

From the Office of the Sheriff:

Are you sick of the doom and gloom? Every newspaper and television station starts the newscast with the poor economic times, stories of major foreclosure and increase bankruptcy filings. We are in tough times and I am sure, all of you, like I, are watching our personal dollars more carefully than ever before. My concern goes much farther as I am also entrusted with your tax dollars and we, in government are not exempt from the economic downturn.

Just this week I met with the staff and questioned what cuts we could make in operations to reduce spending? Every private corporation is laying off employees what if we were ordered to do the same? Will this economic disaster impact government as it is private industry?

We went to work, I wanted the answers. What I found was disturbing at best. I discovered that cuts we make cost more than the money we saved. My father had a saying that "we are spending quarters to save nickels". A quick look at my 2008 expenditures confirmed that.

When we craft our budget we attempt to keep increases to a minimum. We address our fixed costs such as fuel and squads and estimate the lowest number we can. Should additional cuts be necessary we look at personnel. We looked at each of our divisions and cut funding for vacant positions and pledge not to fill them for the year. We assume some risk but understand that we are required to cut costs and do so. In 2008 we cut funding for two dispatchers and several Correctional Officers. We also chose to not fill an detective position in an attempt to reduce the tax levy. Did we succeed? A question we, as managers, must ask ourselves to ensure we are not spending quarters to save nickels. We failed!

In 2008 we exhausted \$500k in overtime costs alone. This does not include hundreds of hours of compensatory time employees take in lieu of the overtime wages. I examined our Investigation Division where we thought we would save \$68k by not filling a position, yet exhausted \$78k in overtime. Our jail, reducing funding for two positions but spent \$170k in overtime. I do not have the final numbers but conservatively, I figure our total overtime costs for 2008, including comp time used will approach  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a million dollars.

We will never get around paying out a certain amount of overtime; much is built in due to holiday's worked and major crimes and crashes. But we must put more effort into the budget system and realize that cutting personnel may not be a money saver. The work must get done, cops must be on duty. We do not have the luxury of not replacing those on vacation or are ill. We must have deputies on the road. We must staff the jail without jeopardizing the safety and security of the facility.

The budget cure is not reducing personnel as they are as much of a fixed costs as squads and fuel, they are a "must have". We may have been able to save a couple hundred thousand dollars if we had funded those positions rather than paying the overtime costs for not having them. There is also a cost associated with this that is not in dollars. That cost is on the mental health of the employees, the burn-out they experience. These non-monetary costs are the costs we can not afford.

I pledge in our next budget we will not spend quarters to save nickels, we will fund our positions, reduce the overtime costs of our department and recognize the negative impact our understaffed divisions have on our treasured employees. Thanks for listening, [tnehs@co.dodge.wi.us](mailto:tnehs@co.dodge.wi.us).