



To: Budget Office, County Manager and County Council
From: Sheriff John Horch
Date: August 11, 2025
Subject: 2026 Annual Budget Process – Executive Summary of General Fund Needs

Issue or Issues that Need to be Considered by Council

The Sheriff's Office requests \$147,900 in ongoing budget capacity to support the mandatory training of newly hired and lateral deputies to the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Center's (CJTC) Basic Law Enforcement Academy (BLEA), in accordance with RCW 43.101.200.

Rule

RCW 43.101.200- Law enforcement personnel—Basic law enforcement training required—Commission to provide.

Analysis

This statute mandates that all law enforcement personnel shall engage in basic law enforcement training that complies with standards adopted by the commission. Successful completion of basic training is a requisite for continuing employment as a deputy sheriff.

Previously, CJTC provided funding for deputies to attend this training, but continued financing was not approved with state budget cuts. Beginning July 1, 2025, the state reinstated the 25% cost share for the CJTC Basic Law Enforcement Academy. The cost to attend BLEA is \$7,395.00 per person.

CCSO is projecting that an average of 20 deputies per year will need to be sent to BLEA based on current hiring and attrition trends. This will result in an increase of \$147,900, which our office will need to bear. Given our historical staffing levels, this will need to be an on-going expense.

Conclusion

Without dedicated funding, our ability to send deputies to BLEA in a timely manner will be compromised. This would impact public safety and operational readiness, especially given current staffing shortages in law enforcement statewide.

We appreciate your support in ensuring we continue to meet our state-mandated legal obligation and supporting public safety and community trust.



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The Sheriff's Office requests one-time funding of \$79,500 for the initial purchase of hardware, software and training on the Cellebrite Digital Intelligence Investigative Platform and its components and on-going funding of \$9,300 per year for continued access to the software. According to [Cellebrite](#), "high volume of complex digital data are giving criminals the inherent edge in the investigative process. ... Cellebrite's Digital Intelligence Investigative Platform can enable cross-collaboration and help your agency's investigative team to accelerate justice and increase solvability, efficiency, and transparency to criminal investigations."

Rule
N/A

Analysis

Electronic data plays an ever-increasing role in our current society. Cell phones and other electronic devices are present in most investigations conducted by law enforcement. Video, pictures, messages, applications and other digital data stored on electronic devices often serve as evidence to prove or disprove a crime that has been committed and by whom. Often this information can be vital to an investigation and there is an expectation from both the public and juries that law enforcement has access to this electronic data.

Currently our region lacks certified electronic device examiners. The Sheriff's Office employs only one detective with the ability and training to examine electronic devices. This duty is an "additional duty" they must juggle on top of their regular investigatory case load. In the past year, the Sheriff's Office has collected over 920 cell phones during investigations. Due to our current limited capacity to analyze electronic devices (having only one investigator), detectives must prioritize which cell phones are being analyzed leaving valuable information on devices undiscovered. This request would train and certify additional detectives to forensically analyze electronic devices which would allow our agency to analyze more devices and better keep up with the current demand in our community.

Oftentimes, time is the critical factor in investigations. In addition to increasing overall capacity, having additional detectives and equipment would allow the Sheriff's Office to conduct forensic examinations in the field, both providing information to investigators right away and potentially returning the electronic device to the owner, minimizing the time citizens are without their device. A delay in downloading the device also gives suspects time to remotely alter or erase evidence. The current process of collecting the device, submitting it into evidence, downloading it, and then requiring the owner to collect it from evidence can take up to several weeks.

A recent example of the benefits of being able to analyze electronic devices in the field occurred during an investigation into the sexual exploitation of a minor. While serving a search warrant at a residence, Sheriff's Office detectives collected several electronic devices belonging to the residents of the home. In this case, detectives were able to team up with a forensic examiner from another law enforcement agency to analyze



the devices in the field. They were quickly able to eliminate several occupants as suspects and return their cell phones right away. They were also able to identify a possible suspect and obtain information from that person's phone that detectives used during questioning to facilitate a confession and solve their case.

Conclusion

Given the increasing presence of digital data in daily life, this program will enable our agency to more quickly and accurately conduct investigations involving data collected from cell phones, social media and other electronic means. Additional trained investigators and access to the programs and tools in the field will provide a more immediate response for detectives to use. "From crime scene to the courtroom, Cellebrite solutions help investigative teams make disparate data accessible, digestible, and actionable across the full investigation lifecycle." ([Cellebrite](#))



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Issue or Issues that Need to be Considered by Council

The Sheriff's Office requests \$96,383 in ongoing budget capacity to create a new Communications Specialist position, as well as \$10,000 in one-time funding for start-up costs.

