

COLUMBUS CONSOLIDATED GOVERNMENT

Georgia's First Consolidated Government

TERESA TOMLINSON
Mayor

Post Office Box 1340
Columbus, Georgia 31902-1340

Telephone (706) 653-4712
Cell (706) 905-9570
FAX (706) 653-4970
TDD (706) 653-4494

March 31, 2015

RE: Mayor's Fiscal Year 2016 Recommended Budget

Dear Citizens of Columbus, Georgia and City Councilors:

This Mayor's Recommend Budget is the culmination of many months of data/information collection and fiscal policy assessment. The process that leads up to the Mayor's Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 Recommended Budget takes place over many months. It involves numerous meetings with department heads, office holders, and Columbus Councilors and is led by executive management staff to include the City Manager, Finance Director, both Deputy City Managers, Human Resource Director and Budget Analysts. The submission of this recommended budget to our Councilors is expressly recognized in Georgia as the "initial budgetary policy-making function" of the elected chief executive official of the Columbus, Georgia Consolidated Government (CCG). The Mayor's Recommended Budget is required to be accompanied by a budget message from the mayor containing explanations of general fiscal policies, explanations of major changes recommended for the next fiscal year, a general summary of the capital and operation budgets, and other information deemed appropriate for Council's consideration.

The Mayor's Recommended Budget incorporates, synthesizes and balances all revenues, budgetary requests, data and information necessary to set the fiscal policy of CCG and proposes a budget for all departments, divisions, elected offices, authorities and commissions funded by the taxpayers of this jurisdiction. The Mayor's Recommended Budget, in and of itself, has no force or effect; it must be reviewed, debated, deliberated upon, modified, amended, and/or adopted by a majority vote of the CCG legislative body - the Columbus Council. Rather, the Mayor's Recommended Budget is a proposed policy path forward given the expected revenues of this jurisdiction and the often competing governmental needs of our community. Based upon these principles of our local government, it is my honor and privilege to submit this FY 2016 Recommended Budget for Council's consideration.

I. Laying a Firm Budgetary Foundation:

Over the past several years, CCG has done the hard work of getting our financial house in order. We have had to face persistent reductions in our local revenue and reserves due to state mandates and revenue exemptions, the years-long recession and the unexpected \$11.3 million budget

overruns in the Sheriff's Office. Those realities have required us to change the way we do business, to recalibrate the services we provide our citizens and to address certain systemic inefficiencies within the CCG government because we simply could no longer afford to avoid the reform. Those realities also have resulted in a General Fund revenue crisis, while other dedicated or restricted funds of CCG are fairly stable. In Columbus/Muscogee County, our General Fund revenues are made up of unrestricted funds, including our property tax revenues, our Local Option Sales Tax (LOST) revenues, our Other Local Option Sales Tax (OLOST) revenues and other unrestricted license fees, fines, etc. Even though our OLOST revenue is a General Fund revenue, indistinguishable under the law or accounting principles from other General Fund revenue, our local government tabulates our OLOST monies separately for purposes of the transparency promised in the OLOST referendum. These funds were promised to be spent 70% for Public Safety and 30% for infrastructure, and this promise has been strictly kept.

Pursuant to Resolution No. 224-11, CCG is required to maintain enough unrestricted revenue in our General Fund Reserve to run the city/county for 60 days. Below is a summary of the impact the foregoing budget factors have had on our General Fund Reserve days:

GENERAL FUND RESERVE DAYS						
	FY11	FY12	FY13	FY14	FY15	FY16
	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual	Projection	Projection
Traditional Funds	79.84	71.57	68.73	38.33	28.32	27.60
OLOST Funds	6.30	5.25	5.35	16.88	32.94	32.77
Total General Fund Reserve Days	86.14	76.82	74.08	55.21	61.26	60.37
Value of 1 Day	\$414,861	\$428,774	\$420,001	\$408,126	\$413,407	\$415,672

Here are some of the difficult decisions we have made to reverse this course:

