

Item 8B - ADDITIONAL



ANTHONY JOHNSON
Chief Deputy

SALLY HERNANDEZ

TRAVIS COUNTY SHERIFF
P.O. Box 1748
Austin, Texas 78767
(512) 854-9770
www.tcsheriff.org

ARTHUR AREVALO
Major - Law Enforcement

NELDA "SALLY" PENA
Major - Corrections

SHANE POOLE
Major - Administration & Support

Memorandum

July 2, 2018

To: Commissioners Court

From: Sally Hernandez, Sheriff *SH*

Subject: FY19 POPS

First and foremost I care about all the employees at TCSO as well the citizens of Travis County. I believe in the hard working people of TCSO and know the jobs they do require a special kind of person, and they should be compensated appropriately for that work. These employees provide services to the county 24/7/365; for them the county never closes. Many are working non-traditional hours that require special child care services or don't get to spend time with their families.

I've had an opportunity to review the Travis County Sheriff's Law Enforcement Association's FY '19 POPS Pay Proposal and have been advised that the price tag of fully funding such a proposal is around \$15 million. This is a huge price tag that I feel can provide for a greater good if spent differently. Some of the things that could be accomplished are outlined below.

Shift-differential: Two-thirds of the staff in Corrections and Law Enforcement work overnight hours and are currently not allowed to get shift-differential. They should be compensated, as should all employees who are required, for working evenings and nights.

Raise starting pay for Cadets: We've made a lot of progress in filling our vacancies over the past year with our dedicated Recruiting Unit. A year ago we had 70 vacant Corrections Officer positions and today we have only 22, but we lose candidates who look at the entry pay and not the value down the road. I feel certain paying as little as \$2,000 more annually for our entry level corrections position will aid in attracting the best candidates.

Raise the top end of the scale: Currently POPS tops out between 14 and 18 years of service, which means a dedicated employee who has been here for 34 years hasn't gotten a pay increase since the last time the scale was moved in 2012. When a COLA is given to classified staff, it has been the practice of the Court to provide at least some amount as a one-time increase for individuals who are "red-lined". This is not the case for POPS personnel. We get a lot of value out of our senior staff and they shouldn't have the prospect of not getting a raise after they've worked for us for only 14 years, if step increases were given every year. The scale seems to be built with the prospect of a 20 year retirement, but that is not our case. The scale needs to be extended, with increases

going beyond the current limitations: Step 14 for Corrections Officers and Law Enforcement Deputies, 15 for Detectives, 16 Law Enforcement Lieutenants, and 18 for Sergeants and Correction Lieutenants.

Full-time Basic Peace Officer Course: The greatest assets in the Sheriff's Office are our employees. A full time BPOC course where we train our Corrections Officers to be Peace Officers is an investment in the future of the Sheriff's Office. As individuals retire from our Law Enforcement Bureau, we have a need for trained individuals to keep patrolling within the county. There is nothing better than having individuals within our own organization who are ready and willing to take on a new challenge. Working in the jail with individuals with mental health issues develops unique skills such as verbal de-escalation and workplace strategies for dealing with the mentally ill that translate well to the streets.

Fully fund the 2018 Benchmark: Following completion of the 2018 benchmark study conducted by HRMD, the Compensation Committee recommended funding the benchmark according to policy, giving increases to those affected at 3.5% of the midpoint of the next grade. While this is the manner in which the benchmarks have been funded previously, this funding inevitably creates inequities within a job title in the future unless there are across the board pay increases that occur between the benchmark and another employee being hired. For instance a Telecommunications 9-1-1 Specialist is hired at a step 3. Two years later a benchmark moves the pay grade up one step. The following year a new employee comes in with the same experience at hire as the original employee, who now has 3 additional years of experience. The new employee would come in making \$1,000+ more than the tenured employee, because the benchmark wasn't totally funded.

In addition to the items above, all of the staffing requests in my budget submission could be funded with these funds including:

- **5 Detectives and a Sergeant, my number 1 priority,** to handle the increase in major crimes cases that are occurring in our rapidly growing region. The cases being handled are more complex than they were in the past. We owe it to our citizens to thoroughly investigate cases, but as complexity increases we can't accomplish this without additional investigative staff.
- **28 Corrections Officers and 6 Security Coordinators** to relieve the burden of working extra shifts that come from the need to staff additional posts due to the makeup of the inmate population. Many in our custody suffer from mental illness and it is our duty to protect them not only from themselves but also from others. Housing inmates in facilities that weren't designed for these types of inmates is staff intensive and we have no choice in order to meet our mission to provide for the safety of staff, inmates, and the community.
- **6 Telecommunicator 9-1-1 Specialists, 1 Telecommunicator 9-1-1 Supervisor, and 2 Records Analysts** to support opening of a third radio dispatch console. With a growing community the number of 9-1-1 calls has been increasing along with the number of deputies on the street, however TCSO has been operating with only two radio consoles for the last 25 years. The radio operators are charged with monitoring the status of deputies who are responding to emergencies, making traffic stops, etc. When there is a major incident, it is necessary, for officer safety, to close down all traffic on a channel so those involved can closely monitor the situation without interference from others working elsewhere. This results in significantly increased radio traffic on the one other lone channel or deputies are out there without the proper oversight for their safety. The Records Analysts are necessary to address the ever increasing open records requests for copies of audio related to calls, as well as reports from the CAD or MDCs.
- **5 Deputies, a Sergeant, and a Lieutenant** to better serve the citizens who have an expectation that a call for help will be answered quickly. As the population growth in the county continues and traffic congestion gets worse, the days of a single deputy being able to cover a quarter of the county has long passed. We need more law enforcement staffing to respond to the needs of an ever growing population.
- **3 Correction Officers, 2 Security Coordinators, and a Sergeant** to enhance the security at the courthouses in the county, as recommended by the Travis County Security Committee on December 5, 2017.

- **Crime Scene Lead** to provide expertise with a focus on the training and qualifications of our Crime Scene Investigators, thus ensuring the highest quality investigations.
- **6 Licensed Vocational Nurses** to address the increased care needs of mentally ill inmates. The volume of inmates requiring specialized nursing care due to mental illness has outpaced current staffing levels. Inmate health is paramount to our departmental goal to provide a safe, humane jail.
- **Support staff in our Human Resources Section** to address the issues related to a growing number of staff. Ensuring that FMLA and Workers Comp rules are complied with by providing support to our staff working through the red tape in an already difficult period in their life.

Again, I want my staff to be appropriately compensated and there are some changes that are needed to the Peace Officer Pay Scale; however, changes could be made and all of my staffing requests filled with the amount requested by the TCSLEA's proposal. I have a responsibility to my staff, but I also have a responsibility to the community as a whole.