



MEMORANDUM

TO: BELLINGHAM CITY COUNCIL
FROM: BELLINGHAM POLICE CHIEF REBECCA MERTZIG
CC: MAYOR KIM LUND
SUBJECT: BUDGET AMENDMENT
DATE: OCTOBER 21, 2024

The Bellingham Police Department has been seeing a steady increase in our jail costs in the last five years. I would posit the increase to be related at least partially to jail booking restrictions. It is extremely common for misdemeanor crimes to move into warrant status. While those arrested for violent crimes will typically require longer jail stays, having warrants because you fail to appear in court also results in longer jail stays, and therefore an increased cost to the city. For example, if the original crime you are arrested for is a low-level property crime that did not meet booking restrictions, but you also have several warrants for your arrest, you may get booked and have an extended stay versus being cited and released.

In reviewing the jail bill from January 2024 through August 2024, twenty-four individuals resulted in a combined jail bill of \$396,058. All twenty-four individuals had extensive criminal history, several warrant arrests, and anecdotally a history of order violations. For that same time period, our booking bill accounted for a total of 723 individuals reaching a total of \$1,601,021.71. This exceeds 2019 by approximately \$300,000 and we have not received a bill yet for September through December of 2024.

Simultaneously, we are seeing a steady increase in the cost of diversion services (home monitoring). Friendship Diversion Services annual cost rose from \$321,432 in 2019 to a projected total of \$632,573 this year.

There are several other factors such as an increase in our rate per bed and additional capital costs that have contributed to being over budget.