- We unanimously passed comprehensive Pension Reform, which has thus far saved taxpayers \$2.7 million;
- We implemented comprehensive employee healthcare reform saving the taxpayers \$4.5 million a year, while still providing value to employees;
- We renegotiated a decades old contract with our partners at the Medical Center to save hundreds of thousands of dollars a year;
- We reduced city subsidies to third-party affiliates by over \$800,000 a year since FY2011;
- We have increased user fees throughout the CCG government where appropriate;
- We have launched a recycling effort that has returned approximately \$60,000 per month to CCG and has postponed the impending cost of closing our landfill; and

- We have thus far avoided broad scale layoffs or furloughs of city employees, though we have reduced through attrition and defunding some \$1.34 million in city employee positions and benefits costs over a three year period.

These efforts to reform city finances have had a positive effect on the financial viability of this city, though it has placed increased burden on our employees to maintain our current level of city services with less. We also deferred tens of millions of dollars in maintenance and capital expenditures for equipment, primarily garbage trucks, lawn mowers, fire trucks, ambulances, police cruisers and undercover vehicles.¹

Just last year we faced the prospect of laying off 100 to 120 employees with severe impact on our city services. Because of the leadership and teamwork of our legislative and executive officials, those 100-plus jobs were saved and nearly 12 days, or some \$5 million, were added back to our dwindling General Fund Reserve, only to have the goalpost moved by the new application of a municipal accounting principle. This change in accounting application and the resulting reduction in our Reserve brings us back down perilously close to our required 60-day threshold necessary to fund CCG and meet our obligations. Had we not made the significant financial changes we did over the last four years and this new principle been applied, the effect would have been devastating for our city, our employees and our citizens.

However disheartening this move of the financial goalpost, it gets us closer to a truer number of where we actually are and what monies are available for our use and benefit. Regardless of the new playing field, our recent history tells us: 1) that we have the necessary leadership to steer Columbus through this fiscally challenging time; 2) that our tough decisions have worked; 3) that we can solve these issues; and 4) that we have another tough year ahead of us.

II. Budgetary Path Forward:

A. Revenue Expectations

The FY 2016 Recommended Budget is based on revenue expectations of \$264 million. We predict a 1.5% increase in the CCG property tax digest putting gross property tax revenue at \$77 million. Local Option Sales Tax (LOST) FY2016 revenue is expected to be \$35 million and Other Local Option Sales Tax (OLOST) revenue is expected to be \$34 million, for a total FY2016 sales tax revenue of \$69 million. Occupancy tax, licensing fees, and other miscellaneous revenues account for the remaining \$118 million of the FY2016 recommended budget.

¹ It should be noted, however, when dire circumstances have arisen, we have found a way to cover “must haves” such as the replacement of the Burn Tower for Fire/EMS training; replacement of our Public Safety Motorola Radio System; an upgrade of the fire alarm system and security cameras for the Muscogee County Prison; and investments in a state-of-the art record management system for the Columbus Police Department and a new assessment software for our Tax Assessor/Tax Commissioner.

We are hopeful that our efforts to update our Tax Assessment system will provide a better structure going forward for improved, and more accurate, property tax revenues. We work to protect our sales tax revenues from state legislative bills that attempt to usurp county funds or provide broad, costly exemptions. We also work to make certain that the state sales tax remittance distribution system is fair and reflective of revenues actually collected in Muscogee County. And, we are initiating a referendum ballot effort to “thaw” our residential homestead property valuation freeze in November 2016, which Freeze system denies us the benefit of our growth.

We have not sat idly by and accepted our flat revenues over these past many years. We will continue to work to enhance revenues through growth and other fair, transparent means.

B. Addressing Systemic Budget Issues

1. Pension Costs

This year’s Pension contribution will be \$18,180,671 for both our General Government Pension Plan (\$5,843,267) and our Public Safety Pension Plan (\$12,337,404). Had we not adopted this important reform, our FY2016 contribution would have been approximately \$542,455 more. Thus far we have saved \$2.7 million due to our pension reform and are positioned to save approximately \$28 million over a 15 year period. In addition, our Pension Fund has grown stronger. Our Public Safety Pension is now 80% funded, while our General Government Pension Fund is 87% funded. Our combined pension plan fund stands at \$371 million.