Rule
N/A

Analysis

Currently, the Communications Team consists of one full-time Communications Manager and a patrol Sergeant who provides part-time support for Public Information Officer (PIO) duties while balancing other agency responsibilities. The Communications Manager oversees a wide range of high-impact functions, including internal and external communications, media relations, recruitment campaigns, social media strategy, body-worn camera (BWC) video editing, and public engagement initiatives.

This workload has rapidly expanded beyond what a single full-time position can sustain. In comparison, other County departments—such as Public Works and Public Health—have multiple staff members dedicated to supporting similar communications efforts, underscoring the need for additional capacity within the Sheriff's Office.

Adding a Communications Specialist will:

- Strengthen our ability to produce and release BWC footage to promote transparency and maintain public trust.
- Ensure consistent and proactive public messaging.
- Enhance the Sheriff's Office's ability to respond quickly during urgent events and critical incidents.
- Safeguard against communication gaps during staff absences.
- Support continued progress in recruitment, outreach, and community engagement.

Current Communications Demands, that the Communications Manager is responsible for:

- Creating all social media content and strategy across Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and LinkedIn, driving significant audience growth and engagement.
- Editing and releasing BWC video footage from critical incidents to ensure transparency, provide context, and mitigate liability.
- Overseeing media relations, including drafting press releases, coordinating agency interviews, and responding to urgent media inquiries.
- Leading the Recruitment Team and directing innovative campaigns that doubled website traffic in 2025 and are helping to drive a projected 44% increase in deputy hires over 2024.



- Managing internal communications, producing quarterly internal and external newsletters, conducting employee and community surveys, and coordinating community town hall events.
- Producing the Annual Report, Action Plan, and Action Plan updates to track progress and communicate priorities.
- Overseeing the Outreach Unit and leading all Sheriff's Office outreach initiatives and programs to strengthen public trust and engagement.
- Planning community and employee events, including the annual awards show, agency milestones (e.g., 175th anniversary), and Coffee with a Cop outreach meetings.

Key Gaps:

- **Body-Worn Camera Video Editing:** Only the Communications Manager currently has the skills and permissions to edit and release BWC footage. Timely, well-produced video packages, especially during use-of-force incidents, are vital for maintaining public trust, providing context during high-stakes events, and reducing liability.
- **Lack of redundancy:** There is no backup staff with adequate skills to manage communications if the Communications Manager is unavailable. This includes social media publishing, video editing, digital/graphic design, and quarterly internal and community newsletter creation and distribution.

Digital Growth & Public Engagement Metrics

The past year has shown significant growth in community engagement via social media:

- **Facebook**
 - 6.3M users reached (+403.9%)
 - 325,489 content interactions (+85.8%)
 - 31,304 link clicks (+666.1%)
 - 17,774 new followers (+66.1%)
- **Instagram**
 - 1.04M users reached (+278.9%)
 - 4,415 link clicks (+8,200%)
 - Page visits grew 124%

Despite this growth, response rates remain low due to capacity constraints:

- Instagram: 8.8% response rate, 2h 57m average response time
- Facebook: 9.6% response rate, 7h 8m average response time

We therefore request to create a new Communications Specialist position which will report to the Communications Manager. Their primary objective will be to increase the Sheriff's Office's communication capacity, maintain continuity of messaging, enhance public engagement, and support rapid, transparent media responses during critical incidents. Key responsibilities will include:

- Content Creation, Social Media & Website Management
- Body-Worn Camera Video Editing (Critical Incidents)
- Community Engagement Initiatives
- Digital Content & Visual Design



- Internal Communication & Collaboration

Conclusion

If this request is not approved, the Sheriff's Office will continue to rely on a single Communications Manager to manage all internal and external communication efforts for the entire agency, including critical tasks such as body-worn camera video editing, media relations, social media strategy, recruitment outreach, and community engagement. Without additional staffing, the Communications team will face increased delays in response time, a growing risk of communication gaps during emergencies, and a reduced ability to proactively engage with the public.

