

City Corner

This is the first of intermittently published articles designed to keep you informed of City of Hillsboro government happenings. The articles will be derived from a variety of sources, including: questions, comments and complaints received at City Hall or from your elected or appointed officials; topics that are generating considerable discussion; and periodic status updates on projects the City is pursuing or engaged in. We hope you find these articles informative and if you have any topics you would like discussed in this forum, please feel free to contact Brett Klein, City Administrator at (608) 489-2350 or bklein@hillsborowi.com

During the upcoming week the City will be distributing a survey to all citizens and business owners within the City of Hillsboro. The survey is completely confidential. Your candid responses are greatly encouraged and appreciated and will guide the decisions your elected officials and City staff make. The survey consists of four open ended questions, which have been validated through many pilot surveys and surveys nationwide. The responses to these questions will help in developing a comprehensive survey, which will be distributed later in the year. A return addressed, postage paid envelope will be included for your convenience. It is important that your opinion is heard to ensure your viewpoints are represented. A future article will reveal the results of the survey.

In last week's Sentry Enterprise, the article from the City Council meeting generated a rather surprising response from the community in specific reference to the hiring of two part-time police officers. While the survey results may reveal a different school of thought, the current amount of on-duty police services appears to strike an effective balance between protective services and the overall budget. The City is served by two full-time officers and numerous part-time officers, with the Vernon County Sheriff's Office filling the gaps in coverage. Part-time officers are used primarily for special events, such as Cesky Den and the Labor Day celebration, to fill in when full-time staff are unavailable, and during times when police calls are projected to be more frequent than normal.

Using part-time police officers to staff the police department yields many financial benefits because they are compensated at a typically lower than full-time hourly salary and do not receive costly benefits such as health insurance. However, part-time officers typically have full-time employment elsewhere and many other responsibilities to compete with their time. They also are frequently on full-time police officer eligibility lists waiting to be offered full-time employment. In addition, our geographic location makes it difficult to attract qualified part-time police officers as compared to other police departments that offer part-time police work. Therefore, we typically are recruiting continuously for the position of part-time police officer.

Regardless of how many total part-time police officers the Police Department employs, the total hours and dollar amount budgeted does not change. More officers just provides a better likelihood that when part-time police coverage is needed, someone will be available to answer the call. The City fills approximately 16 hours per week of coverage using part-time officers. Our part-time police officers are not scheduled to work by themselves until they become State certified and either pass our rigorous in-house field training program, or come to us with extensive police experience. If you have further questions or concerns regarding this topic, feel free to contact Chief Thomas Richardson or City Administrator Brett Klein.

I hope you found some value to this article and the new forum the City will utilize to keep the public better informed.

Brett Klein,
City Administrator