

Date: 09 December 2020

To: Stevenson City Council and City Administrator

From: Mary Repar

Subj: Budget; sheriff; sewer and water rates

Dear Council and City Administrator,

I've listened to the Council meeting and read the many public comments in recent weeks pertaining to the \$176,000 proposed budget for law enforcement services for the city of Stevenson.

First, let me say that I've lived in Skamania county for 30+ years, 29 in Stevenson, and that does not disqualify or qualify me from having an opinion! Neither age or residency are requirements in the right to free speech in our democratic republic. Just saying.

Second, it is not just the budget for law enforcement but the character and views of the sheriff and his views on which laws and mandates he will enforce or not, that should be up for debate.

The county sheriff vociferously and actively worked against I-1639, the gun control initiative. He stated he would not enforce it because, as judge and jury, he doesn't believe it is constitutional. Of course, even as vocal as he was against it, he has enforced parts of it and it has been judged constitutional by our court system. This sheriff had interactions with the Klickitat sheriff about forming a posse in Skamania county, like we need a armed and untrained bunch of folks overseeing residents. Sheriff Brown has made statements that indicate that he believes sheriffs are the ultimate authority in a county in case of emergency. Since the sheriffs departments are under the State military department, which would be used in time of political unrest and/or martial law or a natural catastrophe, he may have cause. This bears more scrutiny.

Sheriff Brown has stated, in a Seattle newspaper, that he thinks covid 19 is not worse than the flu! Tell that to the 3,000 Americans who died from covid, today. Tell that to the nearly 300,000 who have died nationwide. He has resisted putting up signs mandating masks, a mandate from our governor, on our public building which houses the jail and the sheriff's offices. What he did put up, finally, after we had a chat, at the foyer entrance of the jail is a sign posted as far from the door as possible, written in negligible font, and pasted up behind a tinted window! Seriously.

A man who believes that certain laws are not constitutional and he shouldn't enforce them because he knows best, should take off the badge and run for a legislative office where he can propone for his personal beliefs.

The sheriff's County budget for 12,000 residents is \$3,057,984 according to the 2021 proposed budget. With the addition of the City's \$176,000 the total is \$3,233, 984. If we divide 3,233,984 by 12,000 residents, that is \$269.50 /resident. If we divide the City's proposed offer of \$176,000 by the City's residents, we get \$126/resident. So, by these numbers the City should be getting another almost 50% of service. The sheriff's statistics does not bear this out. The City has every right to ask for better statistics within city limits. And, the City should ask for comparable statistics from other parts of the county so a comparison could actually be made as to where the sheriff's department is most active.

The sheriff's budget should be cut and the funds used for defraying the costs of rising water and sewer rates for City residents. Some residents are living on the edge and this council is proposing raising sewer and water rates to \$190 by 2024. That is \$2280/year!

Also, it has been proposed that the City should look into diversity training and I believe a audit of how well the City is doing in regards to racism, discrimination, etc. Some monies should go toward this process. I've previously sent in comments on this issue.

The sheriff's department is running at full capacity, I believe, with almost 30 employees. That is up from previous numbers.

The Stevenson council should have a very robust conversation about this budget request. Just because it is for the sheriff does not mean that it should be approved. He is, by law, required to provide law enforcement to all of Skamania County, including Stevenson residents who are paying twice, in County taxes and City taxes, for this service.

/e-signature/Mary Repar