

Open Work Session
Budget Session with Sheriff's Office
May 21, 2019

Sheriff Mike Lewis, Captain Tod Richardson, and Ms. Julie Strockbine, Financial Specialist, came before Council. Mr. Cannon said Council reviewed what they have, and he thinks they are very aware of what Sheriff Lewis talked about before, which is, in their budget, most things are in balance, except they are requesting three new deputies, so that may be the gist of the conversation, unless any Councilmembers have any other questions. He said he will let Sheriff Lewis open up the discussion if he would like.

Sheriff Lewis said, first and foremost, they have requested positions for three new deputies based on a number of factors. He explained, the opioid crisis here in Wicomico County remains very real. He said they have some small victories, but then they experience several setbacks with the opioids, including overdoses and fatalities here in Wicomico County, and, honestly, they have had several fatal overdoses here most recently. He said, in order to address the opioid crisis in Wicomico County, instead of just doing business as usual, he has reallocated personnel to a three-man unit called a Community Action Team, which includes two deputies, one being a canine handler, and one being a first line supervisor, or a corporal's position. He said they had to pull those positions from different areas within the Wicomico County Sheriff's Office because, in the twelve and a half years he has been the elected Sheriff in Wicomico County, they have not gained one additional personnel, other than filling vacancies that were in their budget. He clarified, they have not gotten any additional people, therefore, they thought it was certainly time to backfill those positions which they had stolen from to address the opioid crisis.

Sheriff Lewis said, in their judicial protection unit within the courts, as Council is well aware, their judges are constantly requesting a stronger presence in the courtrooms. He explained, with the addition of courtroom five, which was the ceremonial courtroom, it will be operational with the additional cases Wicomico County has experienced, so they now have additional personnel assigned to the courts. He said it is nothing for him to go to the courts, like he did last week for the sentencing of a murder suspect, and, when he got down here, unbeknownst to him, Captain Babe Wilson had already reassigned several additional personnel from throughout their Office to the courtroom for the sentencing because this was a validated blood gang member, so they are frequently having to bring deputies to the courthouse.

Sheriff Lewis said they are handling an immense amount of calls throughout their schools every year, as Council can imagine. He said they now have ten Wicomico County Sheriff's deputies in their schools, and they are conducting more active shooter training today than they ever have. He said he is getting multiple requests, so they just assigned Captain Babe Wilson and Sergeant Brian Donohoe to do active shooter training for Holloway's Funeral Home, and they have a meeting coming up with them on June 5th. He said everyone is concerned about active shooters in their businesses here in Wicomico County, and in their churches here in Wicomico County, so they are conducting active shooter training, but they are having to rob Peter to pay Paul every single day. He said they cannot continue at the rate they are going without additional personnel, and that is the number one request he is getting from the rank and file within the Wicomico County Sheriff's Office, and he is hearing it every day. He said, between the County Council and the County Executive, they are very happy with their salaries, with their disability, and with their benefits, but what they are lacking right now is manpower. He said, just this morning, they had a high speed pursuit. He said he was awakened the last two mornings in the middle of the night, but they had a high speed pursuit this morning that started out with the vehicle coming through radar at 88 miles an hour down in Willards. He said the deputy pursued the vehicle all the way to Route

