



# SHERIFF DUSTIN D. HEUERMAN

## CHAMPAIGN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

---

204 E. Main Street  
Urbana, Illinois 61801-2702  
(217) 384-1204

November 29, 2023

### **Dustin D. Heuerman**

*Sheriff*

ph (217) 384-1205  
fax (217) 384-3023

### **Chief Deputy**

**Shannon Barrett**

ph (217) 384-1222  
fax (217) 384-1219

### **Captain**

**Law Enforcement**

**Shane Cook**

ph (217) 384-1207  
fax (217) 384-1219

### **Captain/Jail Supt.**

**Corrections**

**Karee Voges**

ph (217) 819-3534  
fax (217) 384-1272

### **Jail Information**

ph (217) 384-1243  
fax (217) 384-1272

### **Investigations**

ph (217) 384-1213  
fax (217) 384-1219

### **Civil Process**

ph (217) 384-1204  
fax (217) 384-1219

Champaign County Board Members,

I write this letter to show my support of pursuing a Public Safety Sales Tax increase through referendum. I want to share some things an increase in revenue would do to assist the operations of my office, which in turn will benefit the residents of Champaign County. Expenses and operational needs continue to increase each year, with criminal justice-related fees collected by the County being decreased, and without additional revenue we will not be able to keep up with those increases or meet those needs. From what I am told through budget projections, it is likely we will face a decrease in budget in the coming years without additional revenue, so this Public Safety Sales Tax initiative is very important for continued investment in our employees and in public safety.

## **STAFFING NEEDS**

Below is a synopsis of staffing needs based on current circumstances. During budget planning for Fiscal Year 2024, I was told there is no additional funding available for these needed positions.

### **Administrative Sergeant – Patrol Division**

**Adding an Administrative Sergeant to the Patrol Division will help increase administrative oversight and more intently focus on initiatives like strategic planning and accreditation.**

We have seen an increase in State training requirements and auditing/reporting with law enforcement for increased accountability. This work has traditionally been handled by our Law Enforcement Captain and Lieutenants, however the increase in these requirements requires an additional administrative position to provide proper oversight and accountability. If we are to enhance the professionalism of the Sheriff's Office, I need my Chief Deputy and Captain to help me focus on strategic planning and high-level goals for the Sheriff's Office, not be overwhelmed by day-to-day tasks that can be adequately addressed by a lower-level position. When compared to similarly sized agencies in our area, we are lean in administrative staff, and to my knowledge, have never added administrative staff as professionalism in law enforcement has evolved.

### **Additional Deputies**

**Adding additional Deputy Sheriffs will help increase proactive patrol in rural areas and collaboration with rural businesses, as well as help to increase problem-solving policing efforts countywide.**

In 2022, I was approved by the County Board for two of the four additional Deputy Sheriff positions I requested. This allowed us to return to the number of positions we had in 2008 before the two positions were given up due to budgetary concerns countywide. Since 2022,



# SHERIFF DUSTIN D. HEUERMAN

## CHAMPAIGN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

---

204 E. Main Street  
Urbana, Illinois 61801-2702  
(217) 384-1204

we have seen a decrease in officers working in village police departments in the county. This, in turn, increases these villages' reliance on deputies to respond to calls for service.

As expenses due to state legislation continues to increase for police departments (including the Sheriff's Office), I foresee additional reliance on the Sheriff's Office to provide patrol services to these areas.

Based on our current needs assessment, I would like to add six additional deputy positions. Adding additional deputy positions will allow us to operate more effectively, especially in more rural areas of the county. It will also allow us to focus our resources on where they are needed, for example with serving civil papers in a timelier fashion, investigating violent crimes more efficiently, and collaborating better with our local law enforcement and community partners to address Champaign County challenges (e.g., gun crime, rural burglaries, etc.).

