umbrella for, those services will always take place," he said. "I just don't know what they will fall under."

Last year, Small called for splitting away from Franklin County on some services they now operate jointly.

Discussions between the counties have slowed while they waited for a state attorney general's opinion on whether they can legally meet together in person outside their own county.

Gov. Jay Inslee recently signed a bill, sponsored by Rep. Larry Haler, R-Richland, that allows for bicounty meetings, but it doesn't go into effect until July. So, the May 15 meeting will be via conference call.

"Due to all the changes, it makes it very difficult when Benton and Franklin counties have a tough time even meeting together," Small said.

The public meeting is scheduled to start at 1 p.m. Franklin County commissioners meet at the courthouse, 1016 N. Fourth Ave. in Pasco, while Benton County commissioners meet at the Planning Annex, 1002 Dudley Ave. in Prosser.



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Exhibit C

LOCAL MAY 21, 2014

Benton-Franklin County Human Services department head selected

Sara Schilling, Tri-City Herald

A longtime Catholic Family & Child Service leader has been picked to head up the Benton-Franklin county human services department.

Linda Robb will start in early July.

Commissioners from the two counties made the selection Wednesday during a bicounty meeting.

Robb, 46, of Richland, said she looks forward to coming on board. "It's a wonderful opportunity to serve the community and be a good steward of the public dollars," she said. "It's going to be a huge opportunity for me to help on a larger level."

Robb has been Catholic Family's local clinical director for 16 years, and before that spent several years with Lourdes Counseling Center.

A Montana native, she holds a master's degree in clinical psychology from Wichita State University. Robb will replace Ed Thornbrugh, who stepped down as human services administrator in March to take a position with Central Washington Comprehensive Mental Health.

Thornbrugh was hired as administrator in 2010 after spending about two years as the department's deputy director.

The human services department provides direct services, including through the Crisis Response Unit and the Coordinated Entry System, and also coordinates providing a range of other human services in the area.

Robb's annual salary will be about \$85,000.

Commissioners from the two counties praised Robb after Wednesday's meeting.

"We look forward to working with her," said Benton County Commissioner Jim Beaver. "She's got ideas about how to move forward."

Benton County Commissioner Shon Small said they had "several qualified applicants. We're very fortunate to get Ms. Robb" for the position.

Franklin County Commissioner Bob Koch said the strong human services department staff will help Robb hit the ground running.

Benton Commissioner Jerome Delvin and Franklin Commission Brad Peck were absent.

About 40 people applied for the top human services post. Commissioners interviewed three finalists behind closed doors last week.

-- Sara Schilling: 582-1529; sschilling@tricityherald.com; Twitter: @saraTCHerald



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Exhibit D

LOCAL JULY 29, 2015

Commissioners: Head of Benton-Franklin Human Services on leave

HIGHLIGHTS

Benton County commissioners removed Linda Robb from the top position more than a week ago for unspecified reasons.

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Tyler Richardson - Tri-City Herald

The Benton-Franklin Human Services Department could be looking for a new leader after its executive director was recently placed on administrative leave.

Benton County commissioners removed Linda Robb from the top position more than a week ago for unspecified reasons, Commissioner Jerome Delvin confirmed.

"There's been several issues going on in the last year," Delvin said.

Robb oversees the bi-county department which provides services related to mental health, alcohol and drug dependency, housing and other areas. The department provides mental-health services to citizens through the Crisis Response Unit.

Robb could not be reached Wednesday to discuss the issue.

Robb was hired in 2014 after leaving Catholic Family & Child Services, where she was the local clinical director for 16 years. Prior to that she worked for several years at Lourdes Counseling Center.

She replaced Ed Thornbrugh, who was hired in 2010 and left to take a position with Central Washington Comprehensive Mental Health.

Commissioners and county employees discussed Robb's job status during an executive session at a joint meeting Tuesday in the Benton County Justice Center.

No decision was made after the executive session about whether Robb would stay on as department head. Delvin told the Herald a final decision is expected soon.

Also during the meeting, commissioners from both counties discussed the closure of a detox center and the need to agree on and draft guidelines for the department.

The detox center was shut down about a month ago after a state auditor determined the facility could no longer house patients with mental health and chemical dependency issues, Delvin said.

The facility was the main detox center in the Tri-Cities and is now not open to serve those in need, Delvin said.

Commissioners are hopeful a plan will be worked out to reopen the facility in the near future.

"There's no place to put those people now," he said. "They are probably stuck in the emergency rooms."

For as long as commissioners can remember, the human services department has been run on a "good faith" agreement between the counties, they said.

Commissioners agreed they need to come up with an operational agreement to ensure the department runs smoothly, they said. No decision was made on when that process will begin.



