



CRIMINAL JUSTICE OVERSIGHT COUNCIL 69th Montana Legislature

SENATE MEMBERS

Laura Smith
Barry Usher

HOUSE MEMBERS

SJ Howell
Amy Regier

PUBLIC MEMBERS

David Armstrong
Eldena Bear Don't Walk
Luke Berger
Charlie Brereton
Alan Doane
Mark Dunn
Jessica Flint
Shantelle Gaynor
Brandon Kelm
Koan Mercer
Jimmy Patelis
Eric Strauss
Amy Tenney
Scott Twito

COMMITTEE STAFF

Laura Sherley - Lead Staff
Abbie J.N. Cziok - Legal Staff
Ania Alduenda - Secretary

MINUTES LOG

January 15, 2026
Capitol Room 102 & Zoom
Helena, Montana

Please note: This document is a Minutes Log and provides annotation of the time elapsed between the beginning of the meeting and the time at which the item was presented or discussed, a motion was made, or a vote was taken. The narrative presented here is provided only as a guide to the audio or video recording of the meeting. The official discussion, motion, or vote is available on the audio or video archive of this meeting. The Legislature does not prepare a transcript of the meeting activities. The time designation may be used to locate the referenced discussion on the audio or video recording of this meeting.

Access to an electronic copy of these minutes and the audio or video recording is provided from the Legislative Branch home page at <https://leg.mt.gov>. From the home page, select the "Committees" drop down menu at the top, then select Administrative or Interim, and the appropriate committee. The written minutes log can be located by expanding the accordion menu for the date of the meeting. Links to the audio/video files can be located by selecting the Video/Audio button on the same page, then the "past/current recordings" button. From there, use the calendar to select the date of the meeting you wish to view/listen to. The written Minutes Log, along with links to the audio and video recordings, is listed by meeting date on the interim committee's web page. Each of the Exhibits is linked and can be viewed by clicking on the Exhibit of interest. All Exhibits are public information and may be printed. Please contact the Legislative Services Division at 406-444-3064 for more information.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Sen. Barry Usher, Presiding Officer (R)
Rep. SJ Howell (D)
Rep. Amy Regier (R)
Sen. Laura Smith (D)
David Armstrong, Public Member - via Zoom
Eldena Bear Don't Walk, Public Member - via Zoom
Alan Doane, Public Member
Hon. Mark Dunn, Public Member
Shantelle Gaynor, Public Member
Sheriff Brandon Kelm, Public Member - via Zoom
Dir. Koan Mercer, Public Member
Jimmy Patelis, Public Member - via Zoom
Dir. Eric Strauss, Public Member
Chad Parker, Representing DPHHS

MEMBERS EXCUSED:

Hon. Luke Berger, Vice Presiding Officer
Jessica Flint, Public Member
Amy Tenney, Public Member
Scott Twito, Public Member

MEMBERS ABSENT:

STAFF PRESENT:

Laura Sherley, Lead Staff
Abbie J.N. Cziok, Legal Staff
Ania Alduenda, Secretary

AGENDA ([Attachment 1](#))

VISITORS' LIST ([Attachment 2](#))

CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

08:01:57 Presiding Officer Barry Usher called the meeting to order at 8:01 AM. The committee secretary took roll.

Review of November 18, 2025 CJOC Meeting and January 15, 2026 Meeting Overview

08:03:44 Presiding Officer Barry Usher
08:05:07 Dir. Koan Mercer
08:05:51 Dir. Eric Strauss
08:06:19 Council Member Jessica Flint joined the meeting via Zoom.
08:06:29 Presiding Officer Barry Usher
08:07:53 Sen. Laura Smith

CRIMINAL JUSTICE DATA WAREHOUSE UPDATE

08:09:26 Presiding Officer Barry Usher
08:09:57 Kayla Bragg, Executive Director, Montana Board of Crime Control (MBCC)
08:11:53 Janice Fries, Director, Statistical Analysis Center, MBCC
08:19:46 Adam Carpenter, Chief Executive Officer, Department of Administration (DOA)

Public Comment

08:22:45 May Simmons, Lake County Resident

Council Discussion / Questions

08:24:39 Presiding Officer Barry Usher

**COMMUNITY, COUNSELING, AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES (CCCS)
Specialized Treatment Enhanced Program (STEP)**

08:27:56 Presiding Officer Barry Usher
08:29:14 Mike Thatcher, Chief Executive Officer, CCCS
[EXHIBIT 1](#)
08:44:47 Council Member Scott Twito joined the meeting via Zoom.

