



Harrisburg Law Enforcement Ad-Hoc Committee Minutes
November 08, 2021
6:30 PM

Chairperson: Mayor Robert Duncan
Council Members: Mike Caughey, Kim Downey, and Charlotte Thomas
Citizen Members: Travis Crosman and Don Messick
Staff Present: City Administrator Michele Eldridge, Finance Officer Cathy Nelson and City Recorder/ Court Clerk Lori Ross
Law Enforcement Present: Chief Larry Larson, Coburg PD and Captain Micah Smith, LCSO
Meeting Location: Harrisburg Municipal Center @ 354 Smith St.

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL by Chairperson, Mayor Robert Duncan at the hour of 6:30pm

CONCERNED CITIZEN(S) IN THE AUDIENCE. All citizens present were there for items on the agenda

THE MATTER OF DISCUSSION IN RELATION TO LAW ENFORCEMENT OPTIONS FOR THE CITY OF HARRISBURG

STAFF REPORT: Chairperson Duncan started the meeting by having all members and staff introduce themselves and then read portions of the script for the evening as shown in **Addendum 1**. He stated how much admiration and appreciation he has for law enforcement and the most important thing to the City Council, is the safety of our citizens.

Eldridge referred to the staff report which includes graphs, contracts, law enforcement contracts, and crime stats. Some of the highlights include:

- Eldridge pointed out that page 6 refers to selected Cities, including Harrisburg, their population, property tax rate, law enforcement staff and law enforcement budget. She also pointed out that Harrisburg, Veneta and Creswell all contract out for law enforcement services. She referred to the different tax rates for the cities listed and any levies they may have, as well as whether the listed cities had jail and dispatch services.
- On page 7, it shows the breakdown of the cost of professional services and miscellaneous services. She commented that everyone does their budget differently and some personnel budgets don't show the breakdown for the Chief of Police.

Miscellaneous services include dispatch services, vehicles, uniforms along with other items. Eldridge noted that insurance for liability was included in the general fund for the majority of the cities, so we don't know how much they are paying.

- Page 8 shows the startup costs for a police department and shows options for a one- or two-person department. The City would still need to maintain a law enforcement contract with another agency to ensure more coverage. The City would also need to contract out for dispatch services and jail services.
- Page 9 shows the revenue figures based on what the cities are charging out and how they are paying for their police department. Eldridge stated that some cities have a public safety fee that is included on their utility bill. Other revenue includes grants, property taxes and transfers from the general fund. Eldridge commented that if we had our own police department, we would have someone who spends 100% of their time in Harrisburg and the City would be able to direct the policy for the officers. She explained that we have a three-year contract with LCSO which coincides with the collective bargaining agreement, and Coburg, which is a one-year contract that ends next fiscal year. Eldridge stated that she has spoken with Undersheriff Duncan about having a deputy that is assigned to our substation, similar to some cities in Lane County. Those contracts cover their hours and a portion of the vehicle, overhead cost but they are still employed by the county. Eldridge commented that she will be handing out some information at the end of the meeting on how to start a police department.

Chairperson Duncan then opened up the meeting for discussion.