The lack of redundancy also means that key functions—such as timely release of BWC footage and critical incident communication—could be compromised in the event of staff absence, directly impacting transparency, public trust, and legal risk mitigation. Additionally, outreach, recruitment, and digital engagement efforts may stagnate, despite proven growth in community interaction across social media platforms. In short, failing to expand communication capacity may undermine both operational readiness and the Sheriff's Office's commitment to openness and accountability.



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Issue or Issues that Need to be Considered by Council

The Sheriff's Office is requesting \$2,427,737 in ongoing budget authority to fund 14 new Deputy positions and one new Sergeant position, along with \$4,210,958 in one-time funding for associated start-up costs. The one-time funding will cover the initial purchase of patrol vehicles, body armor, weapons, and other necessary equipment. The ongoing funding will provide for salaries and benefits, recurring operational expenses such as fuel and data lines, and the future replacement of vehicles and equipment to ensure continued operational readiness.

Rule
N/A

Analysis

With growing demands on law enforcement services across Clark County, the Sheriff's Office's enforcement unit is facing increased pressure. The unincorporated area of Clark County has grown by nearly 40,000 residents since 2013 yet staffing levels within the Sheriff's Office have remained largely stagnant due to the lasting impact of the 2008 housing crisis. Projections estimate the unincorporated population will reach 314,584 by 2045, placing even greater demand on support infrastructure.

According to the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (WASPC), the average staffing ratio for enforcement in sheriff's offices statewide is 0.80 deputies per 1,000 residents. The Clark County Sheriff's Office currently operates at 0.57 deputies per 1,000 residents, the lowest deputy staffing ratio among Washington counties. Adding these 15 positions would raise Clark County's ratio to 0.68 deputies per 1,000 residents in 2025, still below the state average but a critical step toward bridging the gap.

Operational Benefits by Unit

Patrol: additional deputies assigned to Patrol will increase the department's visible law enforcement presence, allow for longer and more meaningful engagement with victims and community members, and improve public safety outcomes through faster, more effective response to calls. Increased staffing also provides operational flexibility for mandatory training coverage, reduced reliance on overtime, and more consistent shift scheduling and proactive patrols.

Tactical Detective Unit (TDU) and Traffic Unit: additional detectives assigned to TDU and Traffic will allow both units to be staffed 7 days a week, ensuring consistent case coverage and proactive enforcement. The Traffic Unit is currently backlogged with 24 active cases, limiting its ability to focus on high-visibility traffic enforcement. In 2022, Clark County experienced a record number of traffic fatalities, underscoring the urgent need for enhanced investigative and preventative efforts. The TDU handles serious crimes, including robberies, assaults, property crimes, and auto thefts. With only 3 detectives currently assigned, the unit is unable to provide full-week coverage or address all community crime concerns. Adding personnel would enable the formation of two teams to ensure 7-day coverage and increased investigative bandwidth.



Supervisory Needs: an additional Sergeant to oversee the expanded TDU and Traffic units will strengthen supervisory accountability, decision-making, and operational efficiency. Sergeants play a vital role in ensuring team cohesion, mentoring detectives, and making critical real-time decisions during high-risk or high-profile cases. Adequate supervision also reduces risk, improves compliance with policy and procedures, and boosts morale.

This is a strategic and necessary investment in public safety infrastructure. It responds directly to sustained population growth, rising calls for service and investigative demands, and the need to align with state-recommended staffing standards.

Approving these positions will enable the Sheriff's Office to meet its statutory obligations, reduce crime, improve response times, and build stronger, safer communities throughout Clark County.

Conclusion

If this request is not approved, the Sheriff's Office will continue to face critical staffing shortages across its Patrol, Tactical Detective Unit (TDU), and Traffic divisions, compromising its ability to meet the growing demands of a rapidly expanding community. The consequences will be both operational and public facing.

- **Reduced Response Capacity:** Patrol deputies will have less time to respond to calls, assist victims, or engage in proactive community policing. Longer response times could lead to missed opportunities for crime intervention and resolution, decreasing public trust.
- **Increased Burnout and Overtime Costs:** Existing personnel will continue to shoulder unsustainable workloads, resulting in higher overtime expenditures, decreased morale, and elevated risk of turnover and burnout.
- **Unmet Investigative Demand:** The TDU and Traffic units will remain understaffed, unable to provide 7-day coverage or keep pace with rising caseloads—including critical investigations such as robberies, assaults, and fatal traffic collisions. A backlog of investigations will further delay justice and reduce case clearance rates.
- **Compliance and Risk Issues:** Lack of supervisory coverage in TDU and Traffic limits accountability and oversight, increasing risk exposure related to officer safety, investigative errors, and procedural non-compliance.
- **Staffing Ratio Disparity:** Without this investment, Clark County will remain significantly below the state average deputy-to-resident ratio, continuing to operate as the lowest-staffed sheriff's office in Washington. This gap will only widen as the county's population continues to grow.