### **Additional Court Security Officers**

**Adding Court Security Officers will allow us to meet our statutory obligations and increase safety and security in the Courthouse.**

With the addition of a judge, we will need to add a Court Security Officer. By law, I am required to have a Court Security Officer in each county court proceeding that occurs. We currently employ thirteen Court Security Officers. We have eleven judges (soon to be twelve), each requiring a Court Security Officer, and two additional Court Security Officers helping to ensure a safe and secure Courthouse by screening at the front door to the Courthouse. We will need to add a fourteenth Court Security Officer to meet our statutory obligations, and I would like to add a fifteenth Court Security Officer to help cover when there are vacations or illnesses, as well as to help provide extra security to the Courthouse at a time where divisiveness seems to be at an all-time high throughout the nation. The Courthouse is a major target for those wanting to cause harm to others, and employees and visitors at the Courthouse deserve to be adequately protected against that potential harm to the best of our ability.

### **Correctional Staffing**

**Adding Correctional Officers will allow us to evaluate inmates more efficiently for court proceedings and increase safety, security, and programing within the jail.**

We do not yet know how the Pretrial Fairness Act (PFA) will ultimately affect our inmate population. We are also starting to determine the operational needs of the renovated facility when it is finished. At the minimum, it is anticipated we will need our currently allocated staffing numbers. Staffing and space needed to properly assess new inmates for arraignment and detention hearings, and the hearings themselves, have increased since the PFA went into effect. We anticipate additional staff needing to be assigned to these tasks to help increase efficiency.

### ***Estimated Funding Required***

A rough estimate of funding required for these personnel needs, based on 2025 salaries, is \$1,630,937 (including salary, fringe benefits, initial equipment/training and other operational costs) for the first year and \$1,177,346 (including salary, fringe benefits & recurring operational costs) in subsequent years.



# SHERIFF DUSTIN D. HEUERMAN

## CHAMPAIGN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

---

204 E. Main Street  
Urbana, Illinois 61801-2702  
(217) 384-1204

### INITIATIVES

Below is a summary of initiatives I would like to start or enhance at the Sheriff's Office. Some of these initiatives correlate with other needs illustrated in this letter (e.g., staff positions). Additional revenue would help to make these initiatives possible.

#### **Accreditation**

**Being accredited confirms we are operating at the highest standards and reduces the County's liability.**

A goal of mine since being elected has been to seek accreditation for both the jail and the law enforcement division. Many jails, Sheriff's Offices, and police departments across the nation are accredited. The jail has previously been accredited, but not for over a decade. The law enforcement division has never been accredited. We have put infrastructure plans in place to help meet accreditation standards, and have sound policies and procedures in place, however preparing for accreditation takes a lot of time and effort. The needed Administrative Sergeant position can be an asset with seeking accreditation for the law enforcement division. Accreditation itself also requires funding.

#### **Specialty Court Support**

**Adding the deputy positions described above will allow us to better support Drug Court and support a future Mental Health Court, something we are currently unable to do with current staffing.**

Drug Court is a current initiative in Champaign County, and one that requires a dedicated deputy for certification. Due to working with minimal staffing many times, it has been difficult to find a deputy to put in that role. The judiciary would like to start a Mental Health Court as well, which would also require a deputy dedicated to that role. Currently we are unable to support the Mental Health Court initiative with a deputy, however having additional deputies would allow us to support these specialty courts.

#### **Mental Health Response Team**

**Additional resources are needed to improve response to individuals in crisis.**

I have been serving on a regional task force for implementation of the Community Emergency Services and Support Act (CESSA) to determine the most appropriate response for those suffering from a suspected mental health crisis. While those conversations are still progressing, and a solid plan has not yet taken shape, it will likely require additional resources from the Sheriff's Office that we currently do not have, as it has been a consensus that law enforcement cannot be entirely taken out of the response to a potentially violent incident. Increasingly police departments are utilizing plain-clothes investigators to accompany social workers on calls involving a mental health crisis. We currently do not have staffing or resources to implement an initiative like this. Eventually, when the CESSA task force is finished establishing their plan, we will be legally obligated to fulfill whatever obligations this plan places on us.



