Creswell Policing Project Final Report

Evaluation of Present Service Levels and Possible Service Alternatives

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Executive Summary

As a fundamental service of government, the City of Creswell provides police services to its citizens. Determining the City’s service needs, defining a desired level and quality of police services, and ensuring a high efficiency and value are ongoing challenges faced by the City Council and the citizens of Creswell. This report by the Portland State University Center for Public Service responds to these questions with a comprehensive incident analysis and development of alternative policing approaches. This report strives to provide a factual basis that can support reasoned debate and decision making over how best to provide policing and public safety services to the City and its citizens.

Currently the City contracts with the Lane County Sheriff for three patrol officers and a half-time sergeant. The contract provides 20 hours of police coverage per day. The current patrol schedule leaves a gap in service from 3 a.m. to 7 a.m. on weekdays. During this period, the Lane County Sheriff patrol services provide coverage. The Lane County contract also provides at reduced or no cost a full range of investigation, special services, and administrative services. The contract, in the form of an intergovernmental agreement (IGA) is renewed annually. The City funds the contract from its general fund through a blend of property tax and public safety fee revenue (water and sewer bill). This study provides a comprehensive examination of the historic demand for police services, and the performance of the Lane County Sheriff in responding to that demand.

In recent years, concerned citizens have raised several issues with police services, policing arrangements and costs. In response to a rash of property crimes in the summer of 2013, the City used emergency funds and increased the number of Sheriff’s deputies from two to three (3.0 FTE). Steps to adopt a permanent fee to pay for the third deputy proved controversial. However, the Council adopted a permanent public safety fee effective July 1, 2014. Additional funding was allocated to increase the Sergeant’s hours from one-third time to half-time (0.5 FTE) in the 2015-2016 budget. For fiscal year 2015-2016, the City has funded three patrol officers and a half-time sergeant for a total of 3.5 FTEs. In addition to concerns over service needs and costs, another strand of citizen concerns and suggestions has called for the establishment of a City of Creswell Police Department within the city organization. Citizens have proposed cost estimates for an internal department. However, an objective assessment of costs for an internal department was unavailable to support discussion and decision on this issue.

In response to these issues and citizen suggestions, the City Council engaged the Portland State University Center for Public Service (CPS) in a six-month consulting project. The project tasks were designed to develop a service demand and needs analysis, to analyze current service provision by the Lane County Sheriff, to analyze potential revenues to pay for service, and to develop and compare a selected set of service delivery alternatives. CPS began work on this package in late December 2014. The CPS team reported its preliminary results to a working session of the Public Safety Committee in early May 2015. At that meeting, the Public Safety Committee members provided the CPS team with critique, factual corrections and recommendations for completion of the project. This report is the outcome of the project and that session.

CPS began its work with a comprehensive analysis of the incident and call for service data recorded by the Lane County Sheriff dispatcher. This data covered January 2009 through February 2015, although the 2014 data has omissions and limitations. Importantly, the dataset did not contain information on officer response travel times. This is a limitation of the factual base used to assess performance and to develop alternatives.
The Public Safety Committee, City Council and Mayor, and the community have raised a series of issues and questions. The study worked to respond to these and many other issues.

**Creswell contracts with the Lane County Sheriff for police services. Does Creswell pay a competitive amount for services?**
- Creswell budgeted $650,538 in FY 2015-2016 to cover IGA costs. This amount covered 3.0 FTE of patrol deputies, and 0.5 FTE of a sergeant.
- Based on recent annual budget data (FY 2013-2014), Creswell has the lowest per capita costs, and cost per $1,000 assessed value, of compared cities. Compared cities include Veneta, Philomath, Winston, Warrenton, Toledo, Oakridge and Brookings. Veneta was the second lowest on these measures. Junction City, Toledo and Brookings incurred added costs because they operated dispatch centers and/or city jails.
- Comparable cities with near 5,000 citizens and internal police departments paid between $1.09 million (Winston), to $1.3 million (Philomath) and $1.4 million (Warrenton).

**Are the pay and benefits for Lane County Sheriff deputies competitive or excessive?**
- Lane County Sheriff’s deputy compensation is competitive, but not excessive.
- Compared to deputies in Clackamas, Douglas and Marion Counties, the annual base salary for a Lane County deputy is about equal to Marion County ($55,000), and about $5,000 more than in Douglas County ($50,100). Deputy base salary in Clackamas County is higher at $62,800.
- For total compensation costs per position—salary, benefits and retirement expenses paid by the employer—Clackamas County is highest at $130,000 per position, Lane County is second highest at $112,000, and above Douglas and Marion Counties (about $95,000). Clackamas and Lane County face high compensation costs because of relatively high health insurance costs and high retirement obligations.

