

# County hires consultant to develop security plan

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**MONTESANO** — The Grays Harbor County commissioners hired a consultant on Monday to figure out the county's security needs in the wake of the March 9 shooting of a deputy and stabbing of Superior Court Judge Dave Edwards.

The contract was awarded to David Haller, a retired detective previously with the Thurston County Sheriff's Office, who also handled security for Thurston County's courthouse.

The contract spells out that he will "analyze and assess physical security risks to Grays Harbor County building facilities, including the courthouse and administration buildings in Montesano, Pearsall Building and Juvenile Detention Center in Aberdeen and develop recommendations for security management, including proposals for a security implementation plan with necessary equipment and personnel, and preparing a written position description for a county deputy director of public services for facilities security."

Haller will be paid \$25 an hour and the contract is good for the next 30 days. After that, County Commissioners Terry Willis and Mike Wilson said they expect some kind of report back from Haller explaining what the county's next steps should be.

There's no ceiling for how much the contract will cost, but if Haller put in 160 hours over the next month, that would cost the county \$4,000.

"Security for our facilities has become one of the priorities on everybody's mind right now," Commissioner Willis said in announcing the contract Monday afternoon.

Willis said the consultant will pull all of the parties together and figure out if the county needs to install security equipment or hire more people or a combination of both.

In March of last year, Judge Edwards convened a committee to review courthouse security standards and to make a recommendation for the implementation of security measures at the county courthouse. The group, made up of Edwards, Scott, Prosecutor Stew Menefee and officials from county facilities and central services spent more than four months developing a comprehensive security plan. The plan calls for \$300,000 in improvements, including a metal detector, an x-ray machine, three bailiffs, two security screeners and a security director. There would also be \$250,000 annual maintenance costs thereafter.

Willis said the security consultant will review the existing plan and also expand on that plan to focus on other county buildings, as well. If the previously drafted plan expands security to more buildings, the costs — including the annual maintenance costs — could be several hundred thousand dollars.

"We need security for the whole complex, as opposed to one of the buildings," Willis said.

"In the meantime, we will still keep looking at the different ways to fund this," Wilson said. "This is not going to be a one-time cost, there will be ongoing costs for many years."

Willis said that Grays Harbor is not alone in the state in not having security.

"It went (that) out we were the only one in the state and that's not true, and there are counties that have security of varying degrees," Willis said. "They may just have one person at the front door and that's what their security is."

On Sunday, *The Peninsula Daily News* had a story on Clallam County's courthouse security.

"Grays Harbor had less security than we do," Clallam County security deputy Gary Gorss said. "Clallam County has me. That's it."

Clallam Superior Court Judge Ken Williams is pressing his county officials to do more about security.

But other nearby counties do have metal detectors and full-time security, including Pacific, Lewis, Mason and Thurston counties.

The Grays Harbor Superior Court judges have issued an “order of security” requiring a deputy in each of their court rooms during business hours. The Sheriff’s Office has also closed all doors to the courthouse except the front door.

“The feeling of security is there,” Willis said. “You see them. ... The issue is these are officers who are there on overtime and we are paying overtime costs and we cannot sustain this on a financial end.”

“These are trained deputies and they need to be out on the road dealing with issues,” Wilson said. “We’re running short-handed anyway. We know we need to respond. We just need to see what it looks like and how everything will play out over the next six to 12 months.”