

Jacksonville Sheriff's Strategic Initiative

Resources Task Force

Charge to Committee:

The Resources Task Force was charged by Sheriff Mike Williams and Lead Strategic Initiative Chair Tim Cost with looking, from a macro level, at the overall resources needed by the JSO to effectively and efficiently carry out its mission of protecting the people of the City of Jacksonville, Florida.

Committee Members:

Jim Casey – Chair – FBI Special Agent in Charge (Ret.), Vice President-Asset Protection, Stein Mart

Bill Bond – Private Investor, Former Banker

Debbie Buckland – Jacksonville Market President-BB&T Bank

Bland Cologne – Owner/President-First Coast Security Services, Inc.

Tami Glover – Owner/Broker-Remax WaterMarke

Michael Hallett – Professor of Criminology and Criminal Justice-University of North Florida

Tony Hansberry – Presiding Elder, Suwanee North Jacksonville District, AME Church

Jack Meeks – Jack Meeks & Associates, CPAs

Drew Messer – President, Vineyard Partners

Kent Stermon – COO-TMM, Inc.

Charlie Wilson – Wilson & Johns P.A.

Chief Larry Schmitt – JSO Liaison

Amy Winstead – JSO Administrative Assistant

Executive Summary:

Put some of the recommendations at the beginning in the exe summary

The Resources Task Force was both thankful and challenged by the broad mandate to consider the issue of resources writ-large for the new Sheriff of the JSO. We took the mandate to mean nothing from a resource standpoint including personnel, equipment, vehicles, facilities, etc. was off the table. During the first meeting it was quickly concluded however that the Task Force could not efficiently look at resources from such a broad perspective and that it instead needed to look at a few narrow but important issues. Thus the Task Force came to quickly recognize that personnel resources would be the focus of their work.¹ As a result of its work, the Task Force concluded it should be a significant priority for the City of Jacksonville to:

- **Consider a reasonable millage increase bringing Jacksonville into line with other Florida metropolitan cities to fund city services;**
- **Increase the number of JSO officers that are currently serving;**
- **Increase the pay and benefits of the JSO officers currently serving;**
- **Take steps to insure they have a competitive and reliable pension plan moving forward.**

A significant amount of the Task Force's time was spent researching and discussing personnel resources from what turned out to be three perspectives. The first was how does the City of Jacksonville and the JSO compare to other jurisdictions and law enforcement agencies, if at all, in the United States? The second question surrounded the correlation, again if any, between salary, benefits, and especially the retirement issue, and the ability of JSO to keep and retain quality police officers. (And what are the costs both in dollars and quality of policing if it fails to do so?) The third key area of inquiry surrounded significant quality of life issues in Jacksonville, the city's national reputation, and the ability to pay for all city services including policing.

The Task Force concluded the City of Jacksonville, and the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office is rather unlike any other city in the country for a number of reasons. Geographically, at 875 square miles it is well recognized that Jacksonville is the largest city in the United States in land mass. While a number of other large metropolitan areas have undergone consolidation agreements, we found that none appeared to have the wide ranging effect on city services (including the consolidation of school districts,) as did Jacksonville's consolidation in 1968. Of the major metropolitan cities that have undergone consolidation, we found only one other jurisdiction, (Las Vegas Metro,) where an elected sheriff operates as de facto chief of police, a position usually appointed by the mayor, city council or

¹ The Task Force spent some time and considered research on the issue of police body cameras due to it being highly topical in the news recently. Our limited look at the issue determined from a resource standpoint, police body cameras are a complex endeavor and that all costs including the initial investment of cameras for all officers, replacement/end of useful life expenses, streaming of data, data storage, and manpower to review video for prosecution as well as privacy/records request purposes, needs to be considered. We believe police body cameras are a much more expensive proposition than might appear at first blush, and their implementation is oversimplified in the media.

city manager. We found that compared to other major cities in the United States and in Florida, there are far fewer police officers by almost every measure including per capita, by crime problem, spending, and certainly by geography. We also found that compared to other large cities in the United States and in Florida, Jacksonville police officers are paid a lower salary and receive less generous (and secure) retirement benefits.

