

## **State of the Sheriff's Office**

The Sheriff's Office like many other county departments and offices in Monroe County has experienced significant budget reductions. The required budget reductions have caused the Sheriff's Office in particular to reduce services, eliminate programs and layoff personnel due to staff reduction requirements. The most controversial of these was a three million dollar reduction in 2011 causing the layoff of thirteen Deputy Sheriffs, the elimination of two Administrative officer positions, the reduction in rank of one supervisor, the elimination of two corrections officer positions and the reduction to part-time status of two Administrative officers. The Sheriff's Office has reduced its staffing level by forty-seven positions or 24% in the past three years alone. This has resulted in the elimination of clerical, corrections, and sworn officer positions at all levels within the organization and has limited the ability of the Sheriff's Office to ensure that all residents have adequate police coverage and access to timely law enforcement response. While it is true that the Sheriff's Office budget is approximately one-third of the total county budget, this is not uncommon of most counties that are compelled to do so by the need to staff their jails and assign road patrols twenty-four hours a day, every day of the year. That being said, the purpose of this correspondence is to inform the public of the most noticeable changes they will experience in services necessitated by those staffing losses and to answer some frequently asked questions.

**Records Section -** The hours of the Records Section in the lobby area of the Sheriff's Office (where visitors obtain fingerprints, sex offenders register, handgun registrations, various records, general information, inmate visitation, inmate bonds are posted and sworn officers obtain critical investigative data), has been reduced from 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to; Normal hours all seven days are 7am – 5:30pm. Holidays that fall on weekdays are 8am – 4pm. Holidays that fall on the weekends are 7am – 4:30pm due to Record Staffs responsibility to help with jail functions.

**The Administrative Office –** The Administrative office hours are 8am-4:30pm. The offices are closed between 12noon - 1pm during weekdays and all day on weekends and holidays. Some Clerical and Administrative positions have been eliminated; their duties have been absorbed by the remaining employees. The Undersheriff and Chief Deputy (Majors) positions have been reduced to part-time. I retained the right to make further reductions in other personnel areas should the part-time status of those positions not prove practical.

**Jail – The Inmate Service Worker (Red Shirt) Program has been canceled for the time being, leaving over twenty various organizations without the assistance provided by low risk inmates to do lawn work, landscaping, building maintenance, snow removal, etc.. Labor contracts prevent me from continuing this program by allowing volunteers to replace a union position. Additionally, prisoner visitation at the Main Jail Facility has been reduced to two days per week, those being 9-11am and 1-4pm on Saturdays and Sundays.**

**Traffic Unit – Work hours have been modified to accommodate the loss of staff. Citizens will have to wait longer for Salvage Vehicle Inspections, complaints about speeders in their neighborhoods to be addressed and School Bus passing violations and other traffic related complaints to be investigated.**

**Citizen Assistance Responders Unit (CARS) – These Officers are more commonly referred to as Non-Contracted Road Patrol Officers. In 2001, I divided the county into three districts for assignment purposes with an office in each, i.e. Bedford Twp. Hall, Monroe Twp. at the Inmate Dormitory Facility, and the Dundee Twp. Hall. Prior to the reductions, each office was run as a Sheriff's substation servicing five Townships each. A Lieutenant, Detective and Deputy Sheriff's were assigned to each office. Currently, all Lieutenant positions have been eliminated and the Dundee Office no longer has a detective assigned. Deputy Sheriff staffing has been reduced in each office and the remaining Deputy Sheriff's report directly to their assigned office to begin and end shifts. I have coordinated staffing of the shifts with the Michigan State Police but there will still be occasions when response times will be slow especially during the warmer months when there are more citizens out and about and the added burden created by that, along with officer vacations, training, court and other unscheduled absences. Slower responses will also be true during times of inclement weather conditions that result in numerous accidents. Motorists involved in minor non-injury accidents may be required to exchange information or be referred by 911 Central Dispatch to the Sheriff's Office Expeditor to report the accident over the telephone during regular business hours. Life threatening or other potentially dangerous incidents requiring the response of multiple officers may also result in lower priority calls being put on hold until the more serious incident is resolved which often takes several hours and occasionally days.**