Ultimately, failure to approve this request will diminish the Sheriff's Office's ability to deliver timely, effective, and community-focused public safety services, while placing further strain on both personnel and the public.



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Issue or Issues that Need to be Considered by Council

The Sheriff's Office requests one-time funding of \$133,791 to launch a Drone as First Responder (DFR) program at the Clark County Sheriff's Office.

Drone as First Responder (DFR) is a program where drones are stationed at strategic locations like rooftops or other secure locations with geographical areas paired with higher emergency calls for service. When a call for service is received it can be evaluated for drone response. If a drone is determined to be an asset, it can be remotely launched and flown to the scene by a trained Pilot in Command (PIC). The DFR systems commonly allow live videos to be streamed to responding units and command centers. This DFR concept allows for an enhanced capability of making informed decisions while deploying an increase or decrease of appropriate resources. Similar programs are experiencing a significant increase in safety for public service personnel and communities alike.

The DFR program would leverage automated drone technology to provide real-time aerial situational awareness, improve officer safety, reduce response times, and increase operational efficiency.

Rule

N/A

Analysis

This DFR program would serve as a critical force multiplier, enabling the Sheriff's Office to respond rapidly to in-progress events and better allocate personnel. Since 2017 the Clark County Sheriff's Office has experienced significant success with UAS technology, and it has become common practice to deploy a drone on critical events. However, current drone technology requires a trained UAS PIC to drive to the general location of a call for service after the call is broadcasted by dispatch. The UAS equipment is removed from the emergency vehicle and deployed.

Current methodology of deployment requires drive time, decision making to find a suitable launch site, removal and preparation of drone. These current methods of deployment naturally involve delays with drive time and launch site preparation being the main contributors.

The ability to deploy drones immediately upon dispatch allows for early visual assessment of unfolding scenes, providing real-time situational awareness for informed decision making. Once on scene, drones record video, which in turn improve community transparency. The pre-designated launch locations will reduce the wear of equipment and reduce opportunities for human error. It's commonly known that a first responder's delayed arrival can result in an increased probability of negative outcomes or resolve.

A Drone as First Responder program can reduce the need for an emergency vehicle to respond to every call. While data for Clark County's specific geographical area does not exist, data from Chula Vista Police



Departments DFR program indicates a significant decrease of mandated response +/-30% by ground assets for the serviced area (Flight distance). With intelligence gathered by a drone, ground resources can be cancelled or slowed during emergency response. This concept will decrease the probability of emergency vehicle collisions during evolving events. These introduced concepts will in turn reduce fuel consumption, extend emergency vehicle lifespans, all while improving response times.

Data indicates drones will systematically increase the success rate of calls for service while improving safety. Clark County's UAS program statistics were pulled from the most recent data to capture recent trends to provide more accurate relevance.

- 2025 Q1 – 159 logged flights totaling 112.51 hours resulting in 54 Captures (Locates or arrests)
- 2025 Q2 – 149 logged flights totaling 131.64 hours resulting in 44 Captures (Locates or arrests)

Additional geographical research indicates a program success rate greater than current staffing allows to manage. Similar case study was observed with Gresham Oregon Police when their program became too effective at capturing minor retail theft suspects. The efficiency of the program potentially overtasked personnel resulting in a decrease in peer buy in or support of the program. This data indicates a program which would require mediation by the DFR team while either taking primary on the investigations or the disregard of minor investigations.

Evolving the Clark County Sheriff's Office drone program will keep the agency up with current technology. Potential future use could include fire response and medical assists. Drones can aid in structure fire size-up evaluations providing incident commanders with real-time visual information. Additionally, drones could assist with emergency medical requests delivering medical supplies or AEDs. These potential uses would assist with community buy-in and lead to additional program stakeholders.

Conclusion

It is strongly recommended that the Clark County Sheriff's Office launch a four-dock DFR pilot program. This program would significantly enhance emergency response capabilities while mitigating risks during events like active threats, structure fires, medical emergencies, and other critical incidents.

