

SAFETY AND JUSTICE ROUNDTABLE
Feb. 20, 2008
Busch Building, 840 Boonville Ave., Springfield, Mo.

MINUTES

Roundtable members present: Steve Ijames, Michael Ramon, Matt O'Reilly, Nate Quinn, Bradley Stokes, Ron Baird, John Crow, Jean Twitty, Robert Spence, Jim Huntsinger, Bob Cirtin, George Templeton, Jill Elsey-Stoner, Stephanie Montgomery, Mark Skrade

Roundtable members absent: John Holstein, Jim Cook, Bernie McCarthy

Others present: Jenny Fillmer Edwards, Greene County; Mike Brothers, City of Springfield; Mary Mannix-Decker, City of Springfield; Dirk Vanderhart, News-Leader; Emily Rittman, KSPR; camera from KOLR

1) Minutes were accepted from January meeting

2) PRESENTATION by Mary Mannix-Decker, Director of Finance, City of Springfield: Explanation of law enforcement funding for the City; funding sources and expenditures

The total budget for law enforcement funding is about \$38.3 million, most of which (about \$28 million) comes from the City's General Fund. The rest of the funding is generated through a Law Enforcement Sales Tax (about \$9 million), grant and agency funding (about \$900,000) and fees for records management at the Municipal Court (\$175,000). The LE Tax is shared with Greene County.

There are about 500 employees in this sector working for the City.

Revenue for the GF is generated 60 percent by sales tax which is a volatile source of revenue, and is right now in a down cycle. About 1 percent down from same period last year. Other taxes make up 21 percent of the GF, such as payments in lieu of taxes from CU, gross receipts tax. About 10 percent comes from licenses and fees. A small piece is intergovernmental, which is a reimbursement from Greene County for E911 purposes.

Does not include special revenue funds, which are often separate voter-approved taxes.

The \$28 million for law enforcement that comes from the General Fund represents about 39 percent of expenditures from the GF.

These departments do not have a dedicated revenue sources, so they are essentially "at the bottom of the food chain" when it comes to funding.

City's fiscal year runs July 1 to June 30.

A look at the General Fund breakdown:

Springfield Police Department — Budget from GF: Personnel services, overtime and temporary, supplies and services, and capital (which is mainly vehicles). Total is about \$22 million.

Muni court — Budget from GF of about 1.4 million, almost all in personnel.

Prosecutor — Budget from GF about \$580,800, again mostly in personnel.

E911 — Budget from GF is about \$3.7 million. City pays for employees and the center operations, then bills Greene County for its portion. City is facing about a \$1.3 million shortfall for E911 which has been budgeted as a subsidy until the fiscal year is over, at which time it could be made up depending on final sales tax numbers.

A look at the other funding sources:

Law Enforcement Tax — About \$9 million in 07/08 FY. Agreed to hire 60 new sworn officers; 78 sworn now hired, along with 12 non-sworn. Debt payments detailed for the E911 radio system, south side police station and HQ renovation.

Grants are not coming as easily as before. “Drying up” as compared to the last four years.

City is looking carefully at funding for all of its departments because of the projected lower sales tax revenues.

- Question about sunsets in the LE tax. The capital projects portion had a sunset, the operation portion did not.
- Question about the hiring freeze. Hiring freeze does not include the Police Academy. There are about 20 perspective new officers in this spring class. However there are about two resignations per month, which does not make up for the attrition happening. Often the PD tries to overhire for a portion of the year, but lately the academy has not been able to recruit the numbers it would like.
- Question about cost per recruit, answer about \$65,000 per person. If someone quits after training it could be upwards of \$100,000. Not losing officers each month “would be a very fiscally sound” approach, Ijames says.
- Question about what recruitment materials are available. Some on Web site GoSPD.com.

- Question about why officers are leaving. Answer: not really sure because she is not sitting in on exit interviews, Mannix-Decker says.
- Question whether shortage of recruits is a nationwide problem. Ijames's answer is yes, it's happening everywhere. Need to have a very clean record and strong desire, so it's tough to recruit them. Officers have left for various reasons and many types of jobs, from law enforcement to pharmaceutical sales and to Carnahan-White Fence. Very few going to the feds right now.