50 and the Bypass, and when it got on the ramp to go north on the Bypass, and they have already reconstructed his speed, he left the roadway at 113 miles per hour, and totally destroyed and annihilated the vehicle, and it took two rollbacks to load the remains of the car up. Mr. Holloway asked what he was driving, to which Sheriff Lewis responded, he was driving a 2013 Dodge Charger. He said both of the occupants from Prince George's County, Maryland, are in the hospital with very serious injuries. He said they thought one might pass, but it appears they both are going to survive now. He said the 2013 Dodge Charger the deputy was driving when pursuing this Dodge Charger died at the scene based on the high speeds and pursuit, and it blew the engine. He clarified, his deputy did not wreck, but he was chasing a Dodge Charger with his Dodge Charger. Captain Richardson said his engine was not in the car any longer. Sheriff Lewis said the engine and transmission both were ripped out of the Dodge Charger. Mr. Holloway said he has read about what goes on in pursuits in some of the other Cities. He then asked at what point they would call off a pursuit, to which Sheriff Lewis responded, they weigh a number of factors. He said they consider road conditions, they consider traffic conditions, and they consider weather conditions. He said, at 3:00 in the morning, there is nothing on the road, and he came through radar at 88 miles an hour, so the deputy pursued him. He said they also take into consideration the violation itself, and how serious the violation is, but they have to allow the deputies discretionary power to pursue a vehicle. He said, ultimately, the chase is controlled by the duty officer sitting at a desk, or the patrol supervisor on patrol. He said they are out there monitoring the weather and road conditions, and there are a lot of factors that come into play. He said he has self-terminated a number of pursuits in his career as a cop where he thought it was not worth it, so he terminated it. He said he will tell Council that there were two separate chases last night, one involving Salisbury City, and one involving Fruitland, so they had three separate chases overnight. He said, in the one in Fruitland, the guy turned off his headlights and was blowing through traffic lights with no headlights on, so they ended up losing him completely. He said Salisbury City called off their chase because it was earlier in the night when there was heavy traffic in the City, so they self-terminated their chase. He repeated, there were three pursuits overnight. Mr. Davis said he has seen some Cities with accident review boards, and, if they pursue someone, the police officer has to go in front of the review board, and can be found guilty. Sheriff Lewis said his officers were the only ones to catch their people, but they felt that, at 3:00 in the morning, they had it under control. He clarified, the suspect did not, but they did. Mr. Dodd asked if they have one of those propelled things that stick on the car, to which Sheriff Lewis responded, yes, they are called 45 caliber rounds. Mr. Dodd said Sheriff Lewis knows what he is talking about, to which Sheriff Lewis responded, he knows exactly what he is talking about, but, no, they do not have any of those.

Mr. McCain asked, with their agreement with the Executive, is this the last year of their binding agreement, and when does that start again, to which Captain Richardson responded, the next to last year starts July 1, 2019, and the final FOP raises are in effect July 1, 2019. Mr. McCain said, if he remembers, in the last year they do not get a raise, to which Captain Richardson responded, correct, the last year is a flat budget, so this is the last raise under this agreement, and then they will renegotiate.

Mr. Holloway asked what a part-time civilian sheriff is, to which Sheriff Lewis responded, judicial protection unit. Captain Richardson said it is the civilian manning the magnetometers in the vestibule between the old circuit court and the new circuit court, and they are part-timers.

Mr. Davis asked, in the schools, are they arresting some of those kids a lot more, to which Sheriff Lewis responded, absolutely. He said, honestly, things have changed with Dr. Hanlin, and they are absolutely arresting more people now. Mr. Dodd asked if they are planning to put two deputies in schools, or was that in another school district, to which Sheriff Lewis responded, they have ten deputies in schools right now. Mr. Dodd said he thought he read somewhere in the past week that somebody was going to be

putting more than one deputy in the school because of the size of the school, to which Sheriff Lewis responded, that is not them, and they handle all the schools in the County, as Council well knows, whether they are in the City or the County. Mr. Dodd said they discussed at one time that they are going to have to expand school resource officers in more schools, to which Captain Babe Wilson, speaking from the audience, responded, Mr. Dodd is correct. He then came before Council, and said the Kirwan study has been done, and is something they are discussing Statewide with the Training Commission, as well as the Maryland Center for Safe Schools (MCSS). He said, presently, they have somebody in their high schools and middle schools, and then next year they will push into the feeder schools. He said, as long as they have an adequate response to a selected area, that is acceptable right now, so they are still in discussions about how to manage that because of the cost.

Mr. Hastings asked who does a security assessment. He clarified, last week they just heard about Mardela having 19 portables, and, of course a lot of spaces to go in and out. He then asked who the person is who actually sits down and figures that out, to which Captain Wilson responded, the Board of Education is responsible through the education portion of it, and they report it back by June 15th of this year. Mr. Hastings asked if that is with security professionals, to which Captain Wilson responded, yes, the safe schools coordinator, and they work in conjunction with MCSS.