All options are limited to flight distance which is legally three (3) statute miles (sm). Other factors limiting service area (flight distance) are obstacles including weather, structures, terrain, and signal interference. Additionally, the further a drone is required to fly, the less time it will be able to spend on location due to depletion of battery while flying to location.

This specific technology provides fundamental compatibility with the systems the Sheriff's Office already owns and utilizes. Purchasing four docks will provide a scalable path to operational efficiency and enhanced officer safety. Additionally, this option provides features to fit the agency's needs. These options include the ability to:

- Relocate the launch sites as needed.
- Mount launch sites to vehicles as needed.
- Add additional launch sites as needed.
- Sell technology upon program failure.



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Issue or Issues that Need to be Considered by Council

The Sheriff's Office requests one-time funding of \$200,000 to purchase two sets of hearing protection for each of our sworn deputies. This request is essential to safeguard our deputies from occupational hearing loss, a growing and under-addressed risk in law enforcement.

- Set 1: electronic over-the head muffs for firearms training
- Set 2: helmet-mounted hearing protection for field operations.

Rule

Occupational Safety and Health Administration 1910.95- Occupational noise exposure.

Analysis

Deputies are regularly exposed to dangerously loud conditions during their routine duties, including:

- Building searches with an audible alarm or loud machinery
- Protests
- Use of sirens while loud-hailing people inside buildings
- Use of 40mm less lethal launchers
- SWAT distraction devices & explosive breaches
- Firearms training and requalification

Currently, only firearms instructors are issued dedicated personal hearing protection. When training at the range, all other deputies must share and rotate hearing protection. This presents safety, health, and equity issues. Oftentimes, these courses include multiple deputies on the range simultaneously. Our current passive muffs muffle not only gunfire but also critical commands and instructions. Deputies often need to remove their hearing protection to hear the instructors, exposing themselves to sudden gunfire noise and increasing the risk of:

- Hearing damage
- Operational miscommunications under stress
- Firearms mishandling

According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), permanent hearing damage can occur from a single unprotected gunshot over 140dBA. L&I requires hearing protection to be provided to any employee exposed to 85dBA or higher. For context:

- Gas-powered lawn mowers produce 85-90dBA
- Cars produce 70-90dBA
- 9mm handguns produce 160dBA
- AR-15 style rifles produce 165-168dBA



- High caliber (like .50 caliber) rifles produce up to 170dBA
- 12-gauge shotguns produce 155-160dBA
- 40mm launchers produce 140-160dBA

Conclusion

Routine and high-risk operations also expose deputies to loud conditions. In 2024 alone, there were at least two incidents of officer-involved shootings that caused hearing problems. In one incident, a deputy inside the armored vehicle who was near the windshield when it was shot with a .50 caliber projectile sustained hearing damage from the impact on the windshield alone. This incident could have been prevented with helmet-mounted hearing protection.

This request will:

- Ensure full agency-wide hearing protection without burdening deputies
- Mitigate legal and workers' comp risk
- Improve operation communication and safety training environments
- Protect the long-term health of our sworn personnel



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Issue or Issues that Need to be Considered by Council

The Clark County Sheriff's Office respectfully requests one-time funding of **\$14,500,000** for the acquisition and renovation of a new headquarters and administrative facility. This funding will support both the purchase of the building and the necessary renovations to meet the specialized safety, security, and operational requirements of a law enforcement agency.

In addition to the one-time capital request, the Sheriff's Office seeks **\$450,000** for **first-year operations and maintenance** of the facility, and **\$500,000 in ongoing annual budget capacity** to support the facility's long-term operational and maintenance needs.

Although the request is initiated by the Sheriff's Office, ongoing operational funding will be administered through the **Internal Services - Facilities** budget to ensure appropriate oversight and alignment with countywide facility management protocols.

The renovation scope accounts for essential hardening measures and infrastructure modifications required to ensure secure, efficient, and safe operations for staff and visitors. These investments are critical for maintaining a secure environment tailored to the unique needs of law enforcement personnel and the sensitive nature of their work.

Rule
N/A

Analysis

The Clark County Sheriff's Office respectfully requests **\$14,500,000 in one-time funding** to support the **acquisition and renovation of a new headquarters and administrative facility**. This funding is intended to ensure the Sheriff's Office can secure a property that meets its current and future operational, safety, and security needs.