Next year our Pension Board will most likely recommend a shift away from the 1994 mortality table we currently use to a mortality table published later than 2000 in order to calculate our annual pension contribution. Life expectancies are increasing, and our pension must be well-funded to support these increased expectancies. We will need to find several million dollars in our FY2017 budget for the anticipated increased pension contribution. Given our stagnant revenues and other budget demands as set forth herein, we must begin planning now for this significant budget issue.

2. Healthcare

As healthcare costs continue to rise throughout the country, we at CCG have taken pro-active steps to ensure that our self-funded healthcare plan remains a value for both our employees and our taxpayers. We have started a Health and Wellness Clinic Plan, while providing HMO and PPO plans. Though many of the necessary adjustments made in FY2015 to keep our healthcare plans stable only went into effect January 1, 2015, we believe these efforts will moderate healthcare cost increases. We continue, however, to consider other potential efficiencies and opportunities for savings:

- We propose a new Pharmacy Benefits Manager in this recommended budget, saving CCG an estimated \$800,000 per year.
- We are currently speaking with post-65 year old retirees about the possibility of entering into private healthcare exchanges to increase their options and to reduce our costs. This

effort is not expected to be completed prior to the adoption of the FY2016 budget and, therefore, no such recommendation is made in this letter. We do hope to continue this discussion and perhaps bring a proposal forward for Council discussion and a possible effective date of January 1, 2017.

- Last year Council ratified the longstanding policy that CCG share the cost of healthcare with our employees in a 70% (CCG)/ 30% (active employee) split. Given the increase in healthcare cost this year, the 70%/30% split will result in employee healthcare contribution adjustment estimated to be between \$3-\$10 per paycheck depending on the plan the employee has selected. The increase for CCG was adopted last year and those costs have been adopted into the FY2016 Recommended Budget.
- In order to assure the lowest, competitive administrative fees associated with our healthcare plans, CCG has advertised a competitive Request for Proposal. This competitive bid process has resulted in efficiencies and savings, which are passed along in this recommended budget.

Controlling healthcare costs and servicing the healthcare needs of our employees is a major priority for CCG. These efforts are daily and year long. We will continue to look for improvements.

3. Renegotiation of Medical Center Contract

The CCG agreement with the Columbus Regional Medical Center for indigent and prisoner healthcare was entered into in 1992. By its original terms the agreement expires in 2022, and few believed amendment of the agreement was possible. Perseverance and partnership won out in the end and on July 1, 2014 our decades long contract with the Medical Center was amended so that:

- CCG only pays 3 mills on property taxes actually collected as opposed to the value of the entire digest.
- CCG can recoup 50% of any surplus if the discounted cost of the care provided to indigents under the agreement does not exceed CCG's total payments under the contract.
- CCG is now receiving a value of \$1,000,000 of prisoner healthcare for free as opposed to just \$500,000, due to a negotiated 50% discount on the billing rate.

Due to the contract amendment we have saved \$300,000 in FY2015.

4. Reduction in Payments to Third-Party Affiliates

Since FY2011, we have decreased General Fund subsidies to third-party affiliates by \$876,215 per year:

Discretionary Third-Party Appropriations						
	FY11	FY12	FY13	FY14	FY15	FY16
Health Department Services	813,475	813,475	813,475	650,780	502,012	502,012
DFACS	90,000	90,000	80,000	62,400	48,135	48,135
Keep Columbus Beautiful	80,784	72,706	72,706	64,628	49,854	-
New Horizons	234,823	234,823	234,823	187,858	144,932	144,932
Uptown Columbus	81,000	72,900	72,900	58,320	44,988	44,988
Literary Alliance	16,200	14,580	18,822	-	-	-
Naval Museum Subsidy	300,000	250,000	200,000	175,000	135,000	-
TOTAL	1,616,282	1,548,484	1,492,726	1,198,986	924,921	740,067

We transferred the Literacy Alliance to the more appropriate funding source of our Crime Prevention grant program. We have weaned the Naval Museum from the CCG coffers over a four-year period with the help of its Board and our partners at the Columbus Convention and Visitors Bureau. After reducing its subsidy nearly 50% over the past several years, the Recommended Budget proposes moving Keep Columbus Beautiful to our Integrated Waste Fund in order to directly align it with its closest CCG partner.

