



Charter Township of Washington

COUNTY OF MACOMB

STATE OF MICHIGAN

Dan O'Leary, Supervisor
Kathy Bosheers, Clerk
Linda S. Verellen, Treasurer

Art Grimes, Trustee
Abby Jacobson, Trustee
Lisa Rapp, Trustee
Jim Richardson, Trustee

Supervisor James Tignanelli
223 East Gates Street
Romeo, Michigan 48065

Re: Macomb County Sheriff Department

Mr. Tignanelli:

We understand that your residents are considering passing a millage to cover the costs of a contract with the Macomb County Sheriff. Washington Township has used the Macomb County Sheriff for many years, including long before I became supervisor. We are very pleased with the service that they provide and believe you will be as well.

Washington's residents, much like the residents of Bruce, require a limited government and require quality value services at a reasonable cost. We believe that police protection has become a critical service in our communities and that the most economical and high value manner in which to provide that service is through a contract with the Macomb County Sheriff.

The Need For Services

We believe that police service for the northern communities is critical:

1. The County has endured similar declining interest and property taxes as our communities have, causing a gradual reduction in road patrols for the northern communities. The County has been very clear in their position that significant road patrol and non-emergency services are not guaranteed without a contract.
2. The migration northward to our towns over the last 10 years, as evidenced by the recent census, means that we have many residents who expect police service and more potential for crime to occur.
3. The poor economy creates the potential for more nefarious activity.
4. As a rural community, our low density and carefree manner of living provides an opportunity for thieves to take advantage. Breaking and entering and retail fraud are

a constant issue. Though no level of police presence will eliminate crime, a greater presence increases risk for criminals.

5. Both of our communities offer fine fire and ambulance services. Those forces need to be able to focus on fire fighting and patient care, not traffic management or crowd control at accident sites.
6. Last May, a family member of one of my own employees had an experience where she had an accident on M53 in Bruce and waited over 90 minutes for a State Trooper to be dispatched from Port Huron. She was sitting on the side of the road with a 21 month old child.
7. Our youth face substantial pressure for substance abuse. An improved police presence in our community could help with school outreach programs that help avoid problems before they occur.
8. Greater road patrol presence will discourage speeding and drunk driving.
9. For Bruce, by contracting, resident's will have the ability to file police reports without going to Elizabeth Road (will likely increase reported crime and result in a greater understanding of our criminal challenges).
10. Added patrols will likely generate additional fees to the townships and the court system which is threatened by consolidation.
11. Having the same force in Bruce as in Ray, Armada and Washington will lessen jurisdictional confusion when deputies are crossing geographic boundaries.

Why We Prefer to Contract Police Services from MCSD

We choose to contract for police services rather than have our own department or merge with another local department. Our reasons are as follows:

1. The flexibility of a contract allows for cancellation or reduction in service at contract renewal if circumstances suddenly shift. Establishing our own team would take away that flexibility.
2. The MCSD deputies are highly trained professionals. We do not have to plan, coordinate, or evaluate that training – it is part of the package.
3. The MCSD is well equipped. We do not have to plan, evaluate, purchase or maintain any vehicles or facilities or equipment.
4. We do not have the experience to run a department. Mr. Wickersham provides that experience.

5. We don't wish to spend our time and resources on union negotiations, handling of grievances, payroll, benefit management, legal costs of arbitration, handling of discipline and all of the other costly and time consuming efforts that go with managing a significant operation.
6. We recently pulled ourselves out of the difficult problem of having post employment medical obligations. Police Departments are major sources of financial stress for many of our neighbors to the south who have massive unfunded post employment obligations. We prefer to have a contract that, if it ever ended, ends our obligations – period.
7. Using the Sheriff avoids any dispute that would likely result from using a different LOCAL department regarding whether they are spending enough time out of THEIR town and in OUR town. The temptation for a local chief to bias coverage in his own town would be high and the PERCEPTION that this was happening would always be there regardless of the truth.
8. The Sheriff bears all legal liability for the actions of his team.
9. The Sheriff handles dispatch and related equipment, training and staffing.
10. The Sheriff determines protocol changes and evaluates best practices.
11. The Sheriff manages absences and vacations. If we were to go with a local force, an absence would either result in reduced coverage or increased overtime cost.
12. The Sheriff provides one-stop shopping:
 - a. Road patrols
 - b. Jail
 - c. Aerial
 - d. ATV
 - e. Dog team
 - f. Multiple detectives
 - g. Marine
 - h. Drug enforcement
 - i. Breathalyzer expertise
 - j. Evidence techs
 - k. Youth outreach
 - l. Etc.

I have seen statements by others regarding the cost of the Sheriff vs what other local governments would cost to provide the service to us. The comparisons are inaccurate. They compare a level of service that is completely different than what the Sheriff offers. They do not offer most of the services that the MCSD offers and do not offer the depth of bench strength. Expecting departments that handle a one square mile area with a limited team to be able to perform a comparable service as the MCSD does for a 36 square mile area using a team that has many resources to draw on is simply unrealistic.

