

Proposed contract calls for enhancements

The City of Sisters/ Deschutes County Sheriff's Office contract in effect through June 2020 provides 480 hours of service by County deputies each month for an annual cost this year of \$611,000, with a minimum of one deputy assigned to the Sisters-area patrol district 24 hours a day.

They work out of the Sisters substation (West) which is located at the corner of West Barclay Drive and North Larch Street. The other two substations in the county are located in Terrebone (North) and La Pine (South).

Sisters is the only municipality in Deschutes County that contracts for police services, a practice that has spanned 20 years.

City Manager Corey Misley's negotiations for a new contract include requests for:

- Dedicated deputies to patrol only in Sisters.
- A management position (lieutenant) as part of the Sisters team who would be a de facto police chief with whom the City Manager would have a close working relationship.
- The City would play an active role in the selection of DCSO personnel who patrol in Sisters.
- DCSO cars would have markings denoting them as a Sisters patrol vehicle.
- Hours per month would be increased from 480 to 640.

Misley told *The Nugget*, "These are changes that make a lot of sense and will provide effectiveness and efficiency for the taxpayers' dollars."

He is hopeful that the IGA will be ready for Council approval by no later than early February, as it will take time to get all the pieces in place to be ready for July 1, 2020, when the new contract goes into effect.

Analysis indicates that an enhanced contract is less

expensive and potentially more beneficial than re-establishing an independent police force.

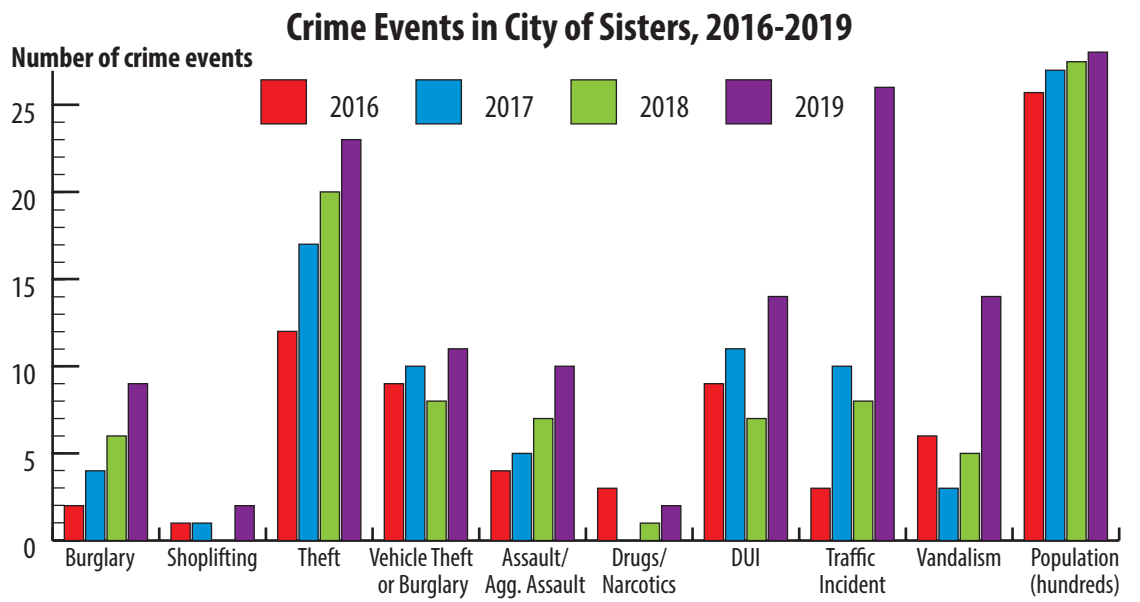
The costs of re-establishing a Sisters Police Department would be between \$3.7 million and \$4.7 million based on a study done by the City — and each subsequent year's budget would be more than double what the City currently pays the County. The increased services being negotiated would cost more than the current contract, but still nowhere near what an independent City department would cost.

The savings allowed by contracting with the DCSO can be put toward programs like increasing traffic/pedestrian safety through education, signage, and traffic adjustments.

Gone are the days of the police chief also acting as the head of the street and water departments. The growth of the city has resulted in the need for greater City infrastructure and oversight, requiring money that used to be available for a local police department to cover all those costs.

There are other considerations beyond costs to be considered. The contract deputies working in the city of Sisters come with full services the DCSO provides to the community. Those services include the response of the entire patrol team of six to eight deputies, the detective division, search and rescue services, SWAT team response, patrol vehicles, automotive maintenance, insurance and personnel services.

Other impact considerations include: liability exposure beyond the City's current insurance premiums; larger exposure to human resources/legal issues; potential collective bargaining for represented employees; and potential staff turnover in a region as a "small" player.



NOTES: HOMICIDE, ATTEMPTED HOMICIDE, AND SEXUAL ASSAULT HAD NO EVENTS IN 2016-2019. ROBBERY HAD ONE EVENT IN 2016-2019. TRAFFIC INCIDENT INCLUDES EVENTS SUCH AS HIT-AND-RUN AND DRIVING WITH EXPIRED LICENSE, BUT NOT TICKETED INFRACTIONS. SOURCES: WWW.COMMUNITYCRIMEMAP.COM FOR CRIME DATA, WWW.WORLDPOPULATIONREVIEW.COM/US-CITIES/SISTERS-OR-POPULATION.

POLICE: Traffic issues lead citizen concerns over public safety

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on their policing services.

This past August/September, the City conducted a survey of city residents and businesses to gather data regarding their feelings on public safety and levels of law enforcement. The information gleaned from the survey has been used to inform decisions by City staff and the City Council regarding future law-enforcement services in the city.

According to responses on the survey, there is a willingness to pay more for increased and enhanced law-enforcement service, with 52.5 percent of respondents "very willing" or "somewhat willing," while 23.9 percent were neutral, and 23.5 percent were "somewhat unwilling" or "very unwilling." Many of the comments expressed a need to better understand the relationship between increased and enhanced law-enforcement

services and the increase in amount paid by a resident or business.

The data gathered indicated that the one biggest threat to public safety in Sisters as perceived by the respondents is traffic with a 50.2 percent response, followed by property crimes at 22.5 percent and drugs at 12.8 percent.

Looking at DCSO statistics of calls for service within the city indicate that traffic stops are far and away the largest number of officer calls with close to or over 500 traffic stops each year since 2016. During that same time period, the larger numbers of calls involved community policing detail, follow-ups, administration, animal control/dog problems, and public assistance — all numbering between 100 and 450 calls.

Violent crimes such as murder, rape, and armed robbery are almost non-existent.

The accompanying graph indicates the actual number of events that have occurred from 2016-2019 for crimes

addressed in the resident survey.

Over 50 percent of respondents rated the current DCSO services as "very effective" or "somewhat effective," while 22 percent indicated neutral, 17.6 percent "needs some improvement," and 7.1 percent "needs major changes." Throughout the written comments, the themes of wanting more deputies and patrols, and more interaction with and visibility of officers were repeated.

The calls for Sisters establishing its own police department were far fewer.

In an effort to meet the needs expressed in the resident survey and comparing current policing services with other similar towns, Misley has been negotiating with the DCSO to create a new contract that will ultimately provide tailored services on behalf of the community. He is hopefully close to completing an intergovernmental agreement (IGA) with the DCSO which will be brought to the City Council for acceptance.



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