- Chairperson Duncan asked Captain Smith what percentage of the overall property taxes, \$654,096, is going to the Sheriff Department. Captain Smith said he would get that number for the next meeting but did explain that the LCSO gets shy of \$5 million out of the \$70 million collected by Linn County. LCSO's total budget is \$36 million, which also includes \$11 million of revenue and the \$22 million from the Bond Measure.
- Chairperson Duncan then referred to the cost of living raise that LCSO asks for every three years. He stated that over the last 20 years, the cost for the City has gone from around \$168,000 to \$279,000. He would like to know when the last time was, LCSO received an increase in revenue out of the county budget. Captain Smith replied that sometimes it's not increased, and sometimes its 1-2% in General Fund contributions from the county for around \$90,000. There are times when the LCSO is cutting cost like in 2012 when 22 positions were cut. Don Messick, retired LCSO Captain and resident, commented that the levy is very important to LCSO due to the fact that vendors with LCSO increase their contracts yearly.
- Chief Larson stated that he agrees with Messick and commented that sometimes its 1-3%. Coburg Police Department includes budget needs with Public Works and if they have a high dollar need it will limit them. This year he will be getting a new patrol car which will end up costing around \$55,000 to \$60,000 after all the electronics are installed.
- Captain Smith commented that if a patrol car is in an accident, that leaves them without a vehicle, and it can take 36 weeks for a replacement. Having contracted services saves the City from taking on those adverse effects. Captain Smith then asked what insurance premiums would look like for the City in an officer involved shooting or a use of force incident, stating that it's not an "if it happens" situation, it's a "when it happens". He also noted that getting sued happens, whether it's related to the Chief of Police, the Sheriff, or the jail. There is also the storage of evidence including vehicles that can have a retention of 99 years, if involved in a homicide. These are expenses that are passed onto to LCSO and aren't reflected in our contract cost.

- Chairperson Duncan noted that the concern for the safety of our residents is our top priority. Residents already pay property taxes which goes for law enforcement and also for the levy, on top of the contracted services.
- Thomas commented that if security is important to the City, we don't put much money into it compared to the City of Oakridge. With the levy, we are still paying for services, even if we have a police department. Thomas questioned Oakridge's tax rate and if they had a levy included. Captain Smith commented that the tax rate could include things like a swimming pool, library, road tax, or other things. Captain Smith gave the example of Sweet Home who is completely compressed. Of the \$10 per thousand that can be levied against property taxes, they are at \$10. With the passing of the new levy, LCSO will lose \$2.9 million to compression. Chairperson Duncan asked Nelson where the City was on compression, and she responded that the City was not anywhere near it at this time.
- Caughey stated that Oakridge is in a similar situation as Harrisburg being located at the edge of the county line. He feels it takes so long for response time due to no Deputy being around and that is a complaint he hears from residents. Messick shared an experience he had with Lane County when attending to his parents, where an officer never responded for a burglary call until two days later. Chief Larson commented that response time is important and anything you can do to make the City safer is the right move, but it's expensive.
- Captain Smith stated LCSO is a Law Enforcement Agency and getting there as fast as possible when the public calls is of the utmost importance. Taxes are not a concern in regard to response time, whether the location is an enhanced contract city, or a rural county area. The Sheriff Department strategically places their resources in the areas that are going to bring about the most calls and stated that Deputies are always here, even if you don't see them. They might be handling calls outside of the City limits, but they are working out of the Harrisburg Substation. The enhanced law enforcement services that Harrisburg has, is an enhancement on traffic or code enforcement. Without it, they would still try to allocate the resources that they have available to be able to be there at all hours for our residents. Harrisburg has always been the place in south county where they anchor resources. LCSO employees don't start from Albany when coming to Harrisburg. The Deputies assigned to Harrisburg are assigned to south county, and that's why you see cars parked at Public Works. Their schedule can be seen on the patrol calendar. Messick stated that the longer response times can be due to bookings and if a Deputy working in Harrisburg is heading to Albany on an arrest, it can take several hours to process. Chief Larson commented that a DUII arrest can take 6-7 hours to complete the booking. Messick commented that's what concerns him as a citizen, and with only one or two officers, we wouldn't have 24/7 coverage. We need to ask what we are going to be happy with and at what cost. If you want more, you have to pay more.
- Resident Travis Crosman commented that we pay contracted services with LCSO, and we pay county taxes. We have Linn County resources even if the contract is not there as well as paying Coburg for extra traffic patrol and he feels that we are throwing money at different agencies for one task.
- Captain Smith commented LCSO tracks all hours on an Excel spreadsheet, and it captures the number of hours they are in Harrisburg. Some of those hours will include calls, follow ups to those calls, traffic, or code enforcement requested by City Staff. Hours can also be added up just by driving around town which can be the most effective thing. He believes the City is getting more than LCSO would be able to offer, without the enhanced services. That revenue supplies two bodies that are always focusing on Harrisburg. If there is a staff shortage, due to vacations, they will move