The cost estimate is positioned at the upper end of the anticipated range to provide flexibility in acquiring a facility that is suitably located and sized for law enforcement purposes. Actual expenditures may vary depending on the condition and alignment of the selected building with existing operational requirements. Should a property require minimal modification, overall renovation costs could be lower than projected. However, the total requested amount reflects the level of investment necessary to deliver a secure, functional, and sustainable facility.

This request arises from the County's **planned jail remodel** and the **fire district's need to reclaim space at the Public Safety Complex**, both of which will result in the Sheriff's Office losing its current administrative and operational base. While a specific site has not yet been selected, the Office has clearly identified the space and infrastructure needed to support its essential functions.



The new facility will be critical to maintaining continuity in public safety operations and services, both public facing such as concealed weapons permits, records requests, finger printing services, and alarm permits, as well as operational patrol and investigative duties.

Due to the sensitive and secure nature of law enforcement work, the facility must include **enhanced safety and security features** to ensure the protection of personnel and the integrity of operations. In addition to the one-time funding request, the Sheriff's Office is seeking **\$500,000 in ongoing annual operating budget capacity**, with **\$450,000 allocated for the first year** to cover costs such as utilities, custodial services, and general maintenance. These operating funds will be administered through the **Internal Services – Facilities** budget to ensure proper oversight and alignment with countywide asset management practices.

While the County's investment in other departments—such as enhanced jail infrastructure and expanded fire service capacity—will provide meaningful long-term benefits to the community, these necessary transitions will leave the Sheriff's Office without a permanent operational facility. As such, securing and preparing a new headquarters is **critical to ensuring the continued, uninterrupted delivery of essential law enforcement services to the residents of Clark County**.

Conclusion

Failure to approve this funding request would present substantial operational challenges for the Sheriff's Office. Without a dedicated facility, the department risks displacement without an appropriate location to support its administrative and public-facing functions. This would disrupt core services—including the issuance of Concealed Pistol Licenses (CPLs), records processing, and daily operational coordination—and impair the agency's overall effectiveness.

Moreover, the absence of a secure and purpose-built facility could compromise staff safety and diminish the department's ability to operate in a professional, responsive, and community-focused manner. Without this investment, the Sheriff's Office may be unable to sustain uninterrupted service delivery, ultimately impacting public safety and the County's ability to meet the growing needs of its residents.



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Issue or Issues that Need to be Considered by Council

The Sheriff's Office requests one-time funding of \$82,000 to purchase six mobile protective rifle-rated shields, critical to life-saving equipment that is currently absent from the Sheriff's Office inventory. These shields are essential for protecting deputies and civilians from high-risk incidents involving high-powered rifles.

Rule
N/A

Analysis

The Sheriff's Office currently has no rifle-rated ballistic shields in service.

Mobile rifle shields provide a critical defense for deputies during dangerous engagements involving barricaded suspects, armed confrontation, and active shooters. The current lack of rifle-rated shields is a dangerous gap in our operational capability in an era of rising threats.

Threats involving assault-style weapons have increased, making our current traditional shields (rated for handguns) insufficient in many situations. Mobile rifle-rated shields enable faster, safer entries and approaches to dangerous situations. With them, deputies can advance toward victims under protection, improving survivability for both civilians and law enforcement.

Utilizing the mobile rifle-rated shields, teams can move through structures with cover, minimizing exposure to gunfire. The mobile shields can also provide a non-lethal barrier during protests and high-risk warrant service.

Mobile rifle-rated shields offer protection against high-velocity threats. Modern shields are made from advanced composite materials and are lighter than the older steel versions. They include viewports for better situational awareness and can be mounted on wheels or used as a mobile cover during movement.

Conclusion

With the increased threats from high-powered weapons, mobile protective rifle-rated shields are no longer optional; they are essential. The equipment will directly improve officer safety, increase survivability in active shooter events, and bolster the Sheriff's Office's capacity to protect the community in the most volatile situations.



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Issue or Issues that Need to be Considered by Council

The Sheriff's Office requests one-time funding of \$350,000 to replace our aging rifle platform with a modern short-barreled rifle (SBR) system equipped with suppressors. This request is not a luxury—it is a critical safety and operational upgrade that aligns with current law enforcement standards and directly addresses serious, documented health and tactical deficiencies in our current equipment.

Rule

Occupational Safety and Health Administration 1910.95- Occupational noise exposure.

