

Lincoln County statement to YachatsNews

Lincoln County has contracted with the city of Waldport for patrol services since 2004, when city leaders decided to dissolve their city police department. All previous agreements provided that the city covers the full costs of the additional deputies needed to fulfill the contract. The county has a similar contract for patrol services with Depoe Bay, under which that city pays the full cost of services.

An April 22 report from Sheriff Curtis Landers proposes that residents in the unincorporated area of Lincoln County subsidize city services. In delivering the report, Sheriff Landers asked that the proposal be addressed during the May 1 Board of Commissioners meeting.

County administration – the Chair of the Board of Commissioners, County Counsel and the County Administrator – typically make a collaborative decision on whether an item is placed on the commission's agenda. Current Chair Casey Miller felt that more information was needed from County Administrator Tim Johnson, who was on leave until a few days ago, to adequately consider the matter.

Commissioners still have questions regarding the proposal, among them equity with other jurisdictions who contract with the county for various services, including deputy patrols. Miller also said he was surprised to see Landers' proposal after all department heads were asked to reduce their General Fund asks due to increased budget pressures.

During recent years, personnel costs have increased substantially for deputies, who received approximately twice the cost-of-living adjustment as other county employees under their labor agreement.

County Administrator Tim Johnson has asked the Sheriff to provide information on how this proposal could fit within the confines of the current budget – that is, what source of revenue will provide these additional funds, or what department's budget would he ask to be reduced to supplement this contract. The Sheriff has not provided that information, so commissioners are unable to meaningfully consider the proposal.

Given that lack of information, Chair Miller said there seems to be three options for the City of Waldport to obtain dedicated patrol deputies for their jurisdiction: pay the county's full cost for contract deputies, reduce their service to a level they can afford, or, if they wish, re-establish their police department. Requiring

residents of the unincorporated areas to subsidize a contract with cities would set a dangerous precedent and constitute a misuse of taxpayer funds.

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