

Boosting part-time patrol is costly

Written by MARK JAEGER

Wednesday, 01 August 2012 15:23

Village marshal tells trustees that hiring another officer for 12 hours a week would cost more than \$16,000

Village of Fredonia officials who feel an expanded police presence is the answer to vandalism concerns got some eye-opening input from Village Marshal Mike Davel during a recent Village Board meeting.

The marshal's office has eight part-time deputies, all of whom have full-time jobs with other local law-enforcement agencies.

At past meetings, village officials have suggested that security could be enhanced by beefing up patrols, especially at night and on weekends.

Davel said hiring an officer for an additional 12 hours a week would cost the village about \$11,000 in pay, plus \$5,500 for equipment.

That calculation put the cost of hiring a part-time officer at more than \$16,000.

"I think it is a tough sell," Davel told the Public Safety Committee during a recent discussion of the likelihood of finding a part-time officer able to work more than five or six hours a week.

"You should realize it would be a position with rapid turnover, probably attracting recent police school graduates who have yet to find full-time jobs," he said.

"But there is a risk when you are talking about putting a brand new guy out there, especially because he would be all by his lonesome here."

Davel said the department's current deputies are veteran officers, each with at least 12 years of experience in law enforcement, who fit their village service around rigid full-time schedules.

He said most law-enforcement departments have rules on how many hours an officer can work outside of his full-time assignment.

Davel told committee members that if they wanted to pursue hiring a part-time officer despite his caveats, they would need to take a long-range view.

"I don't have any of that in my current budget, so you would be looking at next year if you want to pursue this," he said.

As the Village Board reviewed the committee's deliberations, Village President Chuck Lapicola said he could support hiring an additional officer if the cost would be less than \$10,000.

"I would definitely support it to get two more nights of coverage," Lapicola said.

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A less costly approach to improving the police presence in the village would be to start a community watch program, committee members suggested.

“There should be safe places where kids know they can go if they need help,” said Trustee Fritz Buchholtz, chairman of the committee.

“I think you have that already. This is a small, close community and many of the kids who live here already know safe places to go because a lot of the families know each other,” Davel said.

He said the limited coverage deputies can provide means his department depends on community cooperation.

“We rely heavily on people calling us and providing information, preferably as things happen rather than two days later,” Davel said.

The committee agreed to nurture that relationship by including information with the next village utility billing reminding residents how they can contact the marshal’s office.