

MAINTAINING OUR QUALITY OF LIFE

“Navigating the Public Safety Challenges Facing Washtenaw County Now & in the Future”

Understanding the Context

How do we navigate the environment of the future? It is clear to even the most optimistic that significant financial challenges confront federal, state and local units of government. Forecasts predict any reasonable level of fiscal stability to be years away. In 2009, Washtenaw County was forced to adopt a budget designed to close an approximate two (2) year projected deficit of 30 million for the years 2010 and 2011. In 2011, the County will develop and adopt a budget for 2012/2013 designed to address an additional projected deficit of 20 million. This amounts to a total reduction of 50 million dollars over a four (4) year period. The challenges brought about as a result of the shifting financial landscape will force more change at a faster pace than anything we have been accustomed to.

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In this atmosphere of severe fiscal restraint and a continuing demand for services, the general fund monies that historically support public safety in Washtenaw County become even more limited. The simple reality is that there is not enough money to support all of the police services that are important to our communities. It is a reality shared by us all, both jurisdictions within the county that have their own law enforcement operations as well as those that are contract partners with the County and Sheriff’s Office. For example, what has happened in terms of staff reductions in the Sheriff’s Office (Ypsilanti Township contracted for 44 deputies in 2008, and 31 in 2010, Augusta Township contracted for 2 deputies in 2008 and 0 deputies in 2010/the WCSO had 145 deputies assigned to Police Services in 2008 and 124 assigned in 2010) is similar to what has been experienced with most of our fellow law enforcement agencies throughout our county (Ann Arbor Police Department went from 216 sworn officers in 2000 to 150 in 2007 to 124 in 2010, the City of Ypsilanti Police Department went from 39 officers in 2007 to 31 in 2010).

To a degree, crime victimization tends to follow economic recession. And, accordingly, any significant reduction in police services presents an untenable and counterproductive scenario to the Sheriff’s Office and the residents of Washtenaw County we proudly serve. This is particularly true for those who are the direct victims of crime. But make no mistake; we all pay for it both financially, with a loss of economic development, and personally with an increased sense of the fear of crime, social disorder and violence.

Focusing on Good Public Policy & Framing the Questions

Establishing good public policy requires elected officials and the citizens we serve to ask what is most important to us, at what level, and how can we deliver it in the most simple, cost effective manner, and in doing so, build a sustainable future. We hope that this is the Governor’s orientation when he speaks of collaboration and shared services, that his goal is cost reduction absent a degradation of service quality, not a cost increase or the establishment of additional isolating layers of government or pseudo-government bureaucracy.

In critical categories such as Aggravated Assault, Arson, B&E, Larceny/Retail Fraud, Auto Theft (UDAA), Robbery, and Criminal Sexual Conduct, crime in the County has not increased despite the overall reduction in the number of police county-wide.

Create Public Safety. Provide Quality Service. Build Strong & Sustainable Communities

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WASHTENAW COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE			
CRIME REPORT - TWO YEAR TREND - PART 1 CRIMES			
	2010	2009	% Diff
MURDER	4	3	33.33
AGGRAVATED ASSAULT	243	266	-8.65
ARSON	17	29	-41.38
B&E	941	1038	-9.34
LARCENY/RETAIL FRAUD	1598	1648	-3.00
UDAA	259	268	-3.00
ROBBERY	80	98	-18.00
CSC	89	119	-25.21

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As we move forward this presents us with some questions. Did we have more police than needed? Is this a factor of the quality of the effort of the men and women providing the service, or of strong organizational leadership? Or, of a combination of these inclusive of the variety of socio-economic factors that are believed to influence crime?

These questions notwithstanding, there is a fundamental relationship between the adequacy of police staffing and the level of crime and community need. Someone has to respond to crimes, put prevention programs in place, and do the community-based engagement and organizing that provides the foundation for both (response & prevention), as well as acting as the front line for the delivery of other human and social justice services within the community. This is the police. In brief, at a certain point reduced police staffing will place people, property, quality of life and economic development at risk. It is our assessment that we have reached this point.