08:45:19 Brooks Raymond, Director and Unit Manager, STEP
08:47:28 Josh Parish, Compliance Manager, Quality Assurance of Evidence-Based Practices and Programs Bureau, Department of Corrections (COR)
08:49:59 Courtney Berge, Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor, CCCS
08:54:35 Presiding Officer Barry Usher
08:55:18 Sen. Laura Smith left the meeting.

Public Comment

08:56:15 Veronica White
08:56:47 Presiding Officer Barry Usher
08:58:32 May Simmons, Lake County Resident

Council Discussion / Questions

09:01:54 Council Member Jimmy Patelis
09:02:16 Presiding Officer Barry Usher
09:03:34 Mike Thatcher, CCCS
09:14:36 Council Member Scott Twito
09:16:40 Council Member Shantelle Gaynor
09:17:09 Mike Thatcher, CCCS
09:20:39 Council Member Alan Doane
09:20:53 Mike Thatcher, CCCS
09:25:56 Presiding Officer Barry Usher
09:27:45 Presiding Officer Barry Usher left the meeting and Rep. Amy Regier assumed the position of Presiding Officer.

FINES AND FEES IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

National Overview of Recent Policy Responses

09:27:47 Rep. Amy Regier
09:28:04 Anne Teigen, Associate Director, Civil and Criminal Justice Program, National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL)
[EXHIBIT 2](#)
09:28:38 Jessica Guarino, Policy Associate, Civil and Criminal Justice Program, NCSL (See Exhibit 2)
09:33:31 Presiding Officer Barry Usher rejoined the meeting and resumed the position of Presiding Officer.

Perspectives on Montana's Legal Financial Obligations

09:50:52 Presiding Officer Barry Usher
09:51:19 Hon. Kelly Mantooh, Justice of the Peace, Fergus County & President, Commission of Courts of Limited Jurisdiction (CCLJ)
10:05:02 Hon. Jessie Connolly, Justice of the Peace, Sweetgrass County & President, Montana Magistrates Association (MMA)

Public Comment

10:14:05 May Simmons, Lake County Resident

Council Discussion / Questions

10:18:15 Rep. SJ Howell
10:19:22 Anne Teigen, NCSL
10:21:49 Hon. Mark Dunn
10:23:16 Hon. Jessie Connolly, MMA
10:26:43 Hon. Kelly Mantooth, CCLJ
10:29:43 Rep. SJ Howell
10:30:46 Hon. Jessie Connolly, MMA
10:34:47 Presiding Officer Barry Usher

10:35:50 **Recessed**
10:53:40 **Reconvened**

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS (COR)

Agency Workgroup Update

10:53:41 Presiding Officer Barry Usher
10:54:08 Eric Strauss, Director, COR
10:56:14 Megan Coy, Bureau Chief, Community Corrections Facilities & Programs, COR
[EXHIBIT 3](#)
[EXHIBIT 4](#)
[EXHIBIT 5](#)
[EXHIBIT 6](#)
11:11:07 Scott Eychner, Chief Executive Officer, Rehabilitation and Enterprise Division, COR
(See Exhibit 5 and Exhibit 6)
11:16:46 Presiding Officer Barry Usher
11:17:31 Morgan Davis, Facilitator, COR Commits Workgroup

Public Comment

11:17:59 May Simmons, Lake County Resident
11:19:28 Council Member Alan Doane
11:19:31 Presiding Officer Barry Usher

Council Discussion / Questions

11:20:41 Rep. SJ Howell
11:21:36 Megan Coy, COR
11:22:11 Presiding Officer Barry Usher
11:23:12 Scott Eychner, COR
11:23:21 Dir. Koan Mercer
11:23:28 Presiding Officer Barry Usher
(See Exhibit 6)
11:24:02 Scott Eychner, COR
11:24:49 Dir. Koan Mercer
11:25:12 Megan Coy, COR