### **Frequently Asked Questions:**

**Why doesn't the Sheriff take a pay reduction and use that money towards avoiding employee layoffs? Answer – Public Act 45.421 states the salary of a county elected officer can not be reduced or diminished during the term in which the county officer has been appointed or elected. Accordingly, the proper time to make a pay reduction is prior to a new term which in this instance would take effect in 2013. However, I do not take Health Insurance as a benefit from the County. This results in a potential savings of thousands of dollars to the County each year.**

**Why not sell the helicopter and use those funds to keep Deputy Sheriff's on the road? Answer - The helicopter is on loan from the Federal Department of Defense and must be returned when it is no longer wanted. The helicopter program is funded completely by donations, grants, volunteers (pilots) and drug forfeiture funds. Absolutely no County Funds or tax dollars are used. Drug forfeiture funds can not be used to pay for personnel costs or to replace regular county funding. The Drug Forfeiture fund accounts are audited each year by both the Federal and State Governments for accuracy and compliance. The helicopter has proven to be very effective in a number of fully documented ways; search and rescue especially over the lake with several lives having been saved, vehicle and foot pursuits with suspect arrests, narcotics interdiction with thousands of dollars in narcotics seized, stolen vehicles and property recovered, crime scene illumination, Officer backup, incident command and control and reduced personnel costs, to name a few. The benefits of this program far outweigh the cost to the County which is absolute zero.**

**Why not close the Inmate Dormitory Facility and use that money to keep Deputy Sheriff's on the road? Answer - There are two inmate Pods (housing units) at the Dunbar Road facility. One is used to house Monroe County Prisoners and the other is used to house Immigration (I.C.E.) Detainees. A federal grant was used to partially fund building the facility. Without going into a lot of detail, closing the facility could actually cost the county more (it would have in 2010); because of lost revenue (\$2.4 million in 2010 -\$74.96 per inmate per day) versus cost, i.e. possibly having to pay back the federal grant (\$3.5 million) and housing Monroe County Prisoners in other counties (about \$35.00 dollars per day per inmate at approx. 62 inmates per day- plus medical expenses), transportation, employee and other related costs than it would save.**

**Why eliminate Deputy Sheriff Positions instead of Clericals, Corrections Officers or Administrators? Answer – Michigan Sheriffs are mandated by law to perform numerous duties, many of them are not readily visible to the public; some are clerical in nature while others involve skills not required of Sworn Deputy Sheriff's. Court Opinions have historically ruled that the "Road Patrol" is not a statutory mandate of the Sheriff and as a result, I have to use the funds allocated by the County Board of Commissioners to staff the mandated duties at their "serviceable" levels first before I can assign Deputy Sheriff's to the road patrol. The budget provided by the County Board of Commissioners is broken down by line items, each employee classification has a line item with the number of employees funded in that classification, i.e. Deputy Sheriff, Corrections Officer, etc., I can not exceed those numbers. To further complicate this issue, there are six employee groups in the Sheriff's Office and they are all governed by separate labor contracts and receive different levels of pay and benefits. I simply can not eliminate an employee from one union and replace them with an employee from a different union to perform the same duties without violating those contracts and labor laws. Even if I could, those Deputy Sheriff's would not be on the road; rather they would be performing the duties of the employee that they replaced. Additionally, there are special training requirements for the positions and minimum staffing levels in the jails that have to be maintained. I eliminated two Administrator positions and reduced the hours of the others to the extent that it saved two Deputy Sheriffs from layoff. Sheriff's employees constantly work in an environment where constitutional rights are a concern. Some may even be required to make a split second decision to take a life. The Sheriff's Office has had an excellent record of avoiding expensive lawsuits during the past fourteen years that are caused by inappropriate employee actions but it takes the correct level of supervision and training to keep it so. No citizen wants to or should have to deal with a public employee who does not know what they are doing. One unfavorable court decision in a lawsuit could wipe out by far any savings gained by reduced supervision or training.**

**As always, my staff and I will continue to place the safety and security of the county as our number one priority and provide as much service as we can within the constraints of our budget. Citizens are encouraged to assist in this effort by calling 9-1-1 when they observe something suspicious or unusual. Thank you for your time and patience as we continue to work through this most difficult time.**

**Sincerely,  
Tilman L. Crutchfield - Sheriff**