

SOS CALLS FOR “THE ROUND TABLE OF JOSEPHINE COUNTY”

Last updated: Sunday, January 31, 2016

Dear Josephine County Residents,

<http://securingoursafety.org/sos-calls-for-the-round-table-of-josephine-county/>

Here is a draft proposal approved by the SOS Board that was recently submitted to the Josephine County Board of County Commissioners. We look forward to your comments!

“The Round Table” of Josephine County

As the name suggests, there is no head of the table, implying that everyone who sits at the table has equal status.

Mission: To Accept and Review Proposals for Providing Financial Resources to the Law Enforcement and Justice Programs Operated by Josephine County.

A summary of the general idea is as follows:

A large public outreach campaign, done directly by Josephine County Commissioners asking Josephine County residents “how do we **work together** to solve the financial crisis that currently exists in Josephine County Law Enforcement and Justice programs?”

The Round Table should meet at least twice per month for the remainder of calendar 2016....starting asap. The goal is to have a series of solutions that we can move forward and implement or bring to a vote of the people in 2017 (if needed). Rotate the meetings around to different locations in the County, if possible.

Josephine County should immediately recruit for some members of the Round Table (maybe it would technically be a County Task Force?). BCC members might consider being part of the Task Force and designate staff liaisons to help run the meetings and collect/provide information. Any County officials or BCC members should try and limit discussion during meetings except to answer questions (citizens need to lead the charge). Preferably, we want well respected community leaders on the task force – not individuals that have aggressively campaigned either for or against past County public safety ballot measures. BCC members really need to attend all of these meetings to show that this is the top priority for the Board in 2016 and show that the BCC is listening. Make it a task force with a variable number of members (minimum 3, up to XX in total) so you could get started right away while recruiting for more members of the Round Table as needed. Once the round table gets X number of citizen members, the BCC becomes non-voting members that are just there to listen and run the meetings of the Round Table.

The BCC should also immediately advertise separately and request proposals/solutions from citizens or citizen groups – any budgetary solutions or financial proposals to provide some funding for County Public Safety programs. Provide some basic parameters for how to submit a proposal and ground rules about what the BCC is specifically looking for in proposals. Maybe a web page on the County’s website that has a very basic description of the problem at hand, the major decisions and rough costs for different levels of service (having X Sheriff deputies on duty 24 hours a day to patrol and respond to emergencies would cost approximately \$—, while having XX deputies on duty 24 hours a day to patrol/respond to

emergencies would cost approximately \$—. And so on for the jail, juvenile justice, and DA. As more info – “to fund these programs at the same level that they were at in 2011 before the first fiscal cliff caused by the withdrawal of federal funding, the County needs approximately \$8.XX million per year in additional revenue going to County Law Enforcement and County Justice Programs.” Proposed solutions do not have to solve the entire funding challenge, but should provide at least \$300,000 per year in financial resources to County public safety so that they can be combined with other solutions to restore our law enforcement programs at the level that citizens ultimately decide. The message should largely be about the crisis we face today, but there should also be a disclosure about the specific financial effects of what would happen in 2017 if the federal SRS payments are not renewed.

Spend at least the first couple Round Table meetings getting information out about the crisis that the County faces today, and the potential for the crisis to get worse next year. As much as this has been a very public challenge for many years, we’re finding that many citizens still don’t know to the extent of what we’re truly facing today and why we’re facing it (some think the County isn’t prioritizing its budget correctly, some think the money isn’t being spent wisely, etc.). Explain the problem as simple and as concisely as possible, and find a way to get that message out to as many people as possible while soliciting input and soliciting proposals. Direct County staff to be as helpful and timely as possible for any citizen or citizen group genuinely looking for information to assemble a proposal.

Invite those making proposals in for the discussion to make a short presentation if they desire and to answer questions from the Round Table on the proposals. There should be two votes after each proposal, one straw vote of everyone at the meeting including citizens, and then one vote of the Round table. Any majority vote either by the Round table or the straw poll would send a proposal to the BCC for further due diligence. **The BCC must ultimately deliberate on all proposals in weekly business sessions that move forward for due diligence.** Either something is worthy of consideration as part of the series of solutions or something can’t be done or won’t work for X, Y, or Z reason. So for example, if the idea of building a local casino was moved forward for due diligence, the BCC would gather information on whether that was legally possible and if not legally possible it would deliberate and say we can’t support this proposal because ORS 123.xyz states that we can’t...

Any proposal moved forward for due diligence that would ultimately require a vote of the people would wait until January of 2017 for the final action by the 2017 BCC, to make sure the incoming BCC members who will be leading the County in future years will weigh into the decision of anything that would or could go to a vote in 2017. But by the end of 2016, theoretically we would have a list of potential solutions and will have done some due diligence on each of them in different ways to see if they are possible and to see if they are supported by JoCo residents.

If there’s time, consider accepting public comment at the end of task force meetings (3 minutes per person).

Consider the pros and cons of televising and recording for video all the Round Table meetings, if possible. This might be a way to engage an even larger audience. Perhaps the City of Grants Pass, as a very large stakeholder in this crisis, could contribute the Council chambers as a venue for certain meetings and/or help or cover TV recording costs as the City’s part of the project (it’s worth asking the City to see).

Rough timeline for the Round Table activities:

- February to March – seat members at the table, advertise for proposals and members, create web page dedicated to this effort, accept any early proposals for review if any

- March to June – accept and review any and all proposals from County residents or County based citizen groups (any proposals that at least meet the minimum ground rules for proposals as established). All proposals must be submitted by May 31 to be considered for review.
- Finish review of all proposals asap, but all must be reviewed by the Round table by the end of July.
- BCC acts on each of the proposals as they are forwarded by the Round Table. By saying “Acts” this means the proposal is either accepted by the BCC as a potential solution in a series of solutions, or the BCC says unfortunately this can’t be considered for X, Y, and Z reasons. Of course anything that makes sense that is clearly widely supported by the public and doesn’t need a vote should be implemented by the BCC immediately...we may not have to wait for next year to get started on some of these things.
- August to November – the Round Table assembles a final series of solutions and if needed engages in a large polling/survey effort to reach as many JoCo residents as possible for comment on the level of service in the law enforcement system and what they would support to allow that level of service.

Potential benefits to Josephine County and JoCo Public Safety:

- More information shared with public about the true challenges faced by County law enforcement
- Increased trust in the “system” by listening and acting on citizen recommendations
- Citizens more involved in crafting solutions and more potential buy-in on the end result
- Potentially some unique, out of the box feasible solutions presented
- More citizen engagement by the average person who doesn’t attend County meetings
- Tasks should be completed with enough time to consider a measure for May 2017, if needed
- And of course, increased funding to critical County Law Enforcement programs to help solve this crisis

SOS as a non-profit can come along side the County in this effort and assist with information gathering, research, public outreach, public advertising of what’s going on with the Round Table, etc. as needed or as requested. But SOS should not be facilitating these meetings. The County Commissioners need to have direct contact with our citizens on this important topic. SOS is busy working on a number of things already and more information gathering by SOS is already being considered. SOS is also going to be collecting more data about what’s actually happening in our County today as a result of severe cutbacks to County Public Safety and justice programs.

WHAT SAY YOU?

MISSION: “A citizen-voiced plan to provide for a secure, stable and sustainable Josephine County.”

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