Mr. Dodd said he knows from working in public safety all these years that it is not just the Sheriff's Department, or the Fire Department, or EMS, but many have not seen an increase in staffing, as Sheriff Lewis stated, for twelve and a half years, and no telling how many years prior to that, but the deputies are doing a lot more with less. He said they are not improving the quality of life by not having enough officers, so they need to do something, to which Sheriff Lewis responded, he could not agree more. He said, again, as much as he has requested additional people throughout the years, it has never made it to this particular location, and he can tell Council they are in dire need of additional positions. He clarified, they have had vacancies filled through the County Executive, and, ultimately, approved by Council, but they have not had new positions created or approved in his twelve and a half years as Sheriff.

Mr. McCain said he just knows he is a numbers guy, so the thing he looks for, if he were sitting in their seat, would be the data of how they compare per capita with other Counties. He then asked if the State provides that. He said, with education, he can tell them every single County and compare teacher pay, and they can compare per capita for the number of teachers per population per County. He said they can do that up and down the board to see where they stand to identify if the need is there. He then asked if they have access to that kind of data, to which Sheriff Lewis responded, they do have access to that kind of data, and he will tell Council that they are understaffed, and underfunded. He clarified, when he says underfunded, they have 102,000 people roughly in Wicomico County. He then asked if they have any idea how many people there are in Queen Anne's County, to which Mr. Hastings responded, 48,000. Sheriff Lewis said the Sheriff up there is making \$130,000 a year, and he is stuck here at \$95,000, and he is not going to complain about that, but what he will talk about are the number of deputies they have in their schools and patrolling the roads versus what Wicomico County has. He said they work with bare numbers here in Wicomico County, and often times people are terrified because there are only three or four deputies patrolling this entire County, all 374 square miles at any given time. He said the Maryland State Police has what they call minimum requirements, which is two or three troopers working the County. He said, when he attends their morning briefings at 9:00 a.m. Monday through Friday, and he attends this meeting every weekday morning, he sees all of the backup assistance they are given from the State Police and the City, and they are bare numbers, like Wicomico County's are. He said they need more deputies because the demand for services in the City today is greater than it has ever been. He said the bulk of their search warrants they are doing right now are in

the City. He said they are staying extremely busy, and he says that only because they can imagine their urban area is where the bulk of their crime is going to be. He said even all of the drug traffickers in the County are coming into the City to get the bulk of their dope, and then going back out into the County to sell it, so they are very, very busy in this City all the time. He said they are doing the best job they can, and he is confident they will continue doing that, but they need more manpower, there is no question about it. Captain Richardson said the one thing they have been doing for several years is throwing overtime at this problem to try to get their numbers up on a Friday night when it is the busiest, but they are at the point now where deputies are not volunteering for any more overtime. He explained, they are getting off midnight shift, and either being assigned to go to the courts on overtime because they are short, or they are going to court on their off time, so they are constantly being tasked with more and more to do, so the voluntary overtime is hard to fill now. Mr. McCain said they have to balance that against quality of life too, and they need to be home with their families at some point, to which Sheriff Lewis responded, absolutely. Captain Richardson said they also have mandatory minimums. He explained, if there is a guy getting off at 8:00 in the morning after working since midnight, but there is a need in the court, that need comes first, so they are being held over whether it is voluntary or voluntold, and they are still staying for overtime. He said they are getting to the point where overtime is no longer a quick fix, but it is a constant problem. He said, when they get these new deputies available to go in the courts or other units, their overtime should decrease a little bit. He clarified, it is not going to be a huge decrease, and will probably not match the amount they have to pay them, but it is going to be somewhat of a buffer to the cost that three new deputies are going to cost them. Mr. Cannon said that is the first thing he looked at, and it is still pretty much the same on overtime, but he realizes they have to sort of pace themselves through that, and it is not something for which they are going to be able to make any radical guess. Sheriff Lewis said their newer deputies are more inclined to work those overtime assignments than those who have been on the job for a while. He said they have more energy, more stamina, and less commitments.

