

From the Sheriff's Desk . . .

by Jeff Dickerson,
Columbia County Sheriff



In a recent appearance before the Vernonia City Council, I was asked by a citizen in the audience why the Sheriff did not contract law enforcement services with the City of Vernonia. As I answered at that time, it is true that contracts between sheriff's and cities are not uncommon, but that it was not on my agenda to seek such a contract with any city in

Columbia County.

I agree that such contracts can be beneficial to both the city and the citizens living just outside the city limits and can help defray the administrative costs by sharing the burden for those costs among governmental agencies covering a broader area. But this is something that is at the sole discretion of the local city council, and I have in no way sought to press local jurisdictions toward making such a decision.

On the plus side, it is a way to share the costs of policing an area and to promote better coordination of law enforcement services. On the negative side, local jurisdictions might get the sense that they have less control over their policing services. For sheriff's, it is a

greater burden to take on the additional responsibilities of policing city neighborhoods and city streets – which services make up only a portion of the greater responsibilities of sheriffs, including Jail management, civil process services and search and rescue. Even the enforcement of laws by sheriffs usually takes on a less aggressive tone. Deputies are accustomed to problem resolution vs. the more strict law enforcement motif often required by cities. They often need to change gears and seek to enforce traffic laws and municipal ordinance enforcement with a lower tolerance than is typical outside of city limits.

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