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Exhibit E

LOCAL AUGUST 5, 2015**Commissioner: Benton Franklin human services in need of new leadership****HIGHLIGHTS**

Benton County officials have lost confidence in Linda Robb due to ongoing management issues within the bicounty department, said Commissioner Jerome Delvin.

Tyler Richardson - Tri-City Herald

Linda Robb could officially be out by the end of the week as the leader of the human services department in Benton and Franklin counties.

Benton County officials have lost confidence in Robb because of ongoing management issues within the bicounty department, Commissioner Jerome Delvin said.

Benton County officials plan to deliver a letter to Robb, who has been on administrative leave for unspecified reasons, that may spell the end for the executive director.

Delvin would not confirm whether the letter is an official notice of termination or what issues commissioners have with the job Robb has done.

However, the chairman of the Benton County board told the Herald the "writing is on the wall" that Robb will no longer lead the human services department.

"There are dedicated employees (in the human services department)," Delvin said. "We just need to get a leader in there that can lead."

Robb could not be reached to talk about her potential departure. Delvin said it is possible Robb could resign from her position.

Franklin County Commissioner Brad Peck does not support the letter being given to Robb, he said Wednesday. He stated it was premature and additional information is needed before a decision could be made.

"Personally I have not seen any performance issues that rise to the level of needing a replacement," Peck said.

Commissioners from Benton and Franklin counties held a meeting Wednesday to discuss personnel and other matters within the department. They met in executive session for almost an hour to talk about the personnel issues.

During the public part of the meeting, Delvin motioned for the letter, which was reviewed in executive session, to be delivered to Robb by Benton County officials.

Franklin County Prosecutor Shawn Sant told commissioners his office is waiting on information it requested and advised waiting on a final decision regarding Robb's job status.

Both Peck and Delvin confirmed there are no allegations of criminal wrongdoing on Robb's part.

There are several positions open within the human services department, including finance and an administrative assistant, Delvin said.

Delvin said Kyle Sullivan, a former supervisor at Crisis Response in Kennewick, is currently overseeing the department.

Also during the meeting, commissioners discussed the closing of the only detox center in the Tri-Cities, which was operated by Tri-Cities Community Health.

The center was shut down in June following a state audit, which determined the facility could no longer house patients with mental health and training and documentation.

tract so the facility can be reopened, Delvin said. However,

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Exhibit F

LOCAL AUGUST 11, 2015

Head of bicounty human services department fired, commissioner says lawsuit possible

HIGHLIGHTS

After weeks of discussions between county commissioners, Linda Robb has officially been fired as the head of the Benton-Franklin Human Services Department.

Tyler Richardson - Tri-City Herald

After weeks of discussions between county commissioners, Linda Robb has officially been fired as the head of the Benton-Franklin Human Services Department.

Robb was placed on administrative leave more than two weeks ago for unspecified reasons and handed a termination letter by Benton County officials following a bicounty meeting last week.

Commissioner Jerome Delvin, chair of the Benton County board, would not discuss the specifics of Robb's firing, saying it's possible the former executive director could sue the county.

Delvin reiterated statements he made to the Herald last week that Benton County officials had lost confidence in Robb to lead the department, which provides mental health, chemical dependency and housing services to citizens in both counties.

Kyle Sullivan, a former supervisor with Crisis Response, an agency under the human services umbrella, is currently running the department.

There have been ongoing management issues since Robb was hired away from Catholic Family & Child Services in 2014 to replace Ed Thornbrugh, Delvin said. Robb was given the chance to resign.

Commissioners from both sides of the river have held bicounty meetings over the last two weeks to discuss personnel issues within the department and the future of human services in the Tri-Cities.

Commissioners have talked about the closing of a detox center following a state audit, the possibility of privatizing mental health care and Robb's job status.

Franklin County Commissioner Brad Peck expressed concern at last week's meeting that the termination letter may have been delivered prematurely.

Shawn Sant, Franklin County prosecutor, told commissioners his office requested and was waiting to receive more information regarding Robb's job status. The prosecutor advised commissioners to hold off on making a decision on Robb until the information was reviewed.

"Personally, I have not seen any performance issues that rise to the level of needing a replacement," Peck told the Herald following the Aug. 5 meeting.

Commissioners have confirmed there are no allegations of criminal wrongdoing linked to the firing.

Robb was the clinical director at Catholic Family for 16 years after spending several years with Lourdes Counseling Center. The Herald reported at the time of her hiring in May 2014 that her annual salary was about \$85,000.

Robb, who holds a master's degree in clinical psychology from Wichita State University, beat out about 40 applicants for the job.

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