

From the Office of the Sheriff: "BRB and Employees Provide Fiscal relief"

This year has generated tremendous anxiety for county employees as they adjust to the changes in their employment benefits. To their credit, employees of the Sheriff's Department were professional, respectful, and maintained a high level of performance throughout the state and county process. In the end, between Gov. Walker's budget repair bill and our ability to change employee benefits, we were able to submit a taxpayer friendly budget and place the department onto a very solid fiscal foundation for the future. So, as I enjoyed Thanksgiving I reflected back on the employees, their behavior and the departments future, all of which I am very thankful for.

The footing's for the significant change of course came with the Governor's budget repair bill which allowed us to reduce employee costs by \$400,000 as our non-sworn employees are now making contributions towards pension and health care costs. With the elimination of collective bargaining, we also looked at several other employee benefits in an effort to ease taxpayer costs even more. We settled on two changes which provided additional budgetary relief.

The first was the elimination of employee "eat days". For as long as anybody can remember the majority of our 100 plus non-sworn employees were given four additional days off per year in lieu of not receiving breaks or a lunch period. The days can be used as additional days off or paid out. Back in the day it may have been necessary to provide this benefit, but no longer. These employees work a straight 8-hour day with a paid lunch. This change alone will provide 400 more work days, a gain equivalent to two full-time employees, and reduce overtime costs.

A second benefit was the elimination of an unfunded financial burden the county had with banked holiday time. For year's employees who worked on a holiday could "bank" their holiday hours and roll them over year-to-year, gain additional time off or cash out. Many employees had several hundred hours in these banks, many earned at a lesser hourly rate than they are earning today, forcing an unfunded obligation of \$200,000. We have now eliminated this benefit and will cash out employees using savings from the 2011 budget and in return they will receive an enhanced in their compensatory time. A win-win for both management and employees.

Cumulatively, the entire effort of the Budget Repair Bill and the employees has greatly eased the financial impact the department has upon the taxpayer. We will use the employee savings to fund a much needed E911 Dispatch position which was unfunded for years due to lack of financial resources. This is great news.

The bottom line is over 100 Sheriff's Department employees are now paying several thousand dollars each year towards the cost of their employment, allowing us to fund all our operations, purchase necessary equipment, and maintain a safe and secure county. For that I am thankful as well. Thanks for listening tnehs@co.dodge.wi.us or @sheriffnehs on Twitter.