

Office of the Sheriff

Lancaster County, Nebraska

Terry T. Wagner, Sheriff

Todd Duncan, *Chief Deputy*

June 14, 2017

Todd Wiltgen, Chair
Lancaster County Board of Commissioners
County-City Building
Lincoln, NE 68508

Re: Adding additional deputy sheriffs

Dear Commissioner Wiltgen,

At the Mid-Year budget meeting I indicated a desire to add six (6) additional deputy sheriffs in the next six (6) years. After review, I'd like to accelerate this process by adding two (2) deputies in each of the next three (3) years. I know adding six (6) new employees takes ones breath away, but it requires six (6) FTEs to add just one (1) 24 hour, 7 day a week 365 days a year position. Knowing this letter will become public record, I want to provide justifiable reasons for this request without providing specifics of our staffing levels. I'll be glad to discuss specifics privately.

We have divided the County into geographic patrol districts. Depending on how many deputies are working dictates the size of the patrol district. Our normal patrol districts range from 208 to 286 square miles. Lancaster County has increased in population from 213,000 to 306,000 in 27 years. While I have made requests for specialized positions which have been funded in part by other sources such as School Resource Officers, Fugitive Task Force deputy, Computer Forensics investigator, Court Security deputies, Highway Interdiction task force deputies and additional contract deputies for Waverly, etc., we have not increased our district patrol deputies in over 30 years. Waverly and Hickman are two of the fastest growing cities in the state and they both contract for dedicated patrol services. When the contract deputies are not working, the normal district patrol deputy(ies) handle the calls for service and any in depth investigation garners the other resources of my office, i.e. criminal investigators, crime scene technicians, accident reconstructionists, Tactical Response Unit or K-9s.

There are a number of factors which dictate the need for additional staffing.

First is employee safety. Recent assaults on law enforcement officers nationwide has prompted training in how to avoid an ambush, a training topic that had never before been considered, much less provided. We are sending back-up deputies on more types of calls than ever before. Assaults on Lancaster County Deputy Sheriffs have increased 258% from 2005-2016. In the past three years, deputy sheriffs have been involved in three officer involved shootings. We need sufficient staffing levels to be able to provide back-up when needed. The distances deputy sheriffs patrol also dictate a back-up unit could easily be 20 to 25 miles away.

Second are crime trends. Violent crime (homicide, rape, assault) is down, but Fraud, Narcotics, Mental Health investigations and coroner's investigations have all seen significant increases.

Third, the technical complexity of investigations and the public's expectation of our investigative techniques have increased. The case load of the Computer Forensics Unit has increased ten-fold. Every cell phone or personal tablet is a trove of evidence necessary to complete investigations of every sort. When a case is taken to trial, the credibility of the investigation is in jeopardy if forensic evidence hasn't been obtained or analyzed. State of the art forensics capabilities, like our FARO 3-D scanner, and DNA analysis enhances the ability to obtain convictions. Jurors wonder what law enforcement is hiding, or questions our capabilities if these analyses are missing.

Fourth is total county population. As you know, the population split between the city and the population we provide law enforcement services for in the County remains at a constant 90%-10% ratio. However, many of our duties such as Court Security, Civil Process, Prisoner Transportation and Coroners investigations fluctuate with the County's total population. As the County's total population increases, so does the volume of work associated with these tasks.

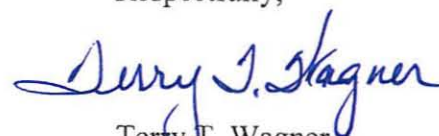
Lastly, the deputy sheriffs working in our Patrol Division earn time off, or have time away from their primary duties. I have calculated the earned vacation time, earned holiday time, average sick leave usage for Sheriff's Office employees (38.48 hrs. annually) and minimum training time to determine the Division loses 13,344 working hours per year. In addition, our normal rate of attrition is 2-4 deputies per year. Inevitably, there is that time frame between the departure of one employee and the hiring of a replacement. Prolonged vacancies are spread throughout the Sheriff's Office to minimize the impact, but the Patrol Division traditionally has an unfilled position or two because of these vacancies.

| | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| Vacation Time earned | 5,502 |
| Holiday time earned | 4,472 |
| Sick Leave usage (average) | 1,650 |
| <u>Minimum Training Time (mandated)</u> | <u>1,720</u> |
| Total Time | 13,344 hrs. /2080 (1 FTE) = 6.41 FTEs |

We do have the three (3) School Resource Officers providing extra Patrol coverage for June, July and ½ of August which reduces some of the staffing pressures during peak vacation times.

The six (6) patrol deputies I am proposing to hire in the next three (3) years simply makes up for accumulated time off of the entire Division. I would appreciate the approval of the Board to begin that process.

Respectfully,



Terry J. Wagner
Lancaster County Sheriff