Lastly, the Task Force looked at overall city resources; asking ourselves and the readers of this report how it is we pay for quality of life services in Jacksonville? The Task Force concluded that by almost all measures of resources availability, the canard often proffered by citizens and politicians of both parties that Jacksonville has been a city trying to get by on the cheap for a long time, was mostly true. The Task Force acknowledged some recent hard work being done by the Mayor and the State Legislature and Governor to address the pension issues was mostly a step in the right direction, but also concluded that more needed to be done especially on the millage issue.

Issue: Police Officer Personnel Resources

Background: We noted above that Jacksonville is unlike other large metropolitan cities in the United States. This is mostly because of its huge land mass of 875 square miles, population of approximately 835,000, consolidated form of government, and concerning law enforcement, that it's police officers are led by an elected sheriff versus a more traditionally appointed chief of police. To the extent Jacksonville resembles other consolidated governments; we looked at the cities of Miami-Dade, Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Las Vegas-Metro, and Indianapolis-Metro. As alluded to above, Miami-Dade, Charlotte-Mecklenburg, and Indianapolis-Metro have chiefs of police who are appointed versus elected. Indianapolis (Marion County) and Mecklenburg also have a sheriff and a sheriff's department that handles civil process, court security and jail functions. Miami-Dade has a police department led by an appointed Police Director, but who oversees some traditional sheriff's department functions in addition to policing. He also meets with and belongs to the Florida Sheriff's Association.

In order, Las Vegas has a population of 1.5 million, Miami-Dade a population of 1.1 million, Charlotte and Mecklenburg 1 million (90% of whom live in the city of Charlotte,) Indianapolis and Marion County 939,000, (90% of whom live in the city of Indianapolis,) and Jacksonville 919,000. None of these jurisdictions have the geographic challenges as does JSO and the city of Jacksonville. Comparing numbers of sworn police officers, Miami-Dade has 2,900, Las Vegas Metro has 2000, Indianapolis Metro has 1,700, Charlotte-Mecklenburg has 1600, and Jacksonville has 1,600. Although this 1,600 number does not include JSO corrections officers, a separate sheriff's office such as Marion County, Indiana and Mecklenburg, NC is likely a force multiplier in terms of some of the workload, and some other law enforcement responsibilities.

Comparing these jurisdictions by Uniform Crime Reporting Statistics (violent crime/murder) we see that Las Vegas leads with 11,374 (97 murders), Indianapolis 10,479 (129 murders), Miami-Dade 6057 (87 murders), Jacksonville 5246 (93 murders), and Charlotte-Mecklenburg 5093 (59 murders).²

We next looked at starting salaries and educational requirements for these jurisdictions and found that Miami-Dade had a starting salary of \$50,490 and requiring a high school diploma, followed closely by Las Vegas Metro with a salary of \$50,460 and a high school diploma. Next was Charlotte Mecklenburg with a salary of \$41,081 with a high school diploma, Indianapolis Metro at \$39,446 with a high school diploma and Jacksonville at \$36,240. Recently, JSO required a bachelor's degree although Sheriff Williams changed the requirement to allow for military experience in lieu of some education.

Comparing the starting salaries of JSO officers to other large Florida cities and counties we find Jacksonville to be the lowest paid. The Tampa Police Department starts at \$47,320, Orlando Police Department \$46,631, Pinellas County Sheriff's Office \$45,500, and Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office \$47,320. Only Tampa and Hillsborough required an AA degree. The highest paying (starting pay) departments in Florida include Broward County School PD \$60,873, Sunrise PD \$57,963, and Hillsborough Beach PD \$56,344.

The Task Force interviewed then FOP president Steve Amos who advised a far wider problem was the rate at which these other Florida departments attained their top pay, which was faster and higher than JSO. According to Mr. Amos not only did this hinder the ability of JSO to attract the best qualified candidates to become police officers, but other jurisdictions in Florida were in effect "poaching" JSO officers with five to ten years' experience by offering them a higher current rate of pay to transfer to their departments, with better and more stable retirement programs. Reportedly, a half dozen specially trained officers in SWAT and bomb detection were lured to departments in Colorado with significantly higher pay and benefits. Again according to Mr. Amos, JSO did not offer the same transfer benefits to qualified and trained police officers who might be seeking to transfer to JSO in that they were required to start at the bottom of the JSO pay scale, and attend the entire training academy.