# SHERIFF DUSTIN D. HEUERMAN

## CHAMPAIGN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

---

204 E. Main Street  
Urbana, Illinois 61801-2702  
(217) 384-1204

### **Officer Wellness**

**Investing in officer wellness initiatives is shown to decrease stress among employees, decrease instances of excessive use of force, and improve retention among employees.**

With the trauma and stress Sheriff's Office employees regularly experience, enhancing our officer wellness program is imperative. Research points to key areas that make an officer wellness program successful, increasing overall productivity, morale, and retention of employees. Some of these are a chaplain, peer support, access to resources, and physical wellness. In early 2023, I added a volunteer Chaplain to the Sheriff's Office and started forming peer support teams in Corrections and Law Enforcement. While these two components were relatively inexpensive to start, the components of access to resources (including self-help, financial literacy, etc.) and physical wellness are more costly. As of the writing of this letter, I have a grant pending to help purchase an app that puts all resources in one place that can be accessed anonymously by employees and physical fitness equipment to help enhance physical wellness. Without that grant, though, these tools will be difficult to not only initially purchase but also sustain. We would also like to invest in peer support resources external to the Sheriff's Office in the case an employee feels stigma with speaking with another Sheriff's Office employee. That would be a subscription that also requires additional funding.

### **Increased Training/Proficiency**

**Increased training and skill proficiency means less liability and opportunity for civil suits against the County.**

Our goal at the Sheriff's Office is to maintain the utmost proficiency in skills within our divisions. Illinois legislation has recently increased the mandatory training deputies are required to have. The goal would be to provide training to employees to exceed the minimum mandatory training, including increasing training focused on diversity, implicit bias, and de-escalation techniques. Much of our training is conducted in-house with our own certified instructors. In that case additional overtime funding is needed. Increased funding would allow us to take more advantage of training resources outside of the Sheriff's Office, too. There is also a need to increase specialized training in Corrections and Court Security, to help maximize safety and minimize use of force needed to resolve a potentially violent situation. With an increase in funding for training, more specialized training for deputies and officers would be available, as well as enhanced leadership training for supervisors.

### **Enhanced Data Analysis**

**Good data helps to increase transparency and drive operational decisions.**

A few years ago, we added a data analyst to our staff at the Sheriff's Office. She has worked diligently at helping to collect data to help drive operational decisions, but that is currently a very manual process consisting of several steps and collecting data from different locations. Increased funding would support enhancing our data collection and interpretation processes through automation, thereby better informing us as we make our operational decisions. This, in turn, could also help to enhance our public-facing data portal by making it more interactive and comprehensive.



# SHERIFF DUSTIN D. HEUERMAN

## CHAMPAIGN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

---

204 E. Main Street  
Urbana, Illinois 61801-2702  
(217) 384-1204

### **Community Initiatives**

**Community collaboration helps to establish trust in the Sheriff's Office from the community and helps to reinforce that we are all one community working together for mutual benefit.**

Over the last several years, we have worked to enhance community outreach and engagement with the Sheriff's Office. These things include neighborhood walks, Special Olympics, Coffee with a Cop, Shop with a Cop, and Back to School BBQ. We also implemented a mobile app to help us enhance our community outreach. We would like to continue to enhance our relationship with the community, and in some cases held fundraising events to help support these initiatives. With increased funding, we can enhance our community outreach and engagement, helping to financially sustain initiatives we've already enacted while expanding opportunities for community outreach and engagement to occur.

### ***Estimated Funding Required***

Funding for these initiatives is variable, based on the extent we want to pursue them. It is difficult to estimate costs without formulating a plan for each of them. I estimate the costs to be approximately \$300,000/yr.

## **RECRUITMENT/RETENTION**

**It is more cost effective to recruit quality employees and retain them than to be a training ground for other agencies and continuously hire new, inexperienced employees.**

### **RECRUITMENT**

Over the last several years, we've seen a decrease in a qualified applicant pool for all divisions at the Sheriff's Office. The number one reason deputy applicants choose the Sheriff's Office for employment above other local police departments is cited as the culture we have built here, despite being offered a higher salary at another police department. That comes from the new hires themselves. I have no doubt we are missing out on many qualified employees simply because we cannot offer a salary equivalent to other local departments with similar positions.

The majority of positions at the Sheriff's Office are stressful and dangerous. Our support staff employees join our public safety employees in their important work to reduce the County's liability and ensure we are following the law appropriately and not taking Constitutional rights away from anyone due to an oversight.

