

**FY 2019 BUDGET TESTIMONY
SHERIFF JEWELL WILLIAMS
OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF
MAY 2, 2018**

President Clarke and Members of the Committee of the Whole, I am Jewell Williams, Sheriff of the City and County of Philadelphia.

In the last year, the Sheriff's Office has continued to improve operations to best serve the City.

In 2017, the Sheriff's Office collected \$61.3 million in delinquent taxes and fees for the City of Philadelphia. When we took office, the Office provided the City only \$27 million.

I am pleased to report the backlog of tax delinquent property is now getting smaller. The number and value of the properties being taken to sale has been declining in recent years. While we processed 20,000 properties last year, the total was 7,000 fewer than the 27,000 properties taken to sale in 2016.

Since we took office, the time between the Sale of a delinquent property and the preparation of a new deed has been reduced to an average of 21 days. This and the thirty-six bi lingual seminars on how to participate in Sheriff Sales encourages participation and accelerates the return of delinquent property to the tax rolls.

An analysis of properties sold in 2015 and 2016 showed that an average of 70% remained tax compliant after they were sold at a Sheriff Sale. Since taking office over \$13.5 million has been refunded to people who lost property through sales, but were owed money from excess

proceeds. In the past no effort was made to locate and pay these people.

While we are the largest collector of delinquent taxes for the City, our primary job is to protect Philadelphia's court system. We now guard eight court facilities and have increased patrols at City Hall public and court floors.

Over 87,000 prisoners were transported between jail and court facilities.

Our warrant unit arrested over 5,100 felons and served over 4,400 warrants.

In six and half years, we have not had anyone escape.

The proposed FY 19 Budget that is now before you hold General Fund expenses at \$24.5 million. Over 93% of this is for 408 employees, of which 314 or 77% are uniform personnel. Of the \$1.1 million purchase of services budget, 54% or \$596,000 is allocated for transporting and feeding prisoners in our care. Last year we served 96,880 sandwiches to people in our care, making the Sheriff the largest provider of sandwiches in the City of Philadelphia.

In the coming year, the office will pay to the City three times our cost. Over \$32 million, will come from the collection of delinquent taxes and \$13 million will come from delinquent water and gas charges.

In addition, we plan to earn over \$12 million in City fees charged for various legal services such as servicing writs and court orders.

In Pennsylvania, Sheriffs are also governed by State laws authorizing banks and attorneys to reimburse us for some services. This cost recovery money, \$3.5 million, goes to the City to help subsidize employees, computer costs, equipment and professional services.

Finally. I want to mention the ongoing issue of overtime. As unfilled uniformed positions are filled, over time will go down. However, security services at strikes and demonstrations are reimbursed to the City; not to the Sheriff. As a result, we pay the cost but do not book the revenue. Often events that require our presence and overtime, such as demonstrations and celebrations are unscheduled. The City has reduced overtime authorization in this budget by \$1 million and we will try to stay within their authorization. But it must be understood that we do not have discretion on when, where or how often we are called out.

Thank you for your attention. I would be happy answer any questions.