

Full-time police staffing suggested

Written by Mark Jaeger

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Town supervisor says shared funding of marshal post may be available to enhance community protection

The debate over staffing the Fredonia Village Marshal's office took an unexpected turn at the most recent Village Board meeting when a Town of Fredonia official suggested creating a full-time position.

Town Supr. John Blasczyk also said the position might even be funded by both the village and town.

Trustee Chuck Lapicola, who was running the board meeting in the absence of Village President Joe Short, said there is a growing support in the community to add one or two full-time officers to the marshal's office.

The marshal's office has part-time deputies on patrol 72 hours a week, but several officials said the criminal element seems to be aware of when officers are in the community.

Lapicola cited several recent burglaries in the village, and said he thought it is time a full-time police presence in the village be considered.

Blasczyk said he was aware of the irony that a town official should offer suggestions on the operation of the marshal's department, which is funded entirely by village taxpayers.

He said the town, which currently relies on the Ozaukee County Sheriff's Department for police protection, may be willing to help pay for added police protection.

"I can see combining with the town to finance a full-time officer. It might be very beneficial to the entire community," Blasczyk said.

"If we have more people, the cost becomes less for all of us. I think we have grown more accepting of that idea."

Because the marshal's office hires deputies from other law-enforcement agencies, scheduling is usually determined by when they are off duty from their full-time responsibilities.

"There are definite limitations to using officers who work for other agencies. That's the problem with a part-time department. We would love to have someone here all the time, but it is not possible," Leet said.

Having a full-time officer would give the marshal the luxury of scheduling officers to work when police presence is most needed, rather than being limited to when officers are available.

Village resident Kelly Sheik said the additional cost of a full-time officer would be worth it.

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"I am not in favor of raising taxes, but if that is a possibility, sign me up," Sheik said.

The staffing question was initiated after Blasczyk said he has been following recent news stories on the village marshal's office, and asked if the officers could monitor businesses, especially taverns.

"Could you have your officers keep an eye on the licensed business during slow times, to make sure everything is up to snuff in our community?" he asked.

Deputy Marshal Eric Leet, a full-time officer with the Port Washington Police Department who was filling in for Village Marshal Mike Davel at the board meeting, said he is the only department member trained to make tavern inspections.

However, Leet said all officers routinely make stops at local bars to make sure a licensed bartender is on duty and that there is no underage drinking.

Leet said he is also in favor of implementing a routine inspection program of all businesses where alcohol is sold, to make sure all licenses are current.

"We have talked about setting up a program of annual or semi-annual inspections," he said.

Trustee Don Dohrwardt suggested moving forward with the inspection program, saying it could head off problems before they occur.

"If we set up an inspection system, it removes the question of subjectivity. We couldn't be accused of picking on anyone, then," Dohrwardt said.

Trustees asked that Davel make a formal presentation on the inspection program at a future board meeting.