Standards are high at the SPD. Average of two out of each academy are lost during field training because they do not meet the requirements. "We'd rather run short than put people out there that we aren't sure about" Ijames says.

Not many officers come across the street from the County to the City. County pays slightly less, but officers seem more content these days due to current solid administration at Greene County, Ijames says.

- Question about comparable pay for cities of similar size. Ijames believes City is competitive compared to others in the state because of a low cost of living. Used to be close to Missouri Highway Patrol, but it got a "big bump" a few years ago. Other variables include pension funding and take home cars.

PD is looking at changing beginning pay scale to accommodate "lateral movement" officers who come in with more experience. Because there is no national certification, these officers have in the past started at the same scale as everyone else. There is a deference to SPD's in-house training academy, which is required for all.

E911 is another area with turnover, Mannix-Decker says. It is a high stress area with three shifts. Have addressed pay issues to this end. Also launched an internship program with students interested in law enforcement to come in and take calls on second or third shift. Starting salary for call takers is around \$25,000, dispatchers get \$2,000 to \$3,000 more. City HR hires for PD, but works very closely with the police in this area because of the specialized nature of the department.

City budget is also online at www.springfieldmo.gov. End of City presentation.

3) DISCUSSION

Dr. Spence would like to again look at the original charge of the group. Group has the prerogative to set its own course. One pressure point is the jail, and he suggests perhaps the group should take a tour of the jail.

Mr. Stokes said he was bothered by Judge Burrell (at the previous meeting) saying judges don't have a secure place to park, believes it should be addressed immediately.

Mr. Ijames suggests there needs to be some time spent, perhaps in small groups, to come to critical understanding of situations. Suggests looking at staffing formulas for county and city and ask how these numbers were arrived at. These formulas determine the level of service for the citizens. Believes the group should look at retention practices as much as recruitment practices.

Mr. Ramon suggests a common thread is what we are NOT doing in each department because of cost restraints. Compare this to the cost of what we should be doing, then look at the bottlenecks in terms of cost. We must start with an idea of what we want criminal justice to look like in Greene County. Mr. Ijames seconded this, and again mentioned that services are direct result of staffing and cost. What level of service does the average citizen expect?

Mr. O'Reilly talked about the types of crimes and their relationship to the personnel problem. Seems arrests are going up, jails are crowding and we are turning more people away from courts. So the lack of staff is not contributing to a lack of arrests. What types of calls are the police answering and not answering? Is there an exemplary community we could take a look at and study?

Mr. Ramon suggest looking at it by going to the PD and asking "what would it take to investigate every crime" and go to jail and ask "what would it take to hold all the prisoners?" etc. Somewhere between where we are now and those goals is where we can find the trade-offs we need to make to get closer to these goals. Mr. Ijames said the numbers of solvable crimes that are assigned to detectives are tracked. The threshold criteria for crimes that will not be investigated is in a written document (it's all property based).

Mr. Cirtin said the nitty gritty boils down to money, and that Springfield has traditionally had a no-frills, low-tax budget.

Mr. Ramon talked about how priorities often come down to the political will of an administration. In this case, a public process would mean the citizens would decide.

Mr. Ijames would like the group to look at duplication of services between City and County. Parks, Health and 911 are unified but not LE. Is there any value in consolidation? Savannah-Chatham, Ga., recently unified and it was effortless according to that department.

Mr. Spence would like the assignment criteria for County and City at next meeting. Mr. Ijames said he would bring it next time. Also would like to get areas of interest and expertise in order to break into smaller groups and examine specific issues more closely.

Ms. Edwards suggest the separation of departments may be a matter of state statute.

Mr. Cirtin said he was part of a group called the Sheriff's Department Oversight Committee, which did an independent analysis of the GCSD and said he would bring copies of the group's final report to the members.

Ms. Spence suggested that the group needs to "question authority" in terms of being open to doing things in new and different ways, not just sticking to things simply because that is the way they have always been done.

MEETING ADJOURNED