

SHERIFF'S BUDGET ADDRESS TO CITY COUNCIL
APRIL 8, 2014

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee of the Whole: I am Jewell Williams the Sheriff of the City and County of Philadelphia.

With the support of City Council and the Administration, we are making solid progress in putting efficiency and integrity in the Philadelphia's Sheriff's Office.

The Sheriff's primary job is to guard over a hundred and fifty court rooms in nine Court facilities. We also transport over 100,000 prisoners a year to and from courts and prisons. Almost twice a month, our Deputies travel across the United States to escort prisoners back to Philadelphia. We also transport 1500 prisoners a year to drug and alcohol treatment centers. This requires a substantial number of Deputies, but over the years the number of sworn personnel was allowed to become seriously depleted.

Now thanks to City Council and the Administration we are rebuilding our uniformed force. We will increase the number of Deputy Sheriff Officers from 170 in 2013 to 246 by the end of the 2015 fiscal year. While still not adequate, this is a huge step forward.

When the Stout Criminal Justice Center opened, it was agreed by all parties that one hundred and fifty six (156) uniformed personnel would be needed to protect everyone who entered that building. A year ago we had less than one hundred and twenty Deputies in that building. Not only did the shortage threaten security, it forced trials to be delayed because defendants could not be moved from holding cells to court rooms in a timely manner. For the first time in decades, we have the proper number of Deputies transporting defendants and securing the Criminal Courts.

Last year we established a three dog K9 corps to prevent weapons and drugs from entering the Courts. These dogs are a source of revenue since they have been used at various events such as the U.S. Open and "Welcome America."

We have also established a Patrol of six bicycles to move Deputies between various Court facilities. By patrolling the parameters of Philadelphia court buildings we can better guard against witness intimidation and other illegal activities.

Each year the Sheriff's Office collects \$32 million in delinquent City taxes and fees through our monthly mortgage foreclosure and tax sales. We have up to five sales a month and handle as many as ten thousand, (10,000) properties a year. I'm proud that despite the increasing number of properties sent to us, we have never missed a sale.

We have restored the Sheriff's website providing real time data about properties put up for sale. We provide homeowners information about protecting against foreclosure. To encourage greater participation, we explain how to purchase properties at our sales. In the first year of operation the web site had nearly 90,000 separate visitors.

We have installed a computer information system to manage Foreclosure and Tax Sales. It is integrated with the website so the public can follow the status of all properties put up for sale. Prior to each sale, writs can be entered from the Prothonotary and City agencies such as the Revenue Department are able to input delinquencies directly.

Yes, we are increasing the number of Deputies; but we are still under staffed. This will become critical when the new Family Court Building at 15th and Arch Street opens. Closing the old family court buildings will free up only twenty eight (28) deputies. However the new high rise Family Court will require one hundred and twenty seven (127) deputies.

The administration agrees more Deputies are needed and has provided thirty (30) additional deputies at a cost of \$1.2 million in the 2015 budget. It will take time to hire and train these deputies. Deputy Sheriffs are not security guards; they must take twenty six (26) weeks of training at Penn State University to become certified. When that is completed we will discuss the need for additional Deputies with the Administration and Council.

The budget submitted to you also contains modest increases for ammunition (\$35,000), uniforms (\$98,130) and food for prisoners awaiting trial at the Criminal Justice Center (\$25,000).

We have also requested and the administration has supported an increase of \$450,000 for the completion of the information management software and related accounting services.

Finally we are seeking an additional \$24,600 for a new telephone system.

Foreclosure and Tax sales are held in West Philadelphia. All Real Estate personnel must be at these Sales so the Real Estate Department must close on sale days and often the day after. We do not have the staff to conduct the sales and keep the office open. While it is not included in the budget submission before you, we are seeking \$245,000 for seven additional clerical positions to both run the sales and keep the real estate office open.

The Sheriff's Office has come a long way in the past two years. But we still have a long way to go. With your help we will become the Office the Courts and the people of Philadelphia deserve.

Thank you.