## STAFF REPORT

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| **Agenda Item:** | 7 | **Name:** | Nick Bowman |
| **Proposed No**.: | 2019-0332 | **Date:** | October 22, 2019 |

**SUBJECT**

A MOTION acknowledging receipt of a report on community policing and engagement practices in the sheriff’s office, in compliance with the 2019-2020 Biennial Budget Ordinance, Ordinance 18835, Section 21, Proviso P4.

**SUMMARY**

The proposed motion and attached report responds to the requirements of Ordinance 18835, the 2019-2020 biennial budget. Section 21, Proviso P4, of the adopted budget obliged the Sheriff’s Office to transmit a report detailing the actions and resources necessary to implement a community policing model in unincorporated King County.

In accordance with the proviso requirements, the report describes a community policing model that the Sheriff believes could be employed in the unincorporated area across the three sheriff precincts, discusses staffing and resource needs to implement the model, provides a general list of organizations and community groups KCSO would seek to partner with, assesses the feasibility of establishing community policing forums and addresses obstacles to implementation of the proposed model. The proviso also requires that Council pass a motion acknowledging receipt of the report in order to release $100,000 in appropriated funding to KCSO. The proposed motion, if passed by Council, would fulfill the proviso requirement.

**BACKGROUND**

Community policing is a law enforcement philosophy that promotes organizational strategies supporting the systematic use of partnerships and problem-solving techniques to proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public safety issues such as crime, social disorder and the fear of crime.[[1]](#footnote-1)

The adopted 2019-2020 biennial budget included a proviso which read:

*Of this appropriation, $100,000 shall not be expended or encumbered until the sheriff's office transmits a report describing the actions and resources necessary for a community policing model to be implemented in the unincorporated areas of each of the sheriff’s precincts.*

*The report shall include, but not be limited to:*

1. *A description of a community policing model that would best serve the unincorporated area residents of each of the sheriff precincts, including the organizational structure and guiding policies that would be employed in the development and implementation of a community policing model for the unincorporated area of each sheriff precinct;*
2. *A list of organizations, including, but not limited to, nonprofits, neighborhood groups, homeowner associations, schools and businesses in the unincorporated area of each sheriff precinct, identified as potential partners necessary to advance the objectives of community policing in their respective sheriff precinct;*
3. *A description of the staffing levels necessary to increase the sheriff’s office visibility through neighborhood specific patrols in the unincorporated area of each sheriff precinct as compared to current reactive policing methods;*
4. *An assessment of the feasibility of establishing a taskforce or roundtable bringing together representatives from each individual sheriff precinct and those community leaders within the unincorporated area of the respective sheriff precinct to foster collaboration and trust in furtherance of the objectives of community policing;*
5. *A description of the resources and estimated time necessary to implement a community policing model in the unincorporated area of each sheriff precinct; and*
6. *An analysis of obstacles to implementing a community policing model in the unincorporated area of each of the sheriff precincts and methods of overcoming those obstacles.*

*The sheriff should file the report by June 29, 2019, in the form of a paper original and an electronic copy with the clerk of the council, who shall retain the original and provide an electronic copy to all councilmembers, the council chief of staff and the lead staff for the law and justice committee, or its successor.*

**ANALYSIS**

Ordinance 18835 required KCSO to transmit a report by June 29, 2019, that includes the following elements:

1. A description of a community policing model, including the organizational structure and guiding policies that would best serve the unincorporated area residents in each sheriff precinct;
2. A list of local organizations in the unincorporated area which may serve as potential partners in advancing the objectives of community policing;
3. The number of additional staff above current levels required to allow neighborhood specific patrols and increase police visibility;
4. A feasibility assessment of establishing a taskforce or roundtable with precinct specific KCSO staff and community leaders;
5. The resources and timeframe for implementing a community policing model; and
6. An analysis of any obstacles to implementing a community policy model, as well as, strategies for overcoming those obstacles.

**KCSO Proposed Community Policing Model, Potential Partnerships and Staffing** The proviso report describes community policing as both a philosophy and an organizational strategy that is based on three basic tenets: prevention, partnership, and problem solving. According to the report, all KCSO commanders in the unincorporated area have received community policing training and hold their staff to high standards of service, partnership and engagement with the communities they serve. While the report stresses that the values embedded in community policing will continue to guide KCSO as an organization, the report concludes that existing staff levels do not allow for the kind of community engagement called for under the community policing model. Instead, the report proposes creating Community Policing Teams, consisting of a sergeant and three to four deputies, to be centrally located within each unincorporated area precinct.