11:26:42 Council Member Scott Twito
 11:27:18 Megan Coy, COR
 11:28:08 Presiding Officer Barry Usher
 11:28:29 Megan Coy, COR
 11:30:15 Council Member Jimmy Patelis
 11:30:47 Megan Coy, COR
 11:30:58 Sean Goeddel, Bureau Chief, Probation and Parole, COR
 11:32:52 Council Member Scott Twito
 11:33:44 Sean Goeddel, COR
 11:36:07 Presiding Officer Barry Usher
 11:36:23 Megan Coy, COR
 11:37:46 Sean Goeddel, COR
 11:37:54 Council Member Jimmy Patelis
 11:38:19 Megan Coy, COR
 11:38:28 Sean Goeddel, COR
 11:38:49 Presiding Officer Barry Usher
 11:39:01 Council Member Jimmy Patelis
 11:42:45 Megan Coy, COR
 11:42:49 Sean Goeddel, COR
 11:43:47 Council Member Scott Twito
 11:45:09 Presiding Officer Barry Usher

 11:46:54 **Recessed**
 13:17:03 **Reconvened**

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 45: COLLATERAL CONSEQUENCES OF CRIMINAL RECORD EXPUNGEMENT

National Research

13:17:03 Council Member Jessica Flint did not return via Zoom from the lunch recess.
 13:17:03 Council Member Alan Doane did not return from the lunch recess.
 13:17:04 Presiding Officer Barry Usher
 13:18:26 Vittorio Nastasi, Director, Criminal Justice Policy, Reason Foundation
 13:26:10 Sarah Anderson, Associate Director, Criminal Justice and Civil Liberties, R Street Institute
 13:38:27 Meagan Forbes, Director, Legislation & Senior Legislative Counsel, Institute for Justice
 13:43:33 Josh Gaines, Deputy Program Director, Corrections & Reentry Division, Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center

Montana Stakeholders

13:52:38 Presiding Officer Barry Usher
 13:53:26 Amy McGhee, Clerk of District Court, Missoula County
 13:56:13 Paige Trautwein, Clerk of District Court, Ravalli County

- 14:00:39 Scott Eychner, Chief Executive Officer, Rehabilitation and Enterprise Division, Department of Corrections (COR)
- 14:02:08 Sarah Swanson, Commissioner, Department of Labor and Industry (DLI)
- 14:02:56 Council Member Scott Twito left the meeting via Zoom.

Public Comment

- 14:07:09 May Simmons, Lake County Resident
- 14:08:59 Presiding Officer Barry Usher

Council Discussion / Questions

- 14:11:51 Dir. Eric Strauss
- 14:12:20 Josh Gaines, CSG Justice Center
- 14:14:47 Rep. SJ Howell
- 14:15:59 Sarah Swanson, DLI
- 14:21:46 Dir. Koan Mercer
- 14:22:19 Sarah Swanson, DLI
- 14:23:57 Presiding Officer Barry Usher
- 14:24:57 Sarah Anderson, R Street Institute
- 14:27:18 Rep. SJ Howell
- 14:28:14 Josh Gaines, CSG Justice Center
- 14:30:42 Vittorio Nastasi, Reason Foundation
- 14:32:14 Presiding Officer Barry Usher
- 14:33:04 Paige Trautwein, Ravalli County
[EXHIBIT 7](#)
- 14:33:46 **Recessed**
- 14:47:20 **Reconvened**

IMPLEMENTATION OF SENATE BILL 94 (2023)

Feedback from Montana Recovery Residences

- 14:47:21 Presiding Officer Barry Usher
- 14:49:41 Rod Ostermiller, Executive Director, Bridgemont-Stefans House
- 14:52:01 Stephen Ferguson, Executive Director, Crosswinds Recovery
- 14:56:49 Tara Williamson, Executive Director, Support and Techniques for Empowering People (STEP, Inc.)
[EXHIBIT 8](#)
- 15:06:59 Kacy Keith Drewry, Owner, A Sober Start
- 15:12:46 Carolyn Belling, Regional Director, Hope Center Ministries

Feedback from Program Stakeholders

- 15:14:23 Presiding Officer Barry Usher
- 15:15:20 Megan Coy, Bureau Chief, Community Corrections Facilities & Programs, Department of Corrections (COR)
(See Exhibit 8)

- 15:21:09 Peter Maney, Executive Director, Recovery Access Montana (RAM)
[EXHIBIT 9](#)
(See Exhibit 8)
- 15:27:42 Meghan Peel, Division Administrator, Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities Division, Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS)
(See Exhibit 8)
- 15:30:22 Terri Todd, National Sober Living Association (NSLA)
- 15:36:37 Rich St. John, Chief of Police, Billings Police Department

