

The City Council of Plain City had a **work session** on Thursday, March 16, 2017, at City Hall beginning at 5:30 p.m.

Present: Mayor Bruce Higley, Councilmembers Buddy Sadler, Brett Ferrin, Natalie Hale (arrived approx. 6:30 pm) and Brad Searle
Excused: Councilmember Mike McKean
Staff: Diane Hirschi, Mike Kerswell, Bren Edwards, Steve Davis
Also in Attendance: Sheriff Terry Thompson, Klint Anderson, Stephanie Ebert, Matt Jensen and James Ebert

The purpose of this work meeting is to hear a presentation by the Weber County Sheriff's Office on the contract beginning July 1, 2017. Weber County Sheriff's Office spokesman, Klint Anderson introduced himself and the other department representatives that would be assisting with the presentation. He had previously issued a printed outline of the main points he would be covering to the members of the Council and City Staff. Chief Anderson began the presentation with a discussion of the history of the Plain City/Weber County Sheriff's Office unified law enforcement undertakings. He then prefaced the elements to follow, expressing anxiety over the necessary restructuring of the contract that has been in place – soon to be up for renewal. Chief Anderson reported, mayors of some cities located within Weber County that do not contract with the Weber County Sheriff's Office have challenged the fairness of tax money allocation, claiming subsidization of cities that use county sheriff services by those that do not. He acknowledged that, though a portion of county property taxes goes to law enforcement services, the revenue is notably divided and extended to all services provided by Weber County. Chief Anderson summed up the results of the debate: An eight percent decrease in Weber County Sheriff's Office funding from the Weber County budget. Eliminating personnel or services is not an acceptable means of offsetting the impact. The deficiency will need to be made up for through renegotiation of terms with cities that commission the Department for services. Mayors of contracted cities and representatives of the Weber County Sheriff's Office met to devise an agreement that would minimize city budget strains due to the added cost while moderately providing the support needed by the Weber County Sheriff's Office to adequately serve their communities. The terms of the agreement were conveyed. An explanation of how the Weber County Sheriff's Office attends to the needs of Plain City in an efficient manner through flexible deployment was given.

Councilmember Searle asked about a marked decrease in citations issued within Plain City boundaries. Chief Anderson indicated other cities with historically higher needs have seen a trend toward fewer citations as well. Councilmember Searle calculated the increased cost and asked for clarification on services offered with the proposed contract. Chief Anderson answered, the services provided would be the same as those offered in the previous agreement. He continued, portraying examples of excellent law enforcement and public safety services that the Weber County Sheriff's Office has delivered in Plain City and neighboring areas. He assured those present that when contracted with the Weber County Sheriff's Office, the resources of whole department are made available to the city. Councilmember Sadler inquired, how diminished demands affect contract costs. Chief Anderson responded, contract numbers are based on population and historic call data. When the needs of a community are low, it is reflected in the contract price. Councilmember Sadler contrasted the call volume expected from Plain City with that from Huntsville and unincorporated areas of Weber County. Councilmember Ferrin asked if the contract can be revised to meet the current budget by eliminating some provisions. County Commissioner, James Ebert spoke to the assurance of full safety the proposed agreement provides. He advised the contract does not include anything that is not needed to assure full safety. Compromise of safety would disqualify a counteroffer. Councilmember Ferrin asked if a county assessment for sheriff services would continue to be required of Plain City should the city incorporate its own police agency. He also queried about the effect that measure would have on the assessment percentages for the remaining contracted communities. Chief Anderson stated, no city will be charged for service if service is not received. The loss of revenue due to a city deciding not to renew their contract will not be passed on to other communities but would necessarily cause cutbacks in the sheriff's department, including laying off personnel. Commissioner Ebert reiterated, the proposed contract is designed to provide services deemed necessary for full safety and includes nothing extra. The proposed operation has been examined and cut as far as it can be and still be effective. Mayor Higley asked for verification of the contract renewal date. Sheriff's Office representative, Stephanie Ebert responded, the current contract expires June 30, 2017. She noted, a response to the proposed contract is sought, prior to March 31, 2017. Councilmember Searle appealed for alternatives to contracting with the Weber County Sheriff's Office. Councilmember Sadler said he would like to explore other options.