Mr. Cannon said he did not flinch when he saw the three positions they are looking for, but he did not know about the Haitian, which he thinks is very good because the discussions come up so many times about how hard it is to find any minorities in this profession, and multilingual is unbelievable. He said he has been to a lot of Haitian events recently, and in the last year he has been to more Haitian events than in the last ten years, to which Sheriff Lewis responded, so has he, and he has immensely enjoyed being with them and learning about them. Mr. Cannon said they are very anxious to be a part of the community, and to engage, and the numbers are increasing, as they have seen through the Board of Education as well, so to have an officer who can speak Creole he thinks is really fantastic. Sheriff Lewis said, when the Chief Deputy brought this prospective candidate in his office a couple of weeks ago, he was so enamored with his presence, with what he had to say, his reason for wanting to be in law enforcement, and what he wanted to do for the community. He said then a picture was sent to him by the Chief Deputy last week while he was in Myrtle Beach on vacation saying this guy has agreed, if they get the funding, to come with the County. He clarified, he is being courted by a number of law enforcement agencies right now. Mr. Cannon said President Ashanti spoke earlier during Public Comments, and the first thing she stated was she was glad to see Sheriff Lewis had brought this individual into his office, to which Sheriff Lewis responded, absolutely. Mr. Holloway asked if they have any Spanish officers, to which Sheriff Lewis responded, they have Spanish speaking officers, but they do not have any Spanish officers. He said the only one the City has is Milton Rodriguez, who is a very tenured employee who has been there forever, and they often have to rely on him to translate because there is a growing Hispanic community here in Wicomico County, but, no, they do not have any Spanish officers. Mr. Dodd said he is used a lot as a translator, to which Sheriff Lewis responded, absolutely.

Mr. Cannon said he wants to ask them about the vehicle leases. He said he noticed they transferred to a lease program in 2020 with about a \$26,000 savings, but what it did not state, and what he could not really find, was how many vehicles they are talking about as far as the lease program. Captain Richardson said, technically, 2019 was their first year of the lease from the amount they use this year towards the lease. He said the eight vehicles they had coming in were taken over by the lease, and they were actually purchased by Enterprise and then brought to their fleet. He said, in addition to those, they will be adding 25 additional vehicles in the next year, and that will be for the current lease. He clarified, they are already in the first year of the lease for all 33 vehicles. Mr. Cannon asked if the total is 33, to which Captain Richardson responded, that is correct. He said it is eight from this current year, and the additional years add an additional 25 vehicles, and they are already starting to see the first vehicles of those arrive to the uplifters. He said they have already been registered, and they are at the uplifters now, but it is going to take them a while to melt in a fleet of this many vehicles. He said, when they first sold the lease program, they would get an additional lease the next year, but they decided right away that there was no way they could handle any more incoming vehicles throughout the year and be able to uplift them and melt them into their fleet, down lift vehicles, remove them from the fleet, and then bring these into the fleet, so that is why they did not ask for any additional funds. He said the funds they have asked for this year are actually the second year lease for the total of 33 vehicles, and that will dramatically change their fleet overnight. Mr. Cannon asked if they will sell the old vehicles, or does the lease company have something to do with those, to which Captain Richardson responded, the vehicles that are owned by the County now will not have any part of that, and will be sold by Pete Richardson Auctions, and they average about \$800 a piece, if they get that. He said, unfortunately, by the time they reach there, some of them have already been deadlined for major repairs that he would not pay for to bring a vehicle that age back to life. Mr. Cannon said that is what he and other Councilmembers always worried about, that they are driving around in these vehicles that have 220,000 miles, and it is not good to have old vehicles. He said he has never really been sold on the lease program, and he thinks, to a certain degree, it is a quick fix. He said the only analogy he has is with cell phones where nowadays instead of paying \$200 they are paying \$1,200, but nobody thinks about that because they just want to know what they are going to pay per month, so that concerns him. Captain Richardson said he was concerned also, and he has been pitched this for an extended period of time, but they have been throwing \$300,000 at their fleet year after year, and it is creating nothing new, and they are barely bringing in enough new vehicles to take care of the vehicles that are dying on the other end. He said the vehicles that are dying are five years past their lifetime, and have been on life support for way too many years. Mr. Cannon said that is probably the first question he had though. He clarified, leases are very strictly structured on mileage, and he thinks in most of the leases it is 20,000 miles, as far as the term, and he could not imagine that their vehicles were going to stay within that time period and only have 20,000 miles on them, to which Captain Richardson responded, there is no mileage. He said, in fact, he will have Sergeant Taylor come to the table to talk about this. Sergeant Taylor then came before Council, and Sheriff Lewis said Sergeant Chris Taylor is their fleet manager at the Wicomico County Sheriff's Office. Captain Richardson said, in a former life, he was a certified ASC mechanic, so he is his vehicle guy by far. He said he has been helping him with this lease program, and he is very well versed in it, but there is no mileage exception. He said the only mileage issue will be what the resale value of that vehicle is at the end of the term, but they have not sold a vehicle in his 17 years past being a sergeant that brought more than \$1,200 because they have all been so old, and at the end of their life. He said replacing a vehicle after five years is something they have been chasing for a long time, and this is the one chance to do it. He said he has spoken to numerous other agencies that are also trying it, and the biggest thing he is getting from them is that they have been throwing money at this problem for years, and they are not finding a fix, so it is time to try something new, unless they want to throw a lot more money at it. He said, to replace 15 vehicles a year, just off the top of his head, is \$1.5 million. He said, if