Deputies around to provide coverage to the contracted Cities. LCSO works assault cases, sex abuse cases, burglary cases and has had homicides in Harrisburg, which include hundreds of hours that don't get put down because it's too difficult to track as they can go on for years. Hours aren't accounted for time spent with the medical examiner or the property and evidence custodian. The hours listed are generally recorded by the patrol Deputies. You rarely see the time spent by the Sergeants or Lieutenants who read the reports before being routed. There is a lot of administrative extra's that aren't captured.

- Downey asked about cities that aren't contracted and how does LCSO take care of them. Captain Smith replied that it's Deputy specific and it depends on how time allows. If complaints that are called in from citizens or if there's crime activity in an area, they would try to cruise by on the way to another call or location. Most cities in Linn County, without a Police Department, have enhanced services with the exceptions of towns like Waterloo or Sodaville. Downey asked if LCSO would only respond if they received a call. If calls come in for non-contracted Cities, Deputies would be assigned accordingly to make sure the contracted Cities are getting their coverage.
- Messick commented that the majority of his time, with LCSO was spent in Harrisburg and if it wasn't in Harrisburg, it was Brownsville or Halsey because they were contracted cities as well. He still sees Deputies driving through town and believes we wouldn't have that, to this extent, without the contract. They would still be a respond to crime, but the response time would probably not be as good.
- Chairperson Duncan commented that Harrisburg is a great place to live that is made up of middle class and fixed income families and he hates to see a few bad people passing through town ruin it. He would like the committee to concentrate on what will make the town livable, safer and what will it take to maintain the level of safety we have currently.
- Caughey thanked Captain Smith for his comments and stated that he felt educated. Captain Smith thanked the City staff and Council for this opportunity and for putting this Committee together.
- Downey asked if we have our own law enforcement, and we have a murder in town, do we have to do our own investigation? Thomas asked Chief Larson how crime was dealt in Coburg as they don't have 24/7 coverage? Chief Larson replied that it's all about relationships and he has a good relationship with the Sheriff of Lane County. Coburg had a stabbing on Mother's Day, which was close to becoming a fatality. Coburg was able to investigate and make an arrest, but if it was a homicide, they don't have the resources so he would ask Oregon State Police or Lane County Sheriff to assist. It can be challenging to follow up and it was almost too much for his department. Messick commented that it can be difficult and depends on the level of experience you have with your staff. Chief Larson gave the example of a domestic violence call that started in Coburg and ended up in Harrisburg on Powerline and Diamond Hill, that included assistance from Lane, Linn, and the Oregon State Police. Downey asked about ongoing murder cases that included assistance from Lane County, and if you have to pay for that service. Chief Larson replied that he has never had to pay for assistance.
- Crosman commented that with Junction City's population growing, he's concerned about people walking from Junction City to Harrisburg especially with Junction City not heavy in handling the homeless population. He doesn't want to see our town inheriting problems from other towns and fears that something is going to escalate at some point. Proactive policing is something that he always did and it's the little things like checking doorknobs that the community loves. He feels like police presence is important

around the school district and which he has only seen once. He doesn't want the City to get stuck with a law enforcement situation.

- Chairperson Duncan informed the committee that the next meeting is scheduled for November 2, 2021, at 6:30pm. If anyone has questions or information they would like to have on the agenda, please contact Eldridge.
- Captain Smith stated that for the next meeting he will have available what the county base tax rate is and the percentage of what goes to LCSO from that. He also provided that the median assessed value for Harrisburg City limits is \$159,280 and the rural, outside the City but in the school district, is \$284,790. The county wide median is \$163,000 in all of Linn County combined.

ADJOURN at the hour of 8:11pm.

CHAIRPERSON

CITY RECORDER