**Do other Oregon cities contract for police services? Are Creswell rates competitive with the rates paid by these cities?**
- Creswell is not alone in its contracting for policing services. Wilsonville, Happy Valley, Troutdale and Damascus all contract with their local county sheriff for services. More similar in size to Creswell, Sheridan, Veneta, and Wood Village also contract for services.
- Troutdale recent decided to make the shift to contracting. It expects to save about $500,000 annually in so doing.
- The rate Creswell pays for services is very near the average rate paid by the Oregon cities that contract. Creswell is cost-competitive among other contracting cities.
- Policing contracts are common in the Puget Sound region. The Cities of Burien (48,000 population) and Sammamish (51,000 population) both contract with the King County Sheriff for police services.
How much time do the Creswell deputies spend responding to calls outside the City?

- Over the study period, the Creswell policing team responded to 28,331 incidents. This total included both citizen calls for service, and officer initiated incidents. Of this total, 76% were within the Creswell City boundary, and the remaining 24% were in the unincorporated area surrounding the City.
- Creswell deputies often leave the City to provide service, but Lane Co. Sheriff’s deputies from the Eugene office and the extensive patrol often come into Creswell to cover and support the city team.
- Incidents in the unincorporated area are generally similar in type and occurrence to in the city.

How much time do Creswell deputies spend responding to dispatched calls for service? How much time do deputies have for self-initiated activities?

- Based on guidance from the Lane County Sheriff’s staff, we used the Lane County dispatch priority 6 as the indicator of officer self-initiated calls. On this measure, 42% of incidents were dispatched calls for service, while about 58% were officer self-initiated. Officer self-initiated calls is one measure of the availability of officers to make community contacts, do community-focused policing, make school visits, and engage in preventative measures with citizens. However, self-initiated calls also include location checks and personal needs.
- On an activity hour basis, 77% of hours were in response to dispatched calls for service, while 23% were for officer self-initiated actions.
- Clearly identified dispatched incidents of community service totaled 3,635 (12.3%), which translated into 3,382 activity hours (15%).

What are the officer response times for Creswell deputies? Do they meet national standards?

- CPS was unable to analyze officer response times for this study. We made full use of the data in the Lane County Sheriff’s incident and call for service database. The database does not record travel times to incident locations. This lack of data severely limits our ability to analyze that aspect of patrol services, and to apply travel information in the alternatives. While travel times may not be a major issue within the City limits, they would be an important factor in staffing a public safety services district with a larger service area.

How do Creswell’s crime rates compare with other peer cities?

- Based on available Uniform Crime Report (UCR) data up to 2012, Creswell has a relatively low rate of crimes against persons, property crimes, and behavioral crimes. These data unfortunately do not capture the property crime activity of the summer of 2013. CPS specifically called the UCR data manager in Salem to try to obtain more updated data, but was unsuccessful.

About how much would it cost to establish and operate a Creswell city police department?

- Based on careful cost comparisons with other Oregon cities of about 5,000 residents, CPS estimates that a City of Creswell Police Department annual operating costs would be about $1.25 million.
This would fund a department with: nine sworn officers, including a chief, a sergeant, and seven patrol officers; two reserve officers; and a non-sworn administrative staff.

The department would provide 24/7 coverage, with two officers on duty for late mornings into evenings on most weekdays.

Startup costs were estimated at $762,000 for a 15-month startup period.

A five-year local option levy may provide the most effective means to fund a new city police department. Including startup costs CPS estimates a local option tax rate of 2.49464 per $1,000 assessed value. This would result in an additional $499 in property taxes on a $200,000 home.

CPS did not investigate the cost of remodeling City hall or building a police station to accommodate a new police department. This would be an additional startup expense.

If the community were to establish a Creswell Public Safety special district to provide policing to the City and to the unincorporated area, about how much would it cost per year?

CPS estimates that annual operating and small capital expenses for a Creswell Public Safety special district would total about $1.92 million.

This would fund a department with: 13 sworn officers, including a chief, two sergeants, and ten patrol officers; two reserve officers; and three non-sworn administrative staff.

The department would provide 24/7 coverage with two officers on duty at all times. There would be three officers on duty on Friday and Saturday evenings and following early mornings.

Startup costs were estimated at $1,206,823 for a 15-month startup period.

A voter approved permanent levy would be needed to fund a new special district. Including startup costs on a 20-year bond and annual operating costs, CPS estimates a required tax rate of $3.23175 per $1,000. This would result in an additional $646 in property taxes on a $200,000 home.

CPS did not investigate the cost of remodeling City hall or building a police station to accommodate a new police department. This would be an additional startup expense.

If the community were to establish a Creswell Public Safety special service district to provide policing to the City and to the unincorporated area, what would services cost to contract with the Lane County Sheriff?

CPS estimates that annual operating and small capital expenses for a Creswell Public Safety Special Service district would total about $1.54 million.

This would fund a department with: 6 Sheriff’s deputies and 1 full-time sergeant. The public safety district itself would have a half-time executive (board chair) and a full-time business manager.

The department would provide 24/7 coverage.

Startup costs were estimated at $106,945 for a 6-month startup period.

With a 10-year loan or bond to finance the startup costs, CPS estimates a permanent tax rate of 2.48803 per $1,000 assessed value. This would result in an additional $498 in property taxes on a $200,000 home.

CPS did not investigate the cost of remodeling City hall or building a police station to accommodate a new police department. This would be an additional startup expense.