Public Comment

- 15:38:12 May Simmons, Lake County Resident

Council Discussion / Questions

- 15:40:17 Council Member Shantelle Gaynor
- 15:41:06 Peter Maney, RAM
- 15:41:41 Presiding Officer Barry Usher
- 15:43:12 Tara Williamson, STEP, Inc.
- 15:44:19 Presiding Officer Barry Usher
- 15:44:53 Meghan Peel, DPHHS
- 15:45:46 Megan Coy, COR
- 15:48:16 Chad Parker, Chief Legal Counsel, DPHHS
- 15:49:31 Chief Rich St. John, Billings Police Department

PUBLIC COMMENT ON ANY TOPIC UNDER CJOC JURISDICTION

Written Public Comment ([See Attachment 3](#))

- 15:50:06 Presiding Officer Barry Usher
- 15:50:47 Cheryl Myers-Schwegel, 406 Revolutionized
- 15:52:23 Nicole Gomez, Justice Initiative Director, Catalyst Montana
[EXHIBIT 10](#)
- 15:53:59 Heather O'Loughlin, Executive Director, Montana Budget and Policy Center
[EXHIBIT 11](#)
[EXHIBIT 12](#)
- 15:56:54 Presiding Officer Barry Usher
- 15:57:49 May Simmons, Director, Montana Justice Alliance
- 16:00:19 Amanda McKnight, Founder, 406 Revolutionized
- 16:00:35 Sen. Laura Smith rejoined the meeting.
- 16:03:32 Adilene Espinoza Nava
- 16:05:33 Presiding Officer Barry Usher

COUNCIL WORK SESSION

- 16:06:11 Presiding Officer Barry Usher
- 16:07:22 Laura Sherley, Lead Staff, Legislative Services Division (LSD)
(See Exhibit 8 and Exhibit 9)
[EXHIBIT 13](#)
[EXHIBIT 14](#)

House Joint Resolution 45

16:10:46 Rep. SJ Howell
16:10:56 Presiding Officer Barry Usher
16:11:14 Chad Parker, Chief Legal Counsel, Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS)
16:12:33 Presiding Officer Barry Usher
16:13:28 Council Member Jimmy Patelis
16:13:36 Rep. SJ Howell
16:14:21 Hon. Mark Dunn
16:15:21 Presiding Officer Barry Usher
16:18:43 Dir. Eric Strauss
16:19:31 Presiding Officer Barry Usher
16:19:51 Rep. SJ Howell
16:21:29 Presiding Officer Barry Usher

Direction to Staff

16:22:37 Council Member Jimmy Patelis
16:23:00 Presiding Officer Barry Usher
16:25:53 Dir. Eric Strauss
16:26:26 Sen. Laura Smith
16:27:24 Presiding Officer Barry Usher
16:27:47 Laura Sherley, LSD
[EXHIBIT 15](#)
16:29:05 Rep. Amy Regier left the meeting.
16:31:28 Hon. Mark Dunn
16:33:02 Presiding Officer Barry Usher
16:34:52 Chad Parker, DPHHS
16:36:04 Presiding Officer Barry Usher
16:37:23 Council Member Shantelle Gaynor
(See Exhibit 11 and Exhibit 12)
16:38:17 Presiding Officer Barry Usher
16:38:46 Dir. Koan Mercer
16:39:52 Presiding Officer Barry Usher
16:40:48 Hon. Mark Dunn
16:41:31 Council Member Shantelle Gaynor
16:42:38 Sen. Laura Smith
16:43:06 Presiding Officer Barry Usher
16:44:11 Rep. SJ Howell
16:45:13 Chad Parker, DPHHS
16:45:24 Presiding Officer Barry Usher
16:46:12 Council Member Shantelle Gaynor
16:47:46 Chad Parker, DPHHS

16:48:25 Sen. Laura Smith left the meeting.
16:48:54 Dir. Koan Mercer
16:49:43 Presiding Officer Barry Usher
16:50:49 Rep. SJ Howell
16:51:19 Chad Parker, DPHHS
16:51:27 Presiding Officer Barry Usher
16:54:39 Laura Sherley, LSD

MEETING WRAP UP

16:55:11 Presiding Officer Barry Usher

ADJOURNMENT

Adjournment: 16:55:52