

City of Cosmopolis
Workshop
March 19, 2014

Mayor Pro Tem Frank Chestnut presided.

Councilmembers Present: Jonathan Fischer, Carl Sperring, Frank Chestnut, Jim Ancich and Debbi Moran

Staff Present: Finance Director Kathy Welch, Attorney Stephen Hyde, and Public Works Director Darrin Raines

Mayor Pro Tem Frank Chestnut opened the workshop at 5:30. He said that tonight's discussion will be about possibly contracting policing services. Mayor Raines was approached by Sheriff Rick Scott and presented the idea of contracting services with the City. Mayor Raines called Public Safety Committee Carl Sperring and Frank Chestnut. They then met and had a detailed question and answer session and decided to bring it to Council.

Sheriff Rick Scott gave a brief discussion of the type of services that would be available through the County for law enforcement. Sheriff Scott said that the discussion came about when he and the Mayor were discussing Criminal Justice Funding. Sheriff Scott has been having this discussion with the City of Westport. It is generally cheaper to contract for services depending on the level of service we would want. He also explained that the liability umbrella becomes smaller for the City's share. What generally allows for this is that cheaper we would no longer be paying employee related cost, vehicle costs and training costs. We would just be writing a check for the service we receive. Twenty four hour a day, seven day a week coverage would take 6 FTEs. Full time FTE's run around \$110,000 (including training, employee vehicle etc.) Westport would require \$600,000 for FTE's. With administrative overhead etc. this could run upwards of \$800,000. Depending on what we would want for response time. Sheriff Scott looked at the calls for service for the City and decided that the impact to the County would not be as great as to the City of Westport. Because of the proximity to Montesano and their office would be easier to absorb. The RCW allows the County to circumvent the Civil Service process, they are allowed to hire the City employees who would like to transfer, allowing for openings. This would be a lateral plus transfer with seniority benefits. He explained that many cities throughout the State now contract for services. The contracts usually run four to five years with built in increases. There are start- up costs to contend with, like increase in equipment, training etc.

Debbi Moran said most of the questions have already been answered. She asked what is the difference between the City and the County hiring requirements. Sheriff Scott said there might not be any difference. She also asked about Shelley's position. Sheriff Scott said that if he needed to hire another staff person to meet the level of service requested, Shelley would be eligible to apply the same as the officers would. Debbi said that Sheriff Scott said that there would be built in increases and asked "How high would the increases go before we could not afford it." Sheriff Scott said that he has looked at historical increases and been able to predict pretty well what the increases would be for the next four to five years and for the most part they would be 3to 5 %. He also said that there is an escape clause built into the contract, but he also has to be able to recoup his costs he has incurred getting ready to hire new employees to take on extra coverage. Debbi also said that we have the best police department here and is very proud of all of them.

Jonathan Fischer asked if there are any benefits for the officers as far as salaries go. Sheriff Scott said that there is quite a bit of disparity in salaries throughout the area. Sometimes at the Sheriff's office there are opportunities to do other things to advance. Jonathan asked if there any contract that are partial hours (night hours etc.). Sheriff Scott said that this is what he does for Oakville. They then get a minimum 40 hours of proactive enforcement. Jonathan asked if any studies have been done about an increase in criminal activity when a city contracts for less service. Sheriff Scott said that he is not aware of any studies available at this time.

Frank Chestnut stated that what drove this issue is not issues of personality or personnel or quality of work. He feels we have one of the best. This is strictly an issue of economy and could possibly be a substantial savings.

Jim Ancich said that he is not willing to sacrifice economy for the safety of the community. He said that he has been through Oakville many times and does not feel that they have adequate coverage.

Chief Stratton said that we are covering full time now and are in the process of hiring to bring our staff up to par. Chief Stratton said that he did not have any advance knowledge of any proposal from the County. He also said that he feels that the Sheriff's Department is one of the premier Departments in the area. They do things right. Chief Stratton said the Cosmopolis Police takes great pride in our community and work hard to preserve it. We also have our own specialties within our departments and have a good Mutual Aid agreement within the County agencies. Our budget this year, puts us into 24 seven department. Sheriff Scott has stated that identical service with the County would cost us more money. We currently have an amazing working relationship with the County. Casey said that he worries about his guys and Sheriff Scott is not obligated to take Cosmopolis staff. There are no guarantees. There also is the issue of finances where the City is recuperating from the mill closing. Chief Stratton feels that we can still support a police department. The whole City is in the process of trying to get more self-sustaining (like water) not less. We still have a volunteer fire department and take great pride in all the services we provide.

Erin Hart, the Daily World, wondered how pension costs figure into this. Does the \$600,000 cover the liability payments as well? Chief Stratton said that anything that comes out of his budget is incorporated into this figure. Does the \$110,000 FTE cover the overhead and liability or is that in addition to what the County would charge? Sheriff Scott said that cost of the FTE has this factored in.

Frank Chestnut said that if this discussion should continue, we would necessarily include the public in the discussion. He thanked Sheriff Scott for attending and giving us the information.

Sheriff Scott said that he is in no way lobbying the City for this and thinks that the Cosmopolis Police Department does a wonderful job. He is just presenting various options that the City could think about.

Finance Director

Attest:

Mayor