The Task Force looked at U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) ratio data comparing populations served by the number of police officers serving those jurisdictions across the United States. It is noted that the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), which presents this BJS data in its publications cautions against making staffing decisions based solely on ratio data and said that staffing "is a complex endeavor which requires consideration of an extensive series of factors and a sizable body of reliable, current data."³ Nevertheless, DOJ/BJS

² The Task Force used statistics from the 2013 FBI UCR Data. It is noted that we refer to population, law enforcement officers, and crime data for that portion of Miami-Dade covered by the Miami-Dade Police Department. According to FDLE there are 27 other police departments in Dade County with an overall population of 2.6 million people. In all of Dade County there were 17,239 violent crimes of which 229 were murders.

³ In 2007 JSO retained Matrix Consulting Group to conduct a detailed operations audit of the type recommended by the IACP for staffing decisions. Among the several findings of the report were that the City was on the verge of

reports that for jurisdictions with populations of more than 250,000 persons, the average full time law enforcement officers per 1,000 residents equaled 2.5. Thus for a city with Jacksonville's population that would equal approximately 2150 officers, or approximately 550 more than it currently has. We further believe as noted above that Jacksonville's sprawling geography makes this statistic more significant.

The Task Force concluded based on this data that JSO police officers are among the highest educated and lowest paid compared to other major cities in Florida, as well as compared to four other somewhat similar consolidated city-county governments in the United States. We also concluded there are fewer JSO officers per capita, policing a jurisdiction with higher crime rates than most of these other jurisdictions, across a much larger geography than any of them. Further, their benefits are less generous and as discussed below, less secure than in many, if not most of these other cities we researched.

Issue: Benefits, Retirement and Retention

Background: The Task Force assigned to explore resource challenges facing JSO found that the men and women of the JSO are caught between the fiscal contradictions of Duval County's consolidated government, while facing increasing crime rates, perpetual high violence, and loss of peer employees to other agencies. These contradictions threaten the long-term viability and competitiveness of the agency in terms of recruitment and employee turnover, as well as morale and operational effectiveness. Operating in the context of an acute budget crises driven by accumulating pension debt across multiple funds, not just the Police and Fire Pension Fund, employees of the Jacksonville Sheriff's office have made repeated sacrifices in terms of de facto pay cuts, loss of benefits, and increasing workload due to increased turnover. As part of our analysis, the Task Force found that since 2009, when efforts to dramatically cut employee retirement benefits in Jacksonville took center stage, employee attrition at JSO (driven by an abrupt increase in resignations and early retirements) doubled. A close look at the data in JSO's Department of Corrections, moreover, reveals an ongoing and costly reliance upon overtime payments to corrections staff-costing taxpayers more than sufficient staffing would, potentially jeopardizing the health and wellbeing of JSO Corrections officers and inmates. Finally, in work done by the pension task force convened by Alvin Brown, analysis showed replacement costs for each officer who leaves JSO prior to retirement costs approximately \$100,000 each.⁴

We found that multi-pronged effort to define the cause of Jacksonville's pension crisis as being driven by lavish public employee benefits mischaracterizes the problem and hurts employee morale, not least because it is inaccurate. Generations of Jacksonville's city leaders, across multiple election cycles and involving members of both political parties have taken advantage of sometimes increasing equity markets to lower pension obligations, (the so-called pension holidays.) The benefits packages promised to public employees were not in fact overly generous and ultimately failed to compete with

losing significant tax revenue (which turned out to be accurate,) and that proactivity for patrol needed to be increased from 35% to 40%.

⁴ Attorney Ted Delegal letter to Mayor Lenny Curry and City Council (See Appendix)

those of surrounding jurisdictions.⁵ The Task Force found that for at least three decades, millage rates too low to support Jacksonville's civic infrastructure as Florida's largest geographic city, created a situation identified by JCCI as "unsustainable."⁶ Already low property tax rates, insufficient to adequately fund the city's complex civic needs and even basic civic infrastructure, were at times cut even further. As the 2009 JCCI report, *Our Money, Our City; Financing Jacksonville's Future*, investigating Jacksonville's pension crisis summarized the concern:

"The first study in JCCI's 35-year history was Local Government Finance, in 1977. The volunteers found Jacksonville's financial position "to be basically sound, with the exception of the underfunding of its pension plans."⁷

In short, after an extensive review, we believe that the evidence shows the cause of Jacksonville's pension crisis, which again extends beyond the retirement funds of police and fire to include two additional plans (that of general employees and correctional officers,) demonstrates a broader pattern of underfunding due to inadequate millage rates. Not only did JCCI diagnose Jacksonville's low millage rate as the root cause of Jacksonville's pension crisis, but former Republican mayor John Peyton did as well.⁸ Mayor Peyton's plan, entitled *FixItNow*, was predicated on the evidence that Jacksonville's property tax rates established what he called "government on the cheap," stating that Jacksonville "is underinvesting in every category relative to our peer cities, making us uncompetitive as we try to grow this economy."⁹ Finally, as we noted above, on a per capita basis Jacksonville has far fewer officers and public safety resources to adequately meet local demands.