Data provided by the Southeastern Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG) clearly shows that towns with their own police force have a substantially higher cost per customer than towns that contract with their County Sheriff. This is partly driven by the spreading of one administration over multiple towns, the lack of infrastructure need (dispatch, jails, etc) and economies of scale. Consider these cost per customer figures:

Romeo Village	\$312 (local police)
Armada Village	\$176 (local police)
New Haven	\$132 (local police)
Washington	\$ 36 (county)
Lenox	\$ 26 (county)

Our Experience with the MCSD

We are pleased with the County Sheriff. They provide a professional, respectful service that has big city resources and yet small town familiarity with our community.

Our officials and staff know the deputies who serve our community by name. Though the Sheriff has the ability to rotate resources as circumstances dictate, he has also ensured that they have consistent personnel assignments. This allows the community to become comfortable with the deputies who serve them and allows the deputies to become part of the town they serve and build a rapport with residents. Our deputies know our town. They know, by name, the few citizens whose personal problems make them frequent "customers". They know how to deal with them because of that experience. This is valuable, especially in areas of town which have frequent visits.

The force we have in place is highly professional and trained in conflict management. This means our residents are treated with respect even under difficult circumstances. For example, when ITC recently performed controversial vegetation management on the Macomb Orchard Trail, tensions were high as many residents were agitated by their presence on their property and the impact on their yards. Several conflicts resulted and one became somewhat physical. Several cars showed up on the scene. Deputies visited with multiple residents and coached them through the situation. Rather than add fuel to the fire by being dictatorial and combative, they quickly calmed the situation, helped the residents understand their rights and obligations, and protected the ITC personnel without disrespecting the residents. They even developed a very friendly rapport with the woman accused of the physical assault and handled the complaint against her in such a cordial but firm manner that both the victim and the perpetrator were laughing about it. I personally observed the situation unfold and was proud of my deputies. Experience and knowledge of how to deal with people are an important part of the quality of their service.

We have had several very unfortunate major events in Washington. The MCSD was quick to act and almost swarming in their approach to those events, ensuring a proper outcome. Everyone is aware of the Tara Grant case. Many know of the murder of a Washington resident by a contractor who wanted to steal her jewelry. This last year we had a disturbed woman disappear from her vehicle and commit suicide in town. The MCSD swarmed the area in each

case, bringing resources to bear that we would never have been able to provide ourselves with a local force. We found ourselves with "big city" levels of ground forces, ATV teams, helicopter teams, forensics, dogs, and detectives. Their management of the public outreach in each case helped garner clues and generate volunteer assistance. This ability to bring multiple resources to bear when needed is critical to the service.

The Sheriff has been generous with his resources when local community events require resources for traffic management. Our annual Art and Orchard 5k run is a great example.

Given the growth of our town, we often have multiple police events at once. Though we have a contract for limited deputies, we receive the automatic back up from deputies in other towns when the circumstances are serious. This economy of scale is something we could never have on our own. In all honesty, it is the one thing that can also be a negative about the contract because the deputies assigned to our town also sometimes leave when there are major or multiple incidents in other towns. However, we recognize that we must accept this occasional inconvenience because the same courtesy is offered to our town when we need it. This is no different than the cost and value of mutual aid on fire services.

Our deputies do not take a Nazi-like approach to ticket writing and do not have the pressure that a local department might have to justify their existence. They share my board's view that the goal is compliance not revenue generation. This comes across to our residents as a more respectful approach.

We would love to have greater representation in Washington. Though we get substantial back up in true emergencies, there are times when less serious calls take time to address because our deputies are on other calls. This is a function of the level of funds we dedicate to the Police Fund (1 mil) and not a function of the quality of the service. That is a community decision that should someday be addressed by a rebalancing of local millages, not a flaw in the MCSD.

Our Participation

One of your board members once said that Washington was not participating in this new effort to improve police protection in our area. That is simply not true. We already had a contract with the MCSD for 6 total deputies. In November we amended our contract with the Sheriff to increase our number of deputies by one to a total of 7. If your community proceeds with its own millage, Sheriff Wickersham would certainly use the deputies serving Washington to assist in true emergencies in Bruce and vice versa. We would be independent from Bruce only in that the deputies assigned to Washington will not be going to Bruce for routine non-emergency efforts (e.g. taking a police report on a stolen bike or routine road patrols). However, by using the same service provider with the same leadership, we avoid jurisdictional confusion and ensure both towns have the support they need during true emergencies.

Conclusion

Bruce Township residents must do what they think is best for their community. Though we are sister communities, our cultures and circumstances are not identical so our problems and solutions may not be the same. That said, we believe that you would be very pleased with the Macomb County Sheriff if you choose to contract with them. If there is anything we can do to assist you with your decision, please call.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dan O'Connell", written in a cursive style.