Finding a Reasonable (Sustainable) Standard

How do you determine the number of police officers necessary to successfully provide appropriate police services to a respective jurisdiction? Some have used the one (1) officer for every 1,000 residents measure. Attractive in its simplicity, it fails to account for the many factors that characterize police service delivery. One of the most accepted methodologies to estimate police staffing requirements employs a complex formula that uses workload data, personnel policies, geographic and roadway information about the jurisdiction and operational performance objectives as part of the analysis. The outcome provides an “ideal” and “minimum” staffing number. Ideal means the agency is positioned to respond in a timely manner to calls for service (CFS), engage in self-initiated and community-oriented policing activities, and provide an acceptable level of patrol visibility in the respective jurisdiction. Minimum means patrol staff will only be used to respond to calls for service. I.e., no additional staff is included to insure that the responses to calls for service will be timely, or to engage in self-initiated or community-oriented policing activities, or to provide general patrol visibility to deter crime and traffic violators in their respective jurisdiction.

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Historically, staffing levels for jurisdictions that contract with the Sheriff’s Office have varied considerably across the County, i.e., they have been above the ideal, below the ideal, comfortably above the minimum, at the minimum and below the minimum. The recent trend towards staff reduction during this past decade has driven current staffing levels in a number of the contract jurisdictions toward minimum levels in, ironically, higher activity areas.

With over 40 years of experience providing contract policing services, the Sheriff’s Office has been able to blend and optimize various staffing circumstances to provide and maintain quality service at a considerably reduced cost while customizing its services to meet the unique needs of its respective communities. Moving forward the Sheriff’s Office will continue this “promising” practice while balancing the impacts of continued downsizing of the police services staff around the County and within the Office as a whole.

What’s Important? *Deciding on Priorities . . .*

Considering the above, it is important that we communicate police service priorities.

- Responding to emergency (911) calls for service remains our top priority. 911 calls indicating a threat to physical well being are foremost within this category. Meeting community need in this area requires the coordinated efforts of both our “contract” and non-contract “county-wide” deputies more than at any other time in our history.
- Maintaining our ability to actively investigate crimes against persons (murder, criminal sexual conduct, assault and robbery) is our next priority. These crimes have significant community impact. Successfully solving them is accomplished primarily through the efforts of our investigative staff with support from our community-based patrol staff.

DB INVESTIGATIONS IN 2010 = 313	
INCLUDES ASSIST TO DEPUTIES/AGENCIES	
Murder	3
OWI Causing Death	1
Solicitation to Commit Murder	1
Accessory After Fact of Murder	2
Death Investigations	27
Suicide	6
Jail Suicide	1
Attempt Murder/FA/GBH	15
Assault	7
Jail Assault	1
Near Drowning	1
CSC	75
Domestic Violence	2
Stalking	1

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Kidnapping/Abduction	3
Intimidation	6
Armed Robbery	7
Unarmed Robbery	1
Home Invasions / B&E	48
Larceny	4
R&C	4
Arson/Fire	6
Suspicious Circumstance	9
Missing Person	8
Child Abuse/Neglect	9
Cruelty/Neglect	2
Shots Fired / Careless	1
Felony Firearm / CCW	7
UDAA	2
Alcohol to Minor	2
Felony Arrest	1
Misdemeanor Warrant	1
Dangerous Drugs	5
Soliciting/Accosting/Prostitution	9
Fraud	1
Embezzlement	2
Intimidation - Threat to Bomb	1
MDOP	2
Obstruct Investigation	2
Runaway	1
Absconding	1
Indecent Exposure	4
Fail to Use Due Caution /Operate	1
Felony False Police Report	1
Mental	2
Resist Officer/Disarm Officer	2
Trespass	1
Possession Harmful Device	1
Assist Citizen / Medical	4
Assist Law Enforcement Officer	6
Personal Injury Crash	1
Accident Injury	1
Impersonate Police Officer	1

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Focusing on these two (2) priority areas is essential to reducing the fear of crime, building strong, sustainable communities and maintaining the high quality of life that we enjoy in Washtenaw County. Absent our ability to do so, public safety, economic development and effective human services are compromised.

