

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 3, 2009

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER

SUBJECT: BUDGET MEMO # 72 : FEASIBILITY OF THIRD SHERIFF WORK
DETAIL

This budget memorandum is in response to Councilman Lovain's questions: What is the feasibility of a third inmate work detail crew, directed by the Sheriff's office, to perform duties carried out by RPCA, T&ES, and other City agencies? Would a third work crew would allow for spending reductions in personnel and other costs for other City agencies? Are there other considerations that should be taken into account before making such a decision (e.g. liability issues)?

The Sheriff's Office currently manages two work detail crews, which perform unskilled labor for projects City-wide on weekdays. Each crew requires at least three and no more than four inmates. One Deputy Sheriff is assigned to each of these work crews. In 2008, the two inmate work detail crews provided \$197,000 in labor to the city based on the number of hours worked at a Laborer 1 job class at mid pay grade. It is estimated that an additional work detail crew would provide approximately \$100,000 worth of labor to the City.

Two major users of the inmate work detail crews, Recreation & Parks and T&ES, have said that they could utilize a third inmate work crew. Although no additional funds are requested, RPCA and T&ES state that they also would have to divert some existing personnel resources from currently planned projects to manage a third work crew. While this staff does not supervise the inmates, they are needed to provide initial project instruction, set out and put away tools, and provide any necessary clean-up (e.g. trash bag pick-up). Some additional non-personnel resources would also be needed such as trash bags, rakes, push mowers, etc. Much of the clean up work done by the inmates includes taking on tasks no longer done by State agencies such as VDOT. The availability of the inmate work crews makes it possible to clean up littered beltway ramps and other areas that serve as major gateways to the City.

RPCA and T&ES state that while a third inmate work crew would provide enhanced services (e.g. additional trash pick-up, painting, etc.) to the City, no spending reductions could be made to staffing or non-personnel. RPCA, however, believes that a third work

crew could offset some of their proposed service reductions by performing tasks normally performed by seasonal employees for which the budget has been significantly reduced. The Sheriff's Office requests that an additional Deputy Sheriff position be added to their budget if a third crew is added by Council. The cost of this position is \$68,795.

Inmates are eligible to work on these crews if they meet the following criteria:

- A sentenced local or state prisoner (federals inmates are not eligible);
- No more than 12 months remaining on their sentence.
- No criminal histories that include violence, sexual assaults, escape history, or a poor adjustment record in the detention center.
- Inmates with detainers (wanted by another jurisdiction) are considered on a case by case basis.

Currently, the Sheriff's Office has a difficult time recruiting eight inmates that meet all the criteria listed above. If the criteria restricting eligibility to inmates with remaining sentences of 12 months were changed to 18 months, enough inmates could be recruited for three work detail crews. The Sheriff's Office is currently reviewing their eligibility criteria policy and may make modifications to this criterion.

The inmate work detail crews provide assistance to various agencies, including the Alexandria Sheriff's Office, Alexandria Police Department, Alexandria Fire Department, Office of Building and Code Enforcement Administration, General Services Administration, Department of Parks and Recreation, Fleet Service, Transportation and Environmental Services, American Red Cross, Alexandria Volunteer Board, ARHA, and Alexandria Public Schools.

Currently the inmate work detail participants pick up litter on a weekly or bi-weekly schedule in the City of Alexandria at the locations City-wide, including Old Town, Del Ray/Arlandria, the West End, Schools, Libraries, Metro sites, and the Landmark Area. In addition, inmates complete special projects which have included light pole painting, mulching tree wells, landscaping projects, stair rail painting at the Alexandria Fire Department smokehouse, off loading of Christmas trees for the Alexandria Police Department, painting of various office areas after and before relocation (Alexandria Volunteer Bureau), setting up barricades for various parades within the city, assisting in office moves, and setting up annually for First Night Alexandria at the Masonic Temple.

With regard to liability issues, neither the Sheriff's Office nor the City is shielded by any code regarding civil liability when using inmate labor. The Sheriff's Office documents training provided to the inmates and provides protective clothing, gloves and eye protection for use of power equipment such as lawnmowers and weed eaters. Any medical injuries are covered by our contract with our current Detention Center medical provider. The Sheriff's Office has not encountered a civil suit from the use of a work detail inmate.