

**FY 2017 BUDGET TESTIMONEY
SHERIFF JEWELL WILLIAMS
SHERIFFS' OFFICE
APRIL 19, 2016**

Chairman and Members of the Committee of the Whole:

Over the last four years, the Sheriff's Office has restored quality service to the City of Philadelphia.

Since 2012 we have doubled the delinquent tax and fees collected and transmitted to the City. The Sheriff's Office now provides the City over \$60 million a year.

The number of properties processed at Sheriff Sales has nearly doubled since 2012. In these four years the time required obtaining a deed has been reduced by two thirds. In 2012 it took four months to obtain a deed after a property was purchased. Today it is done in less than thirty days.

We have increased the security of the City Court System even as new court buildings and courts were added. In the last four years, Courts have been guarded and prisoners transported almost without incident.

A catalogue of our accomplishments is attached. However I do not want to spend our limited time on what we have already achieved.

Instead, I want to discuss what we are going to do in FY 2017.

The Kenney Administration understands our responsibilities and is willing to help us. Next year, with City Council's support, we will increase revenue to the City and increase the security of the Courts.

First; The City and the First Judicial District asked us to assume management of the Courts' warrant unit which serves warrants for such matters as domestic abuse and failure to appear in court. These officers were untrained and lacked the legal authority to perform their duties. Since assuming the forty-two person warrant unit in July 2014, we are now in the process of getting them certified as Deputy Sheriff Officers through the nine teen week state training program at Penn State.

The 2017 Budget transfers the warrant officers from the Courts to the Sheriff's Office. The transaction is cost neutral to the City since costs will be transferred to the Sheriff from the First Judicial District.

Second; The most effective way for the City to collect delinquent taxes and fees is through Sheriff Sales. As ordered by the Courts, Sheriff Sales turn delinquent property into city revenue and returns the property to productive use. Because this is a labor intensive effort, the job is exceeding our current capacity. We have already increased the number of sales from three to four a month and the number of properties in existing sales has almost doubled. The City wants to add an additional sale next year and has also asked the Sheriff to handle Land Bank Sales. These additional foreclosure and tax sales will result in additional revenue; as much as \$1.25 million a sale. We can fulfill the City's request only if additional clerks are provided.

The budget before you also includes twenty three new clerical positions. These salaries and benefits shall be paid for by the charges imposed to prepare deeds. Today, private Title Companies prepare the deeds on properties sold by the Sheriff. Instead of having deed preparation done by private title companies, the new clerks will prepare the deeds and the cost will be paid to the City instead of private Title Companies. The purchasers of the properties pay for deed preparation, not the former property owner.

Third: We have been repeatedly asked by the Courts and members of this City Council to assume responsibility for the security of City Hall. City Hall is a large

porous building that is a security risk. With the support of the Kenney administration this budget provides for thirty five new Deputy Sheriff Officers will be hired. They will be dedicated to guarding the City Council chambers, offices, and the Civil Courts. The various city charges collected by the Sheriff for writ service will be used to pay for these Deputies.

With City Council's support, we can increase delinquent collections for the City, and provide City Hall security without increasing costs to the tax payers of the City.

Thank you.

4/13/16

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE PHILADELPHIA SHERIFF'S OFFICE
2012 TO 2016

In the four years he has served as Sheriff, Jewell Williams doubled the delinquent taxes and fees paid to the City's General Fund. In FY 2012 the Office sent the City \$27 million from Sheriff Sales and by FY 2015, the figure rose to over \$61 million.

Sheriff Sales of mortgage foreclosure and tax delinquent properties are the only method the City has to collect delinquencies. The Sheriff takes this responsibility very seriously.

In October 2013, the Office replaced the computer system terminated by his predecessor, the Sheriff installed new management system to control each step of the Sales process and interface with the Sheriff's new website.

- To be transparent, the system can be accessed through the website by both participants in the Sales and the public.
- The system tracks each step of the sales process for each property in real time.
- The system provides location maps and color photographs of both the neighborhood and the properties up for sale.

In four years number of Sheriff Sales increased from three a month to four with an additional quarterly sale. Another monthly sale is to be added in the summer of FY 2016.

The number of properties placed in sales has increased from 11,000 in FY 2012 to 20,600 in FY 2015.

- To encourage and assist buyers, the Sheriff has reduced the time from the purchase of a property at a Sale to the availability of the deed. In 2012 it took up to four months to obtain a deed after a buyer closed on a property. Today deeds are generally available within thirty (30) days.
- To expedite the deed process, the Sheriff introduced electronic deed processing and electronic deed signing.
- Failure to make final payment or settlement delays payment to the city and keeps properties from productive use. Therefore, the Sheriff imposed strict deadlines on buyers who delayed making final payments on purchased properties. Buyers now have thirty days (30) from initial purchase at the Sale to the closing when final payment must be made. In November 2013, 58 percent of all properties sold at a sale were not completed for over sixty (60) days. Final payment was not made on one hundred and fifty nine (159) properties for over one hundred and twenty (120) days.
- In the past the Real Estate Office had to close when staff was engaged in a Sheriff Sale. Today in addition to keeping the Real Estate Office open during sales, the Sheriff has extended daily Real Estate office hours by an hour.

For the first time, the Sheriff seeks out and pays people who lost their homes in foreclosure but are owed money from excess payments on the sale. In his first term, the Sheriff has paid \$6.6 million to people owed money.

By hiring one hundred (100) new Deputy Sheriffs, often through use of State authorized funding called cost recovery, the Sheriff has provided greater security to eleven (11) different court facilities, including the Criminal Justice Center and the new Family Court. The Sheriff wants eliminate the historic understaffing of of the Office and improve security. The additional Deputies allowed the Sheriff to provide security to almost three hundred (300) Court locations and related functions.

This year the Sheriff intends to fund thirty five (35) additional Deputies to guard the five floors of City Hall's Courts and government operations. These positions can be funded without using the City's General Fund.

In July 2014 at the request of the City and the First Judicial District, the Sheriff assumed responsibility for the Courts' forty two (42) member Warrant Unit. For the first time the Sheriff's Deputy Warrant Officers, are receiving State certified training. Since the Sheriff assumed control, there have been no new complaints concerning the Warrant Unit.

A diversified work force is an Office priority. As a result, as of January 2016 of the Sheriff's three hundred and twenty five (325) filled positions, 54% are African American, 34% are Caucasian, and 7% are Hispanic. The number of women employees, including uniform personnel, is now 26%.

In the last year, Sheriff's Deputies transported without incident 124,000 prisoners from prison facilities in the City and across the State to Courts.

In the last four years, Sheriff's Deputies physically served 2000 warrants for Domestic Violence, child support, and Protection from Abuse Orders.

To further protect people using Philadelphia's Court buildings, the Sheriff created a twelve member bicycle unit and three dog K9 patrols featuring explosive and drug detection dogs.

The Office is seeking State legislative permission to use body cameras on Deputies. This will protect the public and Deputies who can be subjected to false charges by prisoners.

The Sheriff has received permission from the State to train new Deputies at the Philadelphia Police Academy instead of at Penn State in Happy Valley. Because training takes nineteen (19) weeks, traveling back and forth to Penn State incurs high travel, food, and lodging costs and imposes a hardship particularly on women Deputies.

This is a record of substantial achievement. The Sheriff's Office will continue to improve the services provided to the people of Philadelphia.

4-05-2016