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No less important as contributors to quality of life, we will maintain our commitment to fulfilling the statutorily mandated responsibilities of the Office including but not limited to administering and operating the Jail and all ancillary services, providing patrol on County primary and secondary roads, acting as a principle officer of the Michigan Court System including the service of civil process, and executing a myriad of other duties including, by way of example, enforcement of the Marine Safety Act, recovery of drowned bodies, maintaining select local criminal records, animal control and cruelty investigations, etc.

What Do We Give Up?

If the priorities are emergency response (911), investigating crimes against persons, fulfilling statutory responsibilities, what services will suffer as a result of reduced staffing? Every crime affecting residents or visitors to Washtenaw County is important. However, circumstances further limit our ability to sustain the same level of response to the investigation of property crimes as we must do to confront crimes against persons. Depending upon the severity of staffing reductions, the implications of this for the Sheriff’s Office and residents of Washtenaw County include, but may not be limited to:

- **Delayed responses to non in-progress calls for services.** E.g., this includes crimes such as retail fraud, auto theft, larcenies, indent theft, or burglary (home or business).
- **Increased use of alternative response and reporting methods.** E.g., as opposed to sending a Deputy Sheriff to take your report, we may respond using our Telephone Reporting Unit (TRU), ask you file your report on-line, or request that you file a report in person at one of our service locations.
- **Reduced ability to conduct follow up investigations.** Our ability to conduct follow-up investigations involving non-serial property crimes and most misdemeanor crimes against persons will not be at the level that, as Sheriff, I believe is appropriate, nor at the level and capabilities of Sheriff’s Office professionals that do the work. Deputy Sheriff’s assigned to patrol services posses the skills and training necessary to conduct much of their own follow up investigations required to successfully close property related cases as well as many crimes against persons. Unfortunately, such investigative activity is time consuming and often requires multi-jurisdictional contact, effort and cooperation. Considering our current and potential future staffing levels, our ability to manage these cases while focusing on priority activities will be severely limited.
- **Reduced investigative services and support for proactive patrol and community-oriented policing.** Our Deputy Sheriff’s function actively and independently in the communities they police. They lead many of our investigations involving non-serial property crimes and lesser crimes against persons. However, our investigative staff, the Detectives, carry primary responsibility for conducting the lead and follow up investigations of serious crimes against persons and serial property crimes.

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Enforcement’s role is to reduce crime, violence and property loss by assuring that perpetrator’s are caught and cannot victimize an innocent reside or visitor to the County. Last year our Detective Bureau conducted 313 investigations. Detectives also take key roles in community-based problem solving. Presently they are active with their human service counter-parts in assuring that women arrested for prostitution are not just rotated through the justice system, but also receive treatment and other services as may be appropriate. Reducing the number of investigators seriously compromises the ability of the Sheriff’s Office to accomplish these objectives and proactively manage community risk.

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Unrealized Potential of Technology

In both government and business, on-going changes in technology raise the hope that technology will somehow make the difference; that the shrinking budget and staff will be off-set by a technological efficiency that will allow workers to do well or better with less. It is a hope fed by industry and market forces. The reality is that introducing new technologies requires careful and extensive forethought and usually entails more time, effort and resources than expected. Understanding this, the Office has developed a strategic technology team and has made advances which include, but are not limited to, streamlined mobile technology with digital in-car video implementation, a new and more effective Jail Management System, instituted the more efficient and cost effective electronic e-crash, e-property, e-impound, e-warrant, and e-citation programs, improved internal infrastructure including an updated command center, and partnered in a county-wide initiative to improve cyber-security.