For FY2016, we keep the remaining affiliates' funding rates at the same level as FY2015, though we suggest working with our partners at Uptown, Inc. to discuss an alternative to it being funded from the strained General Fund.

5. Enterprise Funds, Authorities, and Mandates

Each year we are faced with having to subsidize some of our Enterprise Funds, Authorities and Agencies. Some subsidies are directed by law, such as our payments to the Health Department, the River Valley Regional Commission, and Airport Authority. Other subsidies are made as loans or as temporary bridges to get the entity over difficult financial challenges. The FY2016 recommended subsidies for funds, authorities or agencies are:

FUND/AUTHORITY/AGENCY	PROPOSED FY2016 SUBSIDY
Civic Center Enterprise Fund	\$200,000
Golf Authority	\$300,000
Parking Management Enterprise Fund	\$135,273
Airport Authority	\$40,000
Health Dept. Rent	\$318,595
River Valley RDC	\$202,824
TOTAL	\$1,196,692

Our management team is working to mitigate these subsidies and to make proposals to Council to alleviate the subsidy burden on our General Fund. For instance, the Civic Center has done a tremendous job of reducing cost overruns and improving revenue, even in the face of the addition of a new ice rink, which we knew from the beginning would be a financial struggle. The Civic Center leadership has worked diligently to mitigate costs, engage in creative partnerships, and re-think the revenue model of the public assets with which they have been charged. Others, however, have struggled either due to a lack of innovation, a lack of community consensus or lack of political will to make the changes necessary to reduce or end the annual subsidies. Some of these subsidies in the aggregate amount to millions of dollars over just the past few years.

In a time when we are struggling to maintain employee positions, pay and benefits, and essential capital investment, subsidies of this magnitude cause citizens and employees to call into question the need for such subsidies. Accordingly, a Mayor’s Commission will be established pursuant to CCG Charter Secs. 4-201 (11) and (13) to study the subsidies to Enterprise Funds, Authorities and Agencies to determine whether efficiencies can be had or revenue increased so as to reduce, or eliminate said subsidies. The Commission will report back to Council with its findings and proposals in the coming year.

6. Proposed User Fee Adjustments

Attached hereto as **Exhibit A** is a list of \$233,498 in proposed FY2016 User Fee adjustments for Council’s consideration.

7. Garbage Collection

CCG’s Integrated Waste program collects waste four times a week from each house: two trips per week for household garbage; one trip per week for recycling; and one trip per week for yard waste. There is an additional fifth trip per week throughout CCG for “White Goods,” that are placed on the curb by residents. This is a higher level of service than nearly any community in the region or state. Indeed, the only twice-a-week household garbage pick-up programs we could find charge their residents significantly more than what residents in Muscogee County are charged:

Monthly Fees For Twice Weekly Garbage Pick Up							
No. of 32 Gallon Containers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Columbus	\$15.00	No Charge	No Charge	No Charge	No Charge	No Charge	No Charge
Gainesville	\$32.10	No Charge	No Charge	No Pick-up	No Pick-up	No Pick-up	No Pick-up
Marietta	\$22.75	\$27.75	\$33.50	\$38.50	\$43.50	\$48.50	\$53.50
Moultrie	\$28.00	\$39.40	\$50.80	\$62.20	\$73.60	\$85.00	No Pick-up

The cost of such a high level of waste collection service is many fold, but is particularly onerous as it relates to the wear and tear on our garbage trucks. We currently need to replace 56

garbage/recycling trucks at \$225,000 apiece for a capital cost of \$12.6 million. Forty-four of these trucks are considered urgent/critical replacement needs. Our waste collection fee has not supported, and cannot support, the actual cost of the capital demand of the service we provide; and, the General Fund Reserve that we depended on for so many years to subsidize these types of capital demands can no longer provide that revenue.

