

Public safety maintains budget

By Jim Moore of the Daily Courier

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Barring some sort of windfall, Josephine County's public safety departments in fiscal year 2014-15 will operate with almost the identical amount of money as now.

The Sheriff's Office, District Attorney and Juvenile Justice departments all presented budgets to the Budget Committee Thursday night that have very slight increases. The fiscal year starts July 1.

The total public safety fund is \$10.5 million, which is an increase of \$736,000 over the adopted budget. Contingency represents \$767,000 of the proposed budget.

Of that total, the Sheriff's Office is requesting \$5.7 million, or \$163,000 over its current budget.

Sheriff Gil Gilbertson, who did not attend Thursday's meeting, submitted a memo requesting some slight boosts in personnel costs. His budget sets \$3.6 million for the jail and \$833,000 for patrol operations.

In a separate memo, Gilbertson also requested \$655,000 for rural patrols from money the county received in forest receipts for roads. The additional money would provide patrol services to rural residents 16 hours a day, five days a week.

"This essentially doubles what we currently are providing to the county residents and offers increased officer safety," Gilbertson wrote.

The request for road money was separate from the proposed budget for the Sheriff's Office. The Budget Committee, which includes all three county commissioners, will discuss that request next Thursday.

Meanwhile, the district attorney's budget proposal of \$1.9 million includes slightly boosting two positions. One increase would be for a part-time receptionist position to a full-time position and adding a part-time victim assistance specialist.

Grants will cover the increases. In fact, grant money comprises \$646,000 of the department's resources.

District Attorney Stephen Campbell told the Budget Committee that criminal prosecution is the department's top priority. Indeed, he allocates \$1.5 million of the department's \$1.9 million budget toward prosecution.

Juvenile Justice, with a proposed budget of slightly over \$1 million, also reflects a slight increase due to personnel pay bumps.

James Goodwin, the department's director, requested two juvenile probation officers be increased by one pay grade due to their experience and qualifications and so they will have the authority to sign off on reports.

Goodwin also wants to add a half-time probation officer.

Also on Thursday, Diane Hoover, the county's public health director, proposed a budget with virtually no change from this year. The budget document lists total requirements of \$2.47 million. The department includes animal protection and a clinic.

The county's total budget is \$84.3 million, while the operating budget is \$15.1 million.

The operating budget, most of which is dedicated to public safety, is money that comes primarily from local taxes and is in the control of county officials.

Most of the rest of the budget comes from state and federal sources, and must be spent on specific programs — roads, courts, transit, etc. — designated by the governmental agency providing the money.

The next Budget Committee meeting is at 3 p.m. Thursday at the Anne Basker Auditorium, 604 N.W. Sixth St., next to the county courthouse.

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