Building a Sustainable Future

Even the most optimistic economic forecasts for the state and Washtenaw County predict a number of years will pass before any significant financial stabilization occurs. (Recovery may no longer be an accurate word if you accept that circumstances may never quite be as they were.) Assuming this is achieved, there is no reason to believe that thoughtful local officials will automatically increase public safety funding and staffing. As a result, law enforcement agencies must do two (2) important things:

- Communicate what’s at risk, i.e., economic development, community stabilization, personal safety, property security, and overall quality of life, to assure that resource allocation decisions are based upon good overall public policy, not politics and self interest.
- Provide community leadership in the development of collaborations and partnerships aimed at creating simple, shared strategies and initiatives that assure the delivery of efficient, effective and sustainable police services.

For the last two (2) years the Sheriff’s Office has been part of the Intra-Agency Cooperation Team (ICT), a group of County law enforcement representatives who have come together to explore and exploit opportunities to gain greater efficiencies and effectiveness through

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collaboration and cooperation; a concept and initiative that newly elected Governor Rick Snyder has identified as a key component of his strategy to re-invent Michigan.

To date, these efforts have resulted in the creation of:

- a county-wide Special Weapons & Tactics Team (SWAT), Washtenaw County Metro SWAT;
- a county-wide Crisis Negotiations Team (CNT); and
- a county-wide Canine response capability.

The Metro SWAT team, for example, has reduced the number of teams from four (4) to one (1) with a resulting savings in costs for training, staff, and equipment. Metro SWAT and CNT work jointly in response to all manner of special threats including, by way of example, barricaded perpetrators, etc. County-wide canine has increased the capability all agencies with timely and consistent access to tracking dogs, narcotics and explosives detection dogs, and patrol dogs. In 2011 the ICT’s collaborative focus includes core police support services such as polygraph, computer forensics, serious traffic crash investigation and possibly GIS Mapping/crime analysis and fleet operations management.

Outside of the ICT, the Sheriff’s Office has taken on dispatch services for the City of Ypsilanti, and with the Ann Arbor Police Department has co-located their public safety dispatch centers providing considerable savings in shared technology and other on-going costs without degradation in services.

Metro Dispatch Efficiencies

As of March 30, 2011

Ypsilanti City dispatching contract

Savings/Earnings	Efficiency	Source of Data
\$-158,000 annually	Reduction to Ypsilanti’s general fund operating budget	City of Ypsilanti
+\$73,000 annually	Revenue generated by contract	Executed contract
+\$75,228 annually	Revenue generated by Ypsilanti PSAP funding	Emergency Telephone District Board

Ann Arbor Co-location project

Savings	Efficiency	Source of Data
\$-350,000 every 8 years	Elimination of need to replace aging Central Dispatch phone switch	AT&T
\$-80,000 every 6 years	Elimination of need to replace aging Central Dispatch logging recorder	Various vendors
\$-440,000 every 10 years	Elimination of need to install new microwave link for MPSCS dispatch connectivity	Motorola
Expected, but not yet determined	Sharing of recurring costs and technology maintenance	Agreement with Ann Arbor pending

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The Sheriff’s Office, over the years, has also worked with a number of its similarly situated contiguous contracting jurisdictions to share operational area and resources to the benefit of each.

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The Justice Project Outreach Team/JPORT as part of CMH, partners with the WCSO to provide services for individual with a mental illness who are involved in the criminal justice system. This includes Pre-booking jail diversion (diverting individuals when appropriate to treatment rather than to jail), post-booking diversion (linking clients to case management and other services upon incarceration release), assessment, psychiatric services, and access to the Street Outreach Court (facilitating treatment for mental health and substance use disorders in lieu of incarceration). The goals of this partnership are to divert individuals with a mental illness from incarceration when appropriate, reduce/prevent recidivism, improve psychiatric stability among offenders, and transition individuals to community supports.

Re-invention requires re-thinking what we do and how we do it. Such initiatives laid out above are essential to successfully navigating our present economic and public safety challenges while building a sustainable foundation for the future.