Neither our Integrated Waste Fund nor our General Fund can support the cost of our impending landfill closure, which is estimated to be \$22.4 million and is unfunded. Our two day-a-week household garbage pick-up increases waste directed to the landfill and discourages recycling. A strong recycling program is an essential part of our cost management strategy for closing the landfill.

Over the years, staff has provided numerous presentations on the costs and effects of our current waste collection service. Many alternatives have been presented. In the spring of 2011, the Mayor's FY2012 Recommended Budget proposed that CCG reduce its household garbage collection service to one-time per week. That proposal was not accepted.

On May 18, 2012, the Public Works Director proposed that CCG begin one day per week household garbage pick-up in January 2014. After discussion and public input, it was decided that we would revisit the issue of changing to once-a-week household garbage pick-up after our new \$8 million recycle center had opened. A target date for switching to once-a-week pick-up was then proposed for September 2014, a date which has come and gone.

Our Recycle Center has opened, and it is successful. We have had a 108% increase in recycling, resulting in an additional four years added to the life of our landfill. We are receiving \$60,000 a month in the sale of recycled material and have additional capacity for growth. The time is now to convert our Integrated Waste System to a once-a-week household garbage pick-up service. Because we cannot adequately provide for the system we currently have, this conversion will provide not a budgetary savings, but a valuable cost avoidance of \$495,000 per year. This change also will increase recycling and prolong the life of our landfill.

This recommended budget also proposes a cost avoidance of an additional \$521,400 per year due to prohibiting the use of plastic bags for yard waste. This prohibition has been discussed at Council meetings and work sessions. Public input was received and information collected. Notably, this prohibition still allows for citizens to use containers, brown bags, and other biodegradable bags. This is a best practices policy and will save CCG the cost of three trucks and three drivers. The community is well informed of the merits of this proposal, it can be implemented with little impact to our citizens, and it provides significant cost avoidance to CCG. See Staff Report, Exhibit B.

8. Capital Replacement

These years of budget woes have resulted in an inability to follow our capital re-investment plan. As a few examples of our critical needs, we note the \$12.6 million needed to purchase the 56 garbage/recycle trucks mentioned above. We note \$225,000 is needed to purchase 28

lawnmowers Parks and Recreation has had to scrap over the past few years while trying to make do through cannibalizing aged mowers. Recently, we had to cut a 90+ acre CCG park with weed-eaters. We also have learned from our new Information Technology Director that there are costly immediate needs which must be funded in order to ensure the stable functioning of CCG.

We have a critical need for 4 ambulances, 3 fire trucks, and 1 quint. We also need dozens of replacement pursuit and undercover vehicles for CPD, among other needs. We have explored lease options and have assigned out the OLOST capital funds as evenly as possible to meet the most urgent Public Safety need. See Exhibit C (List of Proposed Public Safety Capital funded in FY2016 from OLOST).

This lack of funding for our comprehensive capital investment plan cannot continue indefinitely.

9. Budget Requests of Departments and Offices

As part of the FY2016 initial budget process, we received \$25 million in budget requests from our departments and offices over and above the FY2015 Adopted Budget levels. Though there are worthy, necessary and even critical requests among them, our expected revenues and General Fund Reserve cannot sustain those requests. As our Charter states, the budgeting process is an incorporation and balancing of the desires, needs and mandates of the jurisdiction and the revenues that can sustain them. Accordingly, we have prioritized the various requests in order of urgency, critical impact, legal mandate and magnitude. We recommend that Council appropriate \$5 million across various funds to fill the highest priority funding needs. The recommended budget additions by department and office are identified in the FY2016 Recommend Budget Book, which is submitted herewith and incorporated herein.