In summary, we have great concerns about increasingly high turnover, shrinking morale, and perpetually dangerous conditions affecting employees of the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office. We believe that when adequately informed of these problems, Jacksonville's citizens will strongly support modest increases in property tax rates necessary to keep Jacksonville safe and competitive.

Issue: Paying for City Services

Background: As alluded to above, the decreases in millage rates started in 1995 and continued for thirteen years in a row until 2007. At the same time, the unfunded liability in the Police and Fire Pension Fund went from \$53 Million in 1993, to \$554 Million in 2007, and is currently \$1.6 Billion. The current liability for all of the City's pension plans is \$3 Billion. We mentioned former Mayor Peyton's "government on the cheap" comment above and note that is not a view unique just to Mayor Peyton. Like many other cities in the South, Jacksonville has become a destination for people looking to escape the higher costs of living, including taxes, associated with the Northeast

⁵ <http://jacksonville.com/news/metro/2014-04-19/story/retirement-benefits-come-early-often-police-firefighters-jacksonville>

⁶ <http://www.coj.net/retirement-reform/docs/rr-taskforce/background-information/jcci-cityfinances.aspx>

⁷ Ibid 6

⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zKnyGWYQ9Vg>

⁹ Ibid 8

and Midwest sections of the country. But the Task Force believes most of these individuals are not looking for simply a “cheap” place to live, but a “great” place to live. This is no truer than right now when several well-known financial and tech companies are looking to make major investments by moving into Jacksonville, bringing with them thousands of good paying jobs for a young and educated workforce. We believe that in the past the City has missed opportunities to better market itself as a business-friendly, technology-oriented, warm-weather, and reasonable tax location in which to live and do commerce.

The Task Force believes that compared to the other metropolitan regions of Florida, specifically Miami-Dade, Tampa-Hillsborough, and Orlando-Orange, our millage is significantly below these jurisdictions to our detriment. For example, if Jacksonville’s millage were comparable to Miami-Dade and Tampa-Hillsborough, we would raise approximately \$150-\$250 Million additional dollars of revenue per year, and we find nothing in quality of life or costs of living that warrant a substantially lower millage than these other Florida cities.

The Task Force strongly believes that if we as a City fail to adequately and quickly address all of these financial problems which would lead to a stronger JSO with more officers, then the citizens of Jacksonville can anticipate longer police response times, increases in violent crime, continued loss of experienced police officers, and a less effective Jacksonville Sheriff’s Office performing the functions the citizens of the City need them to do.

Recommendations:

1. Combine the current sales tax plan with reasonable millage increases to fund additional hiring of JSO employees, starting with Corrections officers. The current sales tax plan, while laudable, leaves inadequate millage rates in place; a concern since all assets generated by the sales tax must be given over to pension debt. We believe the modest short term revenues generated by the sales tax offsetting debt payments are still insufficient to meet the city’s needs, based on the evidence. There is also the concern that the current plan actually effectuates a decrease in payments on the city’s debt.¹⁰
2. Increase the number of JSO police officers by approximately 400 to a total of approximately 2000 to more adequately reflect the population, geography, crime problems, and workload of the current officers.
3. Increase starting salaries of JSO police officers so that it is more competitive with surrounding jurisdictions as well as the other metropolitan cities in Florida.
4. Continue efforts to stabilize the current Police and Fire Pension Fund keeping all options open including; a 401K option as part of a defined benefit retirement; potentially merging all

¹⁰ <http://m.jacksonville.com/news/metro/2016-02-18/story/currys-plan-would-leave-pension-plans-only-partially-funded-after-30#article=67961F355D9081DA6202C21D6F2DA9BC07CC>

of the City's retirement programs to leverage scale and fees; and exploring merging with the Florida Retirement System.

Appendix – Data Summary:

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