



Deputy Sheriff's Association of Bexar County



08/27/09

PRESS RELEASE For Immediate Release

In response to Mr. David Smith's budget proposal, the Deputy Sheriff's Association of Bexar County is opposed to the proposed budget cuts affecting the Bexar County Sheriff's Office. The proposal called for eliminating:

3 Perimeter Officer positions – The reason cited is that there is a duplication of service as the Court House falls in the jurisdiction of the City of San Antonio. This is still a County Facility so the task of protection for this facility should not be delegated to the San Antonio Police Department as they already have too much to do.

8 Bailiffs - The reason cited is there are more than mandated. The fact is these officers are highly trained professionals who keep our elected officials and Bexar County citizens safe. We often hear of courtrooms across the United States where people bring in guns, knives, or other illegal contraband and cause major disturbances. We do not hear of this happening in Bexar County; it is because of these officers who do a wonderful job. Why would we want to subject our citizens, who go to the courthouse, to a potentially dangerous environment, not to mention our Judges, juries, and employees.

1 Asset forfeiture officer (there is only one) – This is ridiculous as this position generates hundreds of thousands of dollars per year. Why cut a position that generates revenue?

4 Detention officer positions – Our jail is seriously understaffed. The County Officials state we are fully staffed but what they consider to be full is only the minimum number of officers required by the State. This does not equate to full staffing. If a true emergency were to occur in the jail, it would be very difficult to contain it. Cutting any staff from the jail is absurd.

21 Door Monitors – these are not uniformed officers. However, they do form the first-line of defense in eliminating the introduction of weapons and other contraband into the courthouse. The proposal is to eliminate these positions and supplement them with a private company. We did this before and it was due to all of the problems associated with private vendors that the County decided to employee their own door monitors. Going back to privatizing this service, the Association believes, will reduce public safety and will cause the County to incur more long-term costs.

The other 16 positions on the chopping block are cited as duplicated services. While the Association is not in favor of duplicated services, eliminating these positions is a mistake. Any citizen's who have ever had to wait 30 minutes, 45 minutes or even longer for a deputy to respond, once placing a call for service, can tell you that we need more officers on the street. Eliminating these officer's positions is not the answer – the Association's position is put them on the street where they are needed.

Mr. Smith reported that the County has excess revenue, in addition to what was projected, (from one time – not recurring revenue) in the amount of \$6,400,551.00. He also reported that the County has excess recurring revenue, in addition to what was projected from non-recurring revenue, in the amount of \$5,398,999.00. This is additional revenue for the county totaling \$11,799,550.00 from what was originally projected. Looking at this, there appears to be no shortfall.

A long standing point of contention between the Association and the County is the use of the 208 dormitory beds. Our position is simple – we have continually attempted to negotiate the use of these beds – as was ordered by the arbitrator. The Sheriff has opted to resolve this in collective bargaining despite Association efforts to settle this sooner. The Association has recently provided the Sheriff with a proposal, which addresses two operational issues important to us. The economic impact of our proposal would cost taxpayers absolutely zero. The Sheriff has declined to take action on our proposals. Meanwhile the County is spending in excess of \$3,416,400.00 per year to house inmates in other counties. Again, our proposal would cost nothing to our taxpayers as our issues are operational only.

So, the County has found \$11,799,550.00 plus stands to save an additional \$3,416,400.00 by using the 208 beds (which we are happy to give them provided they honor our proposal). This totals \$15,215,950.00. The average annual salaries of the proposed positions to be eliminated is approximately \$2,120,000.00 (based on 53 employees with an average salary of approximately \$40,000.00 per year - which is a high-end estimate considering most of these employees are paid far less than \$40,000.00 annually).

In addition, it was also stated by Mr. Smith that there is approximately \$30,000,000.00 sitting in an account for renovations. Are beautification and renovation projects really more important than our employee's jobs? Are they more important than public safety?

One can only question if Bexar County Commissioners Court really has public safety in mind. We find it appalling that our elected officials would consider cutting 53 public safety jobs while at the same time proposing that the taxpayers spend \$51,299,509.00 on new capital improvement projects (which were also presented in Mr. Smith's proposed budget):

| | | |
|--|---|-----------------|
| Jail Campus renovation project | - | \$5,800,000.00 |
| Historic rehabilitation of the 1892 County Courtroom | - | \$6,350,000.00 |
| New Courtroom project | - | \$21,812,000.00 |
| Re-entry facility | - | \$2,500,000.00 |
| Adult Detention air improvement project | - | \$12,392,000.00 |
| New justice Center Completion project | - | \$1,445,509.00 |
| Haven for Hope improvements | - | \$1,000,000.00* |

*Commissioner Rodriguez stated the County has already invested in excess of \$10,000,000.00 into this and stated the Court has not even seen a business plan for Haven for Hope – that in itself brings the County's fiscal management into question. Can we really spend in excess of \$10,000,000.00 and propose another \$1,000,000.00 in taxpayer money be sank into Haven for Hope when we haven't even reviewed their business plan?

All of these projects sound nice but if we are in such a budget shortfall, as stated by Mr. Smith, why are we spending millions and millions of tax dollars on these projects. Couple this with the County Judge's plans for a light rail system for the city (with a small estimated cost of \$20-\$25 million per mile). One can only question where the importance of public safety falls in the minds of our Commissioners Court.