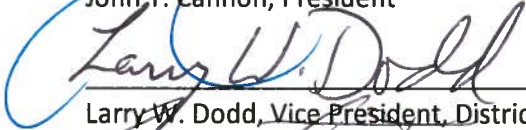
the vehicle costs \$40,000, it is \$40,000 to equip the vehicle. He said, when they take the equipment out of a vehicle that is 12 years old, it has zero value, and they can barely give it away on GovDeals because it is 12-year-old technology. He said the idea of 5-year-old technology going back into a vehicle, whether it is lights and sirens, radios, or weapons, they may see new life on, but they are not seeing any new life at this rate of replacing the vehicle 12 or 13 years into it. He said the Sheriff just mentioned they were chasing an identical vehicle, and their vehicle died on the scene. He said, what if that officer was going to an active shooter situation. Mr. Cannon said some of the cars by the courthouse he cannot imagine getting over 75 miles an hour, to which Captain Richardson responded, those are the backups for road patrol, but they are also the sponge to their maintenance program because he has to be able to keep those vehicles alive. He said, if he told them they need to replace a \$1,200 transmission on an \$800 car, would they manage their money that way? He said he feels bad managing the County's money that way. He said they are blowing through maintenance money just trying to keep their fleet alive, and this is a chance to get a kick start into their fleet, and, at this point, they are running out of darts. He said he talked to the Risk Managers, and even the Internal Auditor, and they told him they will not know until they give this a try. He said, whether they continue with it after year five, and whether they decide to do an additional lease on top of this will be evaluated after they have been in it for a couple of years, and see where they are on mileage and maintenance. He said one thing they are offering is the additional help with maintenance with selecting the right places to go for maintenance because they are managing vehicles they will, ultimately, own as well to resell, and that is what they are counting on to make their money, the resale value. Mr. Cannon said he saw they had some reduction in maintenance expenses, to which Sergeant Taylor responded, absolutely. He said, since they manage this throughout the Nation, they can say a certain model and certain year is going to cost a heck of a lot after a certain mileage, so they really need to shift it down, or move it over because they are bringing the history from all over the Country instead of just the local area. Mr. Hastings asked what the real projections are as far as cost savings over five to ten years, to which Sergeant Taylor responded, \$280,000 savings over ten years. He said they talk about the court cars, and, mechanically, they are kept up, but, when getting in and the seat is worn out, and they are sitting on the frame, or the steering wheel has gotten off, so there are so many other factors in there they are not even fixing, but they would have to if they continued. He said those extras are not in those savings, so, by far, it is a much better condition, but they do not have numbers for that part. Mr. Cannon said what Council was given as part of their layout was the savings they would make in fuel and maintenance, and he sort of expressed to them that they would have those same savings in fuel and maintenance if they purchased vehicles as opposed to leasing. He said sometimes they try to keep it from being apples and oranges, but he was just trying to get the cost effect, and how cost efficient it was to do a lease program as opposed to buying. He said they asked the Internal Auditors to try to evaluate it themselves, but he thinks the determination has been they will have to do a wait and see type thing. He said, again, as it is right now, they have a lot of cars on the road that just have to be off the road. Captain Richardson said the idea is being able to push 33 cars into their fleet, and, if they get those three new positions, they will push 30 vehicles out the other side, and that is an immediate. He said it is one for one, except they may keep three additional ones for the three additional deputies coming in. He said that is 30 of their biggest maintenance problem vehicles that will go out of the fleet between now and when he sees Council this time next year. Sergeant Taylor said, for the next ten going to auction, he will be surprised if they get \$800 because most of them are major repair items right now. Sheriff Lewis said they decided to try this because they are not getting ahead by doing what they are doing now. He said they are falling farther and farther behind, so they are excited to see how this is going to work out for them. He said, as Captain Richardson said, they will certainly reevaluate this year after year to see if this is fiscally responsible for them, and for the County. Mr. Dodd said it sounds like a good thing, and he does not know how long they have been successful, but usually good things do not last long, to which Sergeant Taylor responded, they just started in Maryland because