Analysis

Our current long-barreled rifles were purchased 20 years ago. Not only are these incompatible with modern suppressor technology, resulting in a dangerously long and front-heavy weapon, but they also fail to protect our deputies from preventable, permanent hearing damage during training and tactical operations.

Law enforcement personnel are among the professionals at highest risk for noise-induced hearing loss. In 2024 alone, there were at least two incidents of officer-involved shootings that caused hearing problems. In one of those instances, a suspect pointed his gun at a deputy, forcing the deputy to discharge his rifle; the deputy experienced immediate ear pain, loud ringing and pressure in his ears for three days after this shooting, and eight months later, he is still having hearing problems. L&I has determined he suffered hearing loss from this incident. The other deputies beside him also experienced ear pain, ringing, and completed safety incident reports.

The requested SBR with an integrated suppressor setup significantly reduces the decibel level of gunfire, bringing it below the OSHA threshold for permanent hearing damage. It also reduces the potential long-term medical claims and legal liability for the county.

The requested platform allows for clearer verbal communications during high-stress operations, particularly in team-based entries, reduces muzzle flash, which improves deputy visibility in lowlight or nighttime operations, targets acquisitions without being blinded by each shot, and conceals deputies' positions during tactical deployment. It not only protects the deputies but also community members who happen to be near the area when rifles are used.

A short-barreled rifle is significantly shorter and more maneuverable, especially indoors, in vehicles, or in a close-quarters environment. They also allow for increased accuracy and control. There is reduced recoil and muzzle rise, enabling faster and more accurate follow-up shots and reduced firearm noise, which minimizes public alarm during training or justified shooting.



Conclusion

Failing to modernize our current rifle platform not only puts our personnel at unacceptable and avoidable risk, but it also puts the county at risk of costly long-term medical liability, litigation, and operational failure.

This request is a prudent one-time investment in deputy safety, force readiness, and public confidence.

We urge you to act now to equip our deputies with the tools needed to return home safely after every call.



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Issue or Issues that Need to be Considered by Council

The Sheriff's Office requests \$371,910 in ongoing budget capacity to create five new Support Specialist positions, as well as \$25,000 in one-time funding for start-up costs.

Rule
N/A

Analysis

With growing demands on law enforcement services across Clark County, the Sheriff's Office's civil and administrative units are facing increased pressure. The unincorporated area of Clark County has grown by nearly 40,000 residents since 2013 yet staffing levels within the Sheriff's Office have remained largely stagnant due to the lasting impact of the 2008 housing crisis. Projections estimate the unincorporated population will reach 314,584 by 2045, placing even greater demand on support infrastructure.

According to data from the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (WASPC), the average staffing ratio for civilian support in sheriff's offices statewide is 0.47 civilian employees per 1,000 residents. The Sheriff's Office currently operates at 0.26 civilian employees per 1,000 residents. The addition of these five Support Specialist positions will raise Clark County's ratio to 0.29 per 1,000 residents in 2025, still below the state average but a critical step toward bridging the gap.

Key areas affected by current staffing shortages include:

- **Warrants:** With over 5,000 new warrants entered into the system each year, and an average of 7,000 active warrants to maintain, compliance with RCW 10.31.030 requires all warrants and updates to be entered into state and national systems (WASIC/NCIC) within 72 hours. Delays due to insufficient staffing can pose legal and operational risks for the County.
- **Extraditions:** Since the separation from Jail Services, extradition requests have risen over 124% in the past two years. Support Specialists coordinate legal documentation and travel logistics with agencies nationwide — critical to ensuring deputies can carry out prisoner transports efficiently and lawfully.
- **Civil Services:** The expiration of COVID-19 emergency proclamations has resulted in a surge of evictions and civil process service needs. These duties require careful handling of court documents, scheduling, and interactions with both courts and the public.
- **Criminal Records:** This unit operates 24/7, providing vital support for CCSO deputies and smaller county law enforcement agencies after hours. Staff must be trained across multiple disciplines to provide real-time support for warrants, civil service, and emergency records requests.



Support Specialists are currently overwhelmed by the growing volume of records management, legal paperwork, and interagency coordination. Without relief, the Sheriff's Office risks noncompliance with statutory mandates, reduced efficiency, and a decline in public service quality.

Conclusion

If this request is not approved, the Sheriff's Office will continue to operate with understaffed administrative units, placing increasing strain on existing personnel. This could result in:

- Delayed warrant entries, risking legal liability and public safety.
- Reduced accuracy and compliance in extradition and civil service processes.
- Backlogs in records processing, impacting 24/7 law enforcement operations countywide.
- Increased employee burnout, staff turnover, and the potential for operational errors.

