

Parke County Non-Partisan
Committee on Political Education
July 29, 2008

Subject: Meeting Minutes – July 26th, 2008

The July 26th Meeting was held at the IVY Tech Educational Center in Rockville. The featured speaker of the meeting was Parke County Sheriff Mike Eslinger. Following is a description of the highlights of Sheriff Eslinger's presentation:

Sheriff Mike Eslinger's Professional background:

- 10 years in Indiana State Police beginning in 1966 – Retired in 1976
- Ran personal Business for 3 years
- Elected Parke County Sheriff in 1978. Held the Office for 8 years.
- 20 years as Field Representative for the Indiana Sheriff's Association.
- Ran for Parke County Sheriff in 2006. Took Office January 01, 2007.

The Parke County Sheriff's Department currently has 10 full time Deputies, and 9 reserves.

Sheriff's Office Budget

- The Office Budget was in bad shape in January 2007. Sheriff Eslinger inherited a large number of unpaid invoices when he took Office. This required action by the County Council to eliminate.
- Today the Budget is in pretty good shape, but requires constant vigil on expenses.
- The hard part of controlling the budget is accounting for 3 shifts of 10 people working 365 day per year. The Sheriff's Office does not work 40 hour weeks.
- One major problem is compensatory time off for overtime. This creates scheduling problems and requires prioritization of calls. True Emergency calls must go first.
- Operating the County Jail adds to the challenge of controlling the budget.

Sheriff's Office Major Expenses

- Health Care for Inmates in the Jail presents a major expense.
- Feeding Inmates also a major expense. Currently the County is able to feed inmates for \$.74/meal. Just as with our own food costs, the costs of food at the jail keep going up making this a major challenge.

- The Jail Population is currently 93. The jail has capacity for 97. Other Counties placing inmates in the Parke County Jail are charged #35.00/day. There are currently 39 inmates paid for by other Counties.
- Vehicles are a major expense. Many of the vehicles used by the Sheriff's Office are old with at least 350K miles on them. However, the Sheriff believes that regular maintenance is the key to keeping these vehicles operating.
- Gas is a major expense. The Parke County Sheriff's Office has been conserving gas since last year. As of last month 60% of the gas budget is left.
- The Sheriff's Office needs 3 new vehicles to replace high mileage units that are costing too much to keep operating.
- The jail is 10 years old, and requires some major projects. The water system needs revamping at an estimated \$24K. Video Equipment needs updated to adequately patrol the jail facility. This is an estimated \$20K expense.

Future Challenges

- Budgeting and Crime Rate are the biggest challenges faced by the Sheriff's Office in the future.
- Salaries are a big issue. Each year the Sheriff's Office turns back revenue to the County based upon cost savings running under budget. It has been proposed that these savings could be used to increase the salaries of the Sheriff's Officers. Currently these savings are returned to the General Fund by the County Council. If more of the public would express interest in using these funds to pay Officers/Deputies it might be possible for these funds to be used to keep the best personnel in the County.

Crime Rate

- The biggest crime in the County is burglary. Recently a tri-count Burglary Ring was broken up. Meth Labs are down in numbers due to the Pharmacy requirements that customers sign for the purchase drugs used in the manufacture of these drugs. Also, the Meth crimes are down due to the import of Mexican drugs. Meth is bad as it adds to the crimes of theft and burglary.
- The Crime rate in the County fluctuates. A major theft ring was broken up 6 months ago. \$500k worth of materials was recovered from this ring.
- Currently the crime rate is stable within the County.

Other Issues

- Crime Prevention Activities. The county is active in Drug Abuse Programs. The DARE Program was good, but costly. Unfortunately National Studies show that the program was not as effective as first thought.
- Alcohol related problems are not a big issue in Parke County. Apparently the crack down on DUI related issues has made a big contribution to the reduction in these types of crimes.
- Stray Animals are a big problem in the County. Unfortunately the Sheriff's Department does not have a vehicle to recover stray animals. It was pointed out that a homeowner has the right to protect his property and personal animals from these Animals. The Jail has facilities to house stray animals, but without a method to bring them in it falls on the citizen to help. The Humane Society is active in trying to control stray animals.
- Finally Sheriff Eslinger pointed out that one of the biggest problems to law enforcement is apathy on the part of the County's Citizens.

The Meeting was adjourned at 10:45 am.

The Next Parke County Non Partisan Committee on Political Education Meeting is scheduled for August 23rd at the Parke County Fairground Extension Conference Room. The topic of discussion will be "Property Taxes".

A Meeting Notice will follow.

A Special Thank You to Sheriff Mike Eslinger for his excellent presentation at this meeting.

John Anderson
Chairman – Parke County COPE