To recruit quality employees, we have to pay a competitive wage with other similar positions throughout the County. As an example, two years ago we had an applicant for a Court Security Officer position who worked at the front desk of the Champaign Police Department. When offered the position, he declined stating it would be an \$7.00/hr pay cut from what he was currently making. His clerical position didn't even include the safety hazards associated with the Court Security position, requiring a firearm and bullet proof vest to be used while working.

### **RETENTION**

To retain quality employees, we must continue to invest in their success and career goals. Several front office staff members have left the Sheriff's Office in recent years and obtained employment with the same job



# SHERIFF DUSTIN D. HEUERMAN

## CHAMPAIGN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

---

204 E. Main Street  
Urbana, Illinois 61801-2702  
(217) 384-1204

responsibilities at other local police departments making several dollars more an hour than they did at the Sheriff's Office. We have also had deputies, correctional officers, and court security officers leave the Sheriff's Office to pursue higher-paying local law enforcement positions. Increasing salaries of employees to be competitive with similar positions in the area is imperative to retaining quality employees. Without increased revenue, however, this will be impossible.

Salary is not the only determinate of if an employee will stay with the Sheriff's Office. Other factors, such as training, mental health, and quality of equipment are also imperative and highlighted in other areas of this letter. All of these things come with a cost, and there is no room in the current budget to adequately address them without an increase in revenue.

### ***Estimated Funding Required***

A rough estimate of funding options for salary increases for recruitment and retention needs, based on 2025 salaries for all employees at the Sheriff's Office, except me, is:

10% increase – \$2,177,822/yr

15% increase – \$2,808,106/yr

*This is a very rough number based on salary increases only, not fringe benefits, but does include salary increases for the new positions needed and included in this letter. A local salary comparison for each position would need to be completed for an accurate number as some positions may be closer to comparables than others.*

## **CONSEQUENCES OF A REDUCED BUDGET**

If additional revenue is not obtained, and a budget reduction is needed in the future, as I'm told it likely will be under current circumstances, I want to highlight a few things that will be affected.

- New initiatives would not be possible. We pride ourselves on being innovative with new initiatives, improving employee morale, organizational effectiveness, and community outreach. Pursuing these opportunities will likely stop if additional revenue is not obtained, and existing initiatives would need to be reduced if our budget is reduced.
- We pride ourselves on providing our employees with the tools they need to be effective and safe while performing the roles we expect them to perform. Without increased revenue, we will not be able to continue to expand technology and equipment that allow our employees to be more effective in their duties. With a reduction in budget, we will not be able update existing equipment in an appropriate manner, which could potentially lead to unsafe conditions and uses of force where alternatives could otherwise be available.
- We invest a lot in training our employees to be knowledgeable and proficient in their duties. Without additional revenue, we will not be able to continue to expand our training options, increasing the proficiency of our employees. With a reduced budget, training will have to be reduced, solely focusing on meeting state mandates without expanding the skills and knowledge of our employees above the minimum expectations.



# SHERIFF DUSTIN D. HEUERMAN

## CHAMPAIGN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

---

204 E. Main Street  
Urbana, Illinois 61801-2702  
(217) 384-1204

- Without additional revenue, we will not be able to be competitive with local agencies and will continue to invest resources in training employees for other organizations, if we can attract them in the first place. With a reduction in budget, we may be required to reduce an already minimal staff, thereby lowering the quality of service we provide to residents of Champaign County.

In conclusion, I have put a lot of thought and effort into this letter to help you realize the potential that additional revenue has on further professionalizing Sheriff's Office operations and employees. I also wanted to provide a realistic expectation of what a reduced budget would bring, which I am told is likely if an additional revenue source is not found. From my knowledge of it, a Public Safety Sales Tax increase seems to be a good solution without the need to raise property taxes. After all, everyone who comes to Champaign County potentially benefits from the services of the Sheriff's Office, not just residents living within Champaign County. This can help support our public safety needs without putting the entire burden on Champaign County residents.

Sincerely,

Dustin D. Heurman  
Champaign County Sheriff