Under the proposal, the Community Policing Teams would be free from the requirement to respond to calls for service and would focus on community needs in each precinct area. The teams would be responsible for establishing partnerships with community members and organizations toward the goal of fostering public trust, reducing repeat calls for service and preventing crime. According to the report, locating the teams in each unincorporated precinct will allow KCSO to tailor programs to the needs of individual neighborhoods which in turn may allow team members to serve as area experts for patrol deputies.

With regards to community partnerships, the report provides a partial list of existing and potential partnerships, as well as, a number of unincorporated area community events and programs which KCSO would look to work with to advance community policing initiatives. Organizations highlighted in this list vary from schools and school districts, to homeowner associations and tenant organizations, to tribal organizations, the Veterans Administration and other federal partners, among others. Unincorporated area community programs and events identified as potential partners by KCSO include Neighborhood Block Watch, Adopt-School, Community Walk-Along, Lunch with a Cop, Chief for a Day, Fall City Days, Skykomish River Days and White Center Jubillee Days, among others. The full list of organizations and events identified by KCSO can be viewed in attachment 2 to the proviso report.

As mentioned earlier in the report, current staffing levels at KCSO are a significant impediment to community policing efforts. The report states that an officer’s discretionary time, defined as time not spent responding to dispatched calls for service, is the time where deputies can proactively address crime, purposefully engage with community members and participate in educational opportunities. With current KCSO staff levels, the report states that patrol staff are simply too busy responding to emergencies and priority 911 calls to engage in the type of community engagement necessary under the community policing model. KCSO is currently working with a vendor to develop a program which will allow the agency to study staffing resources in order to determine if additional deputies are needed, beyond the proposed Community Policing Teams, to provide officers an appropriate amount of discretionary time to engage in meaningful community policing efforts.

**Community Policing Roundtable** The proviso asked the Sheriff’s Office to assess the feasibility of establishing a roundtable or taskforce comprised of KCSO staff and community leaders in furtherance of community policing objectives. According to the report, KCSO believes a yearly roundtable would indeed be feasible and a good way to develop cross-precinct relationships, share successes and brainstorm future events and programs. An example of what the roundtable could potentially look like is provided in Attachment 3 to the report. The report however, does cite the need for minimal funding increases above existing budget allocations to allow for supplies, refreshments and the intermittent use of staff overtime. The Sheriff stated that she believes this funding would need to be secured before initiating the roundtable as soliciting community input and discussion might raise community expectations that could lead to disappointment if funding was not forthcoming.

**Implementation Resources, Timeline and Obstacles** The creation of three Community Policing Teams as described in the report, would require funding for three sergeants and nine to twelve deputies, or approximately $2.7 to $3.4 million in annual funding. In addition to the time required to hire and train the new hires[[2]](#footnote-2), the report indicates that KCSO would need to conduct a facilities assessment at each precinct to ensure the teams had appropriate working accommodations. The report does not elaborate as to how long the facility assessment would take to complete or provide a preliminary date which KCSO might expect to have the teams in place. In response to a council staff inquiry, the Sheriff’s Office has stated that KCSO’s current backlog of vacancies[[3]](#footnote-3) would need to be reduced to a more manageable level before officers would be dedicated to the proposed Community Policing Teams. As currently envisioned, as new recruits and laterals are assigned to vacant patrol positions, experienced deputies familiar with the precincts would move into the community policing team assignments.

The report concludes by stating that with the Council providing the authority to hire a Community Outreach Specialist,[[4]](#footnote-4) many obstacles to ensuring KCSO is driven by the tenets of community policing have already been removed. However, the report goes on to note that, should the Council approve additional hiring authority for the proposed Community Policing Teams, these positions may need to be phased in to allow KCSO to balance filling these new positions with its current patrol requirements.

**INVITED**

* Hon. Mitzi Johanknecht, Sheriff, King County Sheriff’s Office
* Liz Rocca, Chief of Staff, King County Sheriff’s Office

**ATTACHMENTS**

1. 2019-0332 (and its attachments)
2. Transmittal Letter

1. Community Policing Defined. United States Department of Justice, Community Oriented Policing Services. 2014. <https://cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/vets-to-cops/e030917193-cp-defined.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The time required to get a new recruit certified through the Basic Law Enforcement Academy and into an active role is approximately nine to ten months. This time would be significantly reduced, to about four months, in the event KCSO were to hire a lateral officer, or an officer who has already certified to work as a law enforcement officer in Washington State. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. KCSO currently has 46 commissioned vacancies, this total number includes revenue backed positions to be filled in various contract cities. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The Council approved funding and hiring authority for a Community Outreach Specialist at KCSO with the passage of Ordinance 18766 in July of 2018. The position was filled in July of 2019. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)