



## SHOOTING STRAIGHT



On Tuesday afternoon, county administrator Richard Johnson presented his proposed 2011 budget to the county board. This budget proposal includes a 2% reduction in property tax funding for the Sheriff's Office - which equates to \$1.5 million less in 2011 than we have in 2010. In addition we must absorb an additional \$1.3 million in 2011 for increases in health care costs, step increases and pensions. This means the 2011 budget, as proposed, is effectively \$2.8 million less than our 2010 budget.

A few months ago, county administration directed us – along with all county departments and the county attorney's office- to prepare a 95% budget – or a 5% reduction for 2011. Your command staff worked hard on behalf of the agency to communicate the importance of funding the Sheriff's Office. We discussed the realities of the service level reductions with a 5% reduction and were able to convince the administration to prioritize public safety in his proposed budget presented yesterday.

Even so, our work is not done. I believe public safety must be prioritized and I am not ready to accept even a 2% reduction - \$1.5 million less for our agency next year. No matter how you slice it, a \$1.5 million reduction for the Sheriff's Office in 2011 will have an impact on the level of service provided across our agency.

Public safety is the most critical function of government. As you all are well aware, we have reduced our staffing levels across the agency in the past two years. As of June 2010, we were operating with 789 FTEs, compared to June 2008, with 804 FTEs. Throughout this year, we kept vacancies open to manage our expenses. Recently, we hired 18 additional people which were greatly needed after several months of significantly reduced staffing levels across the agency. Even with these new hires, we are still under our 2010 funded FTE count- but I think that is prudent in this economic environment.

Over the past two years, we have also reduced spending in other areas of the budget so we can focus more on personnel. I am proud that we have increased the percent of our budget dedicated to personal services by 2% since 2007.

I realize these are uncertain times and I will do whatever I can to avoid job cuts in the Sheriff's Office. After three years of cuts, I believe that any further cuts at the Sheriff's Office would be detrimental to public safety.

We are still early in the budget process and I will continue to advocate for this agency and work with the county board to further prioritize Sheriff's Office funding levels for 2011. The county board will hold a series of public hearings on the budget, including the Sheriff's Office presentation of our proposed budget, which will be on Thursday, October 28. The county board has scheduled two days, November 18 & 29 to offer amendments to the administrator's proposed budget. The final 2011 budget will be adopted by the county board on December 14.

You are all extremely dedicated and hard working. I am very proud of what this agency accomplishes each and every day.

Click the links above and below this document for the full Shooting Straight!