the law changed, but they have been doing this Nationally for a while now. He said it is now just fresh here because before they were taxed, even though a Government entity had them, but that changed. He said they are the third County in Maryland to entertain it, and, since Wicomico, there have been three more Counties that have signed on. Sheriff Lewis said it is what the Federal Government does exclusively, the FBI, DEA, and homeland security all lease their vehicles. Captain Richardson said their deputy who is in the marshal's unit right now is driving a leased Dodge pickup truck. Sergeant Taylor clarified, there is no mileage restriction, and there is no year restriction, so if they wanted to make it shorter or longer, it is all open ended. Sheriff Lewis said they have a lot of flexibility to meet their needs.


Mr. McCain said he has one quick expense question. He said their briefing material takes them all the way back to 2016. He then asked what happened on hospitalization with the number, to which Mrs. Hurley responded, in fiscal year 2016, the benefits were added to individual Departments. Captain Richardson explained, prior to 2016, everything stayed with Human Resources, so that is why that number jumped. He said it is the same thing in that they did not have an electric bill until about two year ago. He said they were trying to get the true cost of running each Department, and they now get their own electric bill, so they now have buy-in on keeping their electric bill low because, if he can save money on electric, he can ask for more money somewhere else. Mr. Holloway said that is truth in financing, to which Captain Richardson responded, that is what they were trying to create, and that is why they picked up that expense. Mr. Holloway said he was arguing that point the other day about County Roads going out and doing work at the Airport and not getting paid for it, and it is the same with this. There was no further discussion.



John T. Cannon, President




Larry W. Dodd, Vice President, District 3

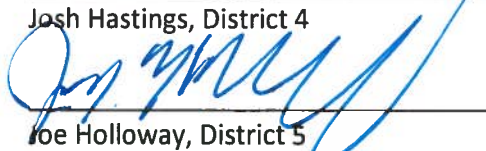


Ernest F. Davis, District 1

Marc Kilmer, District 2



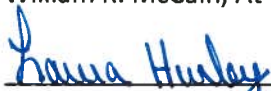
Josh Hastings, District 4



Joe Holloway, District 5



William R. McCain, At-Large



Laura Hurley, Council Administrator