Failure to support this request will widen the staffing gap between CCSO and peer agencies and undermine our ability to meet statutory obligations and community expectations.



To: Budget Office, County Manager and County Council

From: Sheriff John Horch

Date: August 11, 2025

Subject: 2026 Annual Budget Process – Executive Summary of General Fund Needs

Issue or Issues that Need to be Considered by Council

The Sheriff's Office requests \$88,511 in ongoing budget capacity to create a new Program Coordinator position, as well as \$5,000 in one-time funding for start-up costs.

Rule

N/A

Analysis

The community-driven support behind the Sheriff's Office has been consistently positive and encouraging. However, we've quickly reached our capacity to utilize this form of community help due to staff time limitations for engaging in these programs. Therefore, the Sheriff is requesting one Program Coordinator to run our Citizen Volunteer Program.

The Clark County Sheriff's Office has a robust and active citizen volunteer group currently consisting of 38 volunteers. They assist with various duties, including abandoned vehicle checks, disabled parking enforcement, junk vehicle inspections, and marine vessel safety checks. Additionally, they support the agency during events like the Hazel Dell parade and fair booth, and volunteer as role players for agency training scenarios. Since January 2023, these volunteers have worked a total of 3,213 hours. According to Independentsector.org, the value of a volunteer in Washington State is \$37.63/hour, equating to a value of \$119,845 since January 2023.

Key Contributions of the Auxiliary Volunteers from January 2023 to June 2024:

- **Abandoned Vehicle Checks:** Responded to 1,536 abandoned vehicles, averaging 85 vehicles per month, requiring a minimum of 2 patrols per week. 162 vehicles were tagged, re-checked, and sent to dispatch for tow. 29 volunteers contributed 908 hours, averaging 50 hours monthly.
- **Disabled Parking Enforcement:** Logged 72 hours of patrols, issuing 18 warnings and 10 infractions after training and commissioning 21 new members in November 2023.
- **Junk Vehicle Inspections:** Completed inspections and issued affidavits for 17 junk vehicles within three months since March 2024.
- **Events:** Logged 662 hours, assisting with the Hazel Dell parade, Clark County Fair (52 hours in 2023), Santa's Posse, SWAT training, sergeant promotions, Klineline Fishing Derby, PAL events, and other community events.



Due to an inability to allocate staffing time for managing the program, we have been unable to add new volunteers since 2022, despite having over 20 individuals interested in joining. This new position would plan, coordinate, implement, and evaluate the Clark County Sheriff's Office Auxiliary Volunteer Program, including:

- Identifying and developing projects, positions, and programs that support and enhance units within the sheriff's office.
- Coordinating the hiring and onboarding of new volunteers.
- Managing an annual five-week specialized training academy for new volunteers and potentially instructing some sessions.
- Running volunteer recruitment programs.
- Preparing and hosting monthly meetings and training sessions.
- Handling disciplinary issues through the chain of command.
- Providing accessibility to volunteers needing assistance.
- Maintaining volunteer photos and preparing training materials.
- Developing and implementing a volunteer recognition program and annual Volunteer Appreciation event.
- Providing monthly and quarterly statistics and reports.
- Communicating effectively with volunteers and the Outreach coordinator for event scheduling.
- Ensuring training and certification are current (Citizen Corps Emergency Worker, CJIS).
- Communicating with the assigned Auxiliary deputy liaison.
- Pursuing grant opportunities for volunteer programs and equipment.
- Reviewing completed patrol log reports.
- Managing volunteer scheduling and monitoring program success, while researching new programs for volunteer recruitment and retention.

Conclusion

If the request for a Volunteer Coordinator is not approved, the Clark County Sheriff's Office will face significant setbacks in its citizen volunteer program. The lack of dedicated oversight and management will lead to delays in crucial services such as abandoned vehicle checks, disabled parking enforcement, and junk vehicle inspections, which had previously alleviated deputies' workloads. Additionally, the inability to onboard new volunteers, despite substantial interest, will hinder program growth and effectiveness. Without this position, the Sheriff's Office will struggle to maintain compliance with regulatory standards, resulting in increased errors, inconsistent workflows, and potential security breaches. Ultimately, the absence of a Volunteer Coordinator will diminish the program's overall efficiency, and the valuable community support it provides.