



City of Sidney, MT
Police and Fire Committee Meeting
March 13, 2023 5:30 PM
115 2nd Street SE | Sidney, MT 59270

The City Council meetings are open to the public attending in person, with masks encouraged when social distancing cannot be accomplished. If the public does not wish to participate in person, they are also invited to participate via a Zoom meeting. You can participate via phone:

Meeting ID: 878 2249 8621 Passcode: 4332809 Call: 1-346-248-7799

Alderman Present: Godfrey, Christensen, DiFonzo

Others Present: Mayor Norby, Clerk/Treasurer Chamberlin, Chief Kraft

1. New Business

a. Drug Task Force Officer Grant Position

Chief Kraft stated the City has the opportunity of having a position with the Eastern Montana Drug Task Force that we have been a part of for the last 2 years. He stated it is based out of Miles City with three task force positions available. He stated that means a department designates an employee specifically to this position, they would work under the DCI and work only on drug task force items. He stated when they joined the EMDTF they had a concern with getting work done with the TFO's being located 2 hours away and that has been shown in the last year in the active intelligence reports provided for the Sidney/Richland County area. He stated by having the task force position in Sidney, that would alleviate some of that.

He stated that with current staffing they could fill this position and it would not be an entry level position and he would not recommend hiring an outsider rather move one of our experienced officers into that position and hiring a new officer. He stated this is grant funded through the JAG Grants through the Department of Justice. He stated the 3 officer positions have always been filled, but there is a vacancy for us to step in and request that spot.

Alderwoman Christensen asked what happens if the grant money is taken away or the officer is unhappy in that position and Chief Kraft stated if an officer decides they do not like it, they could be pulled and replaced by another officer with experience and that it would be our position until we decided not to do it.

Alderman DiFonzo asked who has task force positions currently and Chief Kraft stated Custer County and Valley County Sheriff's departments. Alderman DiFonzo stated per the MOU the employee must follow DCI policies and if not it is grounds for dismissal and stated that means they

are not under our control and how can we ensure this position would be working on items locally. Chief Kraft stated supervision would come from the office in Miles City but the would be located in Sidney so most of their investigation would be locally, but they could be called to go to another location.

Alderman DiFonzo asked who will control the overtime, as the City is responsible for the first 8 hours each week, and Chief Kraft stated the supervisor controls the overtime. Alderman DiFonzo asked what the plan would be if the patrol positions backfilled, and the grant funding goes away, or the officers do not want to fill that position. Chief Kraft stated the task force has been around for decades, so he does not foresee the funding not being there but should the patrol position be backfilled, the City would be in a tough place to decide to layoff the newest officer or the task force officer.

Chief Kraft stated by having someone here, it will bring in other resources from the task force and will inherently increase the investigations and intel for the Sidney/Richland County area. He stated that narcotics operations are lengthy, taking a lot of time, need experience, and encompass a lot more than the Sidney Police Department is capable of pursuing, such as going into another State.

Alderman DiFonzo asked how the City will know if the position is successful as the City will be committing an officer that they have put a lot of money into training and Chief Kraft stated he will know with the task force intel meetings and statistics. He stated even with using one of our experienced officers, they will still need training and take time to get up to speed. Alderman DiFonzo asked about instructor costs in getting someone trained to continue the assigned instructor duties that experienced officers have and Chief Kraft stated they have more than one trained to be instructors.

Chief Kraft stated he would like to see this as a 4-year rotation position as that would create drive within the department to get experience to move into that position and limit burnout.

Alderman DiFonzo stated he understands the benefit of having this position, but his concern is backfilling the position and then having the task officer position no longer be funded, causing either an increase in the number of positions or terminating someone. Chief Kraft stated the amount of man power he has is currently with 12 officers, once they are all trained, will finally put the department in a position to be able to adequately cover schedules with sick and vacation and he would not want to see that number lessened. Alderman DiFonzo stated if the funding goes away it would create a hard decision, but that he could not anticipate to permanently increase his manpower.

Clerk/Treasurer Chamberlin asked if DCI terminates due to not following policy, what happens to that officer and Chief Kraft stated they would no longer be in that position but could retain their position with the Sidney Police Department, depending the infraction. Clerk/Treasurer Chamberlin asked what happens if none of the experienced officers wants to continue in that position and Chief Kraft stated then we would no longer have the task force position in Sidney.

Alderman DiFonzo stated in the MOU it states the City indemnifies the state for the task force officer work and that concerns him. He stated if they are not under our supervision, we should have our insurance look into if they will cover the work.

Motion was made to recommend approval with the conditions of having MMIA look into the indemnification clause of the MOU and should the TFO grant terminate, it is not a guaranteed permanent position with the Sidney Police Department and current manpower will be maintained unless approved.

Motion made by Godfrey, Seconded by DiFonzo.

Voting Yea: DiFonzo, Godfrey, Christensen

Meeting was adjourned at 6:48pm.