C. Elimination of Duplicative Law Enforcement Services

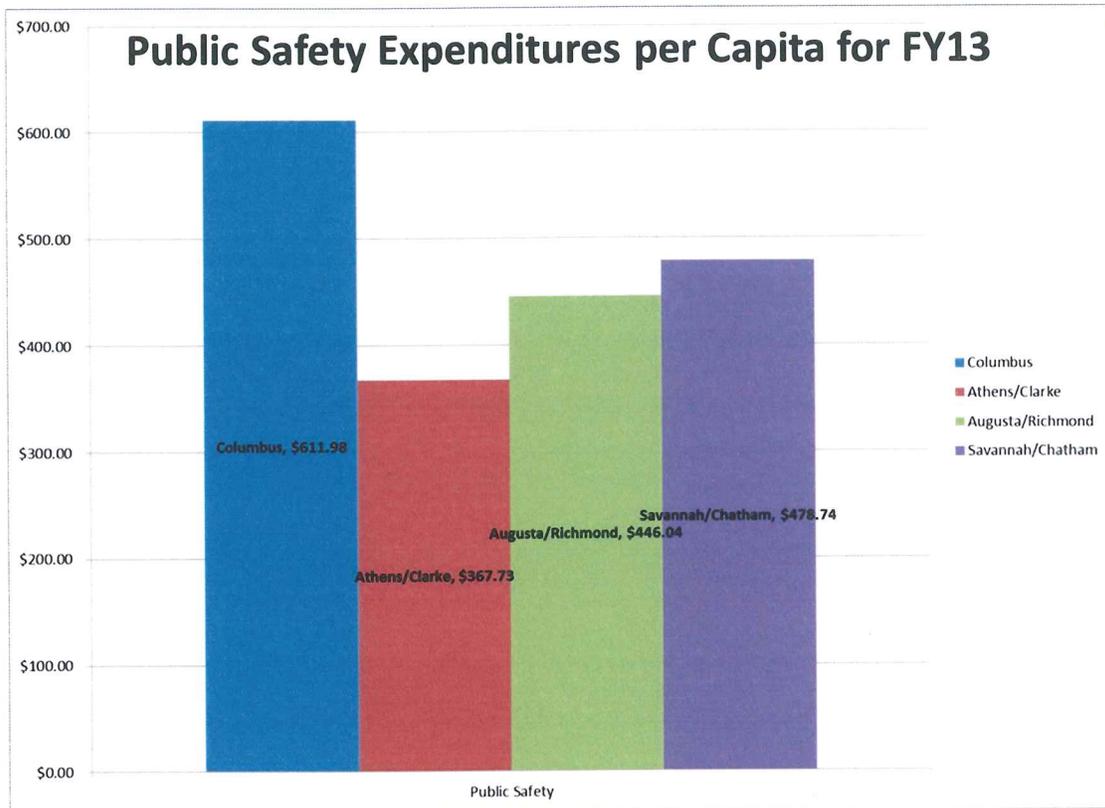
During our FY2015 budget sessions, members of the Columbus Council requested that staff investigate issues of potential duplicative law enforcement services among the following: 1) Columbus Police Department; 2) Muscogee County Sheriff's Office; and 3) Municipal Court Marshal's Office. In assessing this referral from Council and inquiries from citizens, the administration has reviewed:

- Service Line Resource Allocation ("Service Allocation") reports of the Departments/Offices;
- Accounting Records for the past decade;
- Internal and Third-party Comparative Cost Analyses for law enforcement departments/offices in comparable jurisdictions;
- Interviews with subject matter experts and law enforcement service providers;²

² Both the Sheriff and Marshal were invited on several occasions to participate in these discussions. While the Marshal responded in part and in writing to Council's inquiry during the FY 2015 budget process, neither elected officer has thus far participated in staff's review of information related to Council's referral for this FY2016 Recommended Budget.

