



March 27, 2025

Open Letter to the Public from Mayor Mike Poirier regarding Public Safety

Dear Wenatchee Community,

Public safety is key to maintaining a high quality of life in our community and it depends on the coordinated efforts of various agencies, each playing a crucial role in law enforcement and the criminal justice process.

The City of Wenatchee (City) is responsible for hiring, training, and overseeing the Wenatchee Police Department, which provides law enforcement services within the City. While the Wenatchee Police Department uses many tools to avoid arrests—like de-escalation techniques—the Chelan County Regional Justice Center (Jail) remains an important option when needed to protect the public.

Chelan County owns and operates the Jail and the City of Wenatchee contracts with Chelan County to house its inmates. In 2024, the City paid Chelan County \$1.6 million to accept and house all of the City's inmates. However, city officers have been unable to immediately access the Jail or the Jail has refused to take certain City inmates. Every denied booking into the Jail means that an individual who is already suspected of a crime remains in the community with the potential to victimize other people. Since early 2024, the City has been in discussions with Chelan County to renew the service agreement for use of the Jail and to address the City's public safety concerns. The City has requested revisions to the service agreement to require Chelan County to actually book an individual arrested by our officers, and Chelan County has rejected these proposed changes. The City has also proposed an increase to the annual fee for 2025 to \$1.8 million, and this was rejected by Chelan County. In response, the City offered a higher annual fee of \$2.2 million - a 37% increase from 2024 – to help cover Jail operational costs and ensure that the Wenatchee Police Department has 24/7 access to the Jail, 365 days a year, which again was not accepted by Chelan County.

Despite all of the City's efforts, Chelan County served the City with a letter of termination, attempting to end jail services in August 2025 thereby further endangering the public's safety and seriously hampering law enforcement in our community.

The County's position has left our Wenatchee community with limited options. For example, the City could give in to Chelan County's demands and allow a Jail contract that puts the public's safety at risk and continues to hamper law enforcement activities. However, I cannot in good conscience recommend that the City enter into an agreement that risks the safety of our community and our officers. That is why today, the City Council voted to take legal action on this matter to require Chelan County to enter into a reasonable contract that guarantees Jail services for our community. I hope this issue sparks more conversations about the need for regional jail services and the importance of working together, just as we did when the Jail was built in 1983.

I'm sharing this information with you all because I want you to have all the facts and I encourage you to reach out to local officials—such as City and County officials, and others involved in the justice system—and ask them to prioritize the safety of our community.

Sincerely,

Mike Poirier
City of Wenatchee Mayor



Public Safety Frequently Asked Questions:

1. When was the Jail established?

The Chelan County Regional Justice Center was established in 1983 as the first regional jail in Washington State. Chelan County, Douglas County and the City of Wenatchee established a Regional Jail Agreement to serve the collective needs of the region. The partners cooperatively participated in the operation of the Jail until Chelan County withdrew from the regional operational approach in 2009. Since that time, the Chelan County has independently operated the jail and contracted with individual municipalities to collect a service payment for its use.

2. Can the City contract with another jail?

Yes, however contracting with an out-of-county jail would require our officers to transport inmates to a neighboring county, which could require a four hour round trip (or longer) for the officers to transport an arrestee. This would mean that officer time that could be dedicated to preventing and addressing crime is spent instead on transportation.

3. Can the City of Wenatchee open its own jail?

The City used to own and operate its own jail until the regional partners established a collaborative partnership to build and operate the Chelan County Regional Justice Center in 1983. The CCRJC was meant to support the needs of the region as a whole and provide these services; the City closed down the City jail in support of this regional effort. The City could embark on the process to build a new jail, however that process would be a multi-year effort and would not solve the current immediate need for jail services.

4. Why is Chelan County Regional Justice Center not booking into the jail?

The City has not received any clear reasonings for the limited or declined Jail service. Our officers have had to call the Jail in advance of making an arrest to make sure Jail will take a City inmate but have been forced to make decisions based on the Jail's service restrictions, which at times have changed from shift to shift and are uncertain and inconsistent.

5. What was the Jail's capacity?

According to Chelan County Code Section 1.117.020, the Jail has a capacity of 197 inmates.

6. How many inmates have historically been booked into the Jail?

The City has been provided with information that shows the yearly average daily population (ADP) of inmates at the Jail for the City and the County, which shows the following:

Year	City Cost	City ADP	County ADP
2018	\$1,221,920	43.5	139.4
2019	\$1,140,814	33.2	132.2
2020	\$459,163	13.7	111.8
2021	\$1,385,880	16.6	82.1

Year	City Cost	City ADP	County ADP
2022	\$1,455,300	18.7	88.7
2023	\$1,528,065	24.5	96.2
2024	\$1,604,468	28.5	81.0