

Sheriff's department makes its pitch

Written by Carol Pomeday
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Full-time deputy can be provided for \$90,000, but village officials still mull part-time police department

The Village of Belgium is wrestling with whether it is better to form its own police department or contract with the Ozaukee County Sheriff's Department for additional coverage.

On Monday, Capt. Dave Guss of the sheriff's department told the Village Board it would cost less than \$90,000 for 40 patrol hours — about \$80,000 for the officer and \$5,000 to \$7,000 for mileage.

The village would have no other administrative or equipment costs and would have the full resources of the department, he said.

The extra patrol hours would not come at the expense of the current force, Guss said.

"If we contracted with Belgium, we would bring on another officer or retain one who would be cut due to budget constraints," he said.

"We will always have someone during the contracted hours. Your squad is never sick, never on vacation or family leave. You don't have to do the hiring, firing and discipline."

The village logo would be put on the squad car, he said.

A contract would have to be negotiated with Sheriff Maury Straub and fewer hours may be possible, Guss said.

Village President Kevin Kowalkowski said he wants a greater police presence in the village next year and will try to meet with the sheriff next week.

Village Marshal Scott Brinkman, who is a full-time Grafton police officer, told the board he still believes a local department can provide better community police service.

Brinkman had proposed a department with three officers, each providing 16 hours per week, with start-up and first-year operating costs of \$128,000.

After several board members expressed concerns about the cost, he modified the proposal and recommended two officers be hired to provide a total of 24 hours per week and that the department start July 1.

The 2010 cost would be \$58,000 with start-up costs of \$38,000 and operating costs of \$20,000 for six months. If the hours stay the same, the 2011 budget would be about \$40,000.

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"Belgium doesn't have a lot of burglaries or crime. Mainly, it's problems with quality of life issues — kids out after curfew, traffic problems in neighborhoods, vandalism," Brinkman said.

There is more to community policing than having a squad car with the village logo, he said.

"In Grafton, we have community programs. I'm a child safety seat instructor and I install car seats. We work with landlords of apartment complexes and hold programs for business owners. Those are programs we can bring to Belgium," he said.

"Community policing is not handing out baseball cards. It's getting involved with your community and holding programs for them."

Serious crimes such as sexual assault, burglaries, drugs and deaths would be referred to the sheriff's department, he said.

Brinkman said he would hire officers who have a four-year degree and are trained in community police skills. Although he lives in the village, he would not require other part-time officers to do so.

A survey may be sent with utility bills to find out if residents want a part-time police department, he said.

Kowalkowski said he questioned if he was on the right track after reading the editorial in Ozaukee Press that opposed creating a part-time police department.

"I was disheartened, so I talked to a lot of people over the weekend. One person out of about 200 said it (a police department) wasn't needed," he said.

"I think the largest need is to have a police presence that interacts with residents — not just doing patrolling, but talking to residents and getting to know them.

"The officer could even patrol on a bike. You could get to know the community better and also patrol the bike trail."