Mayor Higley reminded the Council that the subject has been up for discussion and reviewed over a period of several months. In his opinion, the matter has been sufficiently examined to make a decision by the deadline.

Commissioner Ebert promised a generous transition if a decision is made to forego the Weber County Sheriff's Office proposal. He added, the March 31st pronouncement date was requested to help the Sheriff's Office in planning future staffing pledges. Service will not be diminished until everything is in place to allow for a safe transition. Stephanie Ebert referred to a six month "out clause", included in the proposed agreement. She restated the purpose of the March 31st pronouncement date – to give direction and assistance to transition planning.

Councilmember Searle inquired if the option of a city operated law enforcement and public safety department has been adequately analyzed. Mayor Higley indicated, the option has been scrutinized and would cost double the proposed contract price of the Weber County Sheriff's Office proposal. Stephanie Ebert recounted Chief Anderson's explanation of how some of the increased funding needs are being buffered by the Sheriff's Department, according to the agreement made with contract city mayors. She pointed to the recent population growth of Plain City and expected development as factors to consider whilst deliberating over other options. Mayor Higley considered the presented information, adequate. He deemed the allotted transition time, acceptable. He reaffirmed his opinion that the expense of forming a city police department would be excessive. Councilmember Ferrin recalled a period when Plain City had its own police department. He believed it was in 1998. Sheriff Terry Thompson stated, at that time, Weber County Sheriff's Office was assisting the Plain City Police Department with tasks. City Treasurer, Steve Davis asked for a date to expect the increased cost be imposed. He asked for clarification on what the additional funding would be paying for – if additional staff/officers were going to be employed or if the increase was only to offset the percentage decrease of county tax subsidy going to the Department. Commissioner Ebert explained, service would remain the same. He stated, the fee increase would be expected as soon as the contract is signed, not after the transition period. Councilmember Sadler thanked the Weber County Sheriff's Office for the presentation.

The purpose of this segment of the work meeting is to discuss budget requirements and potential service of a permanent Plain City Fire Department staff. Fire Chief, Jeremy Crowton began his presentation with a rundown of services provided by the Plain City Fire Department. He noted areas where improvement is needed. He examined the demand on the Plain City Fire Department over the last three years and perceived an upward trend in calls. He outlined staffing costs and where funding comes from. He spoke of scheduling problems inherent to a volunteer staff. Councilmember Searle compared a staffing model for volunteer personnel to one for the proposed, permanent staff. Chief Crowton reviewed response time variations between a volunteer staffed department and one with staff-in- place, as proposed. He explained the existing coordination terms with Ogden City Fire Department and speculated on how they would be revised with the proposed staffing. He determined, an hourly pay rate of \$15.00 per hour would be offered and hours of duty would qualify as part time employment. Councilmember Sadler asked if fire personnel would be required to obtain and maintain the same certifications as required by Ogden City Fire Department. Chief Crowton answered in the affirmative. He added, the Plain City Fire Department can function as its own agency, if permanently staffed, and can offer enhanced benefit to outside agencies in partnership. Councilmember Sadler requested clarification on the cost breakdown. Chief Crowton delineated a 50 – 50 split of the \$100,000.00 annual funding with Ogden City. \$50,000.00 coming from each entity. Councilmember Searle asked if there were additional Fire Department needs this year. Chief Crowton answered in the affirmative, and advised, the additional needs would be deferred in light of the increased budget demands for Weber County Sheriff's Office services. Mayor Higley addressed Ogden City Fire Department's motives in partnering with Plain City Fire Department, declaring them to be legitimate. Chief Crowton took ownership of the proposed terms. His motivation, he announced, is to better serve the Plain City citizens with quicker response times and greater qualification. The proposal was set for further discussion in an upcoming work meeting.

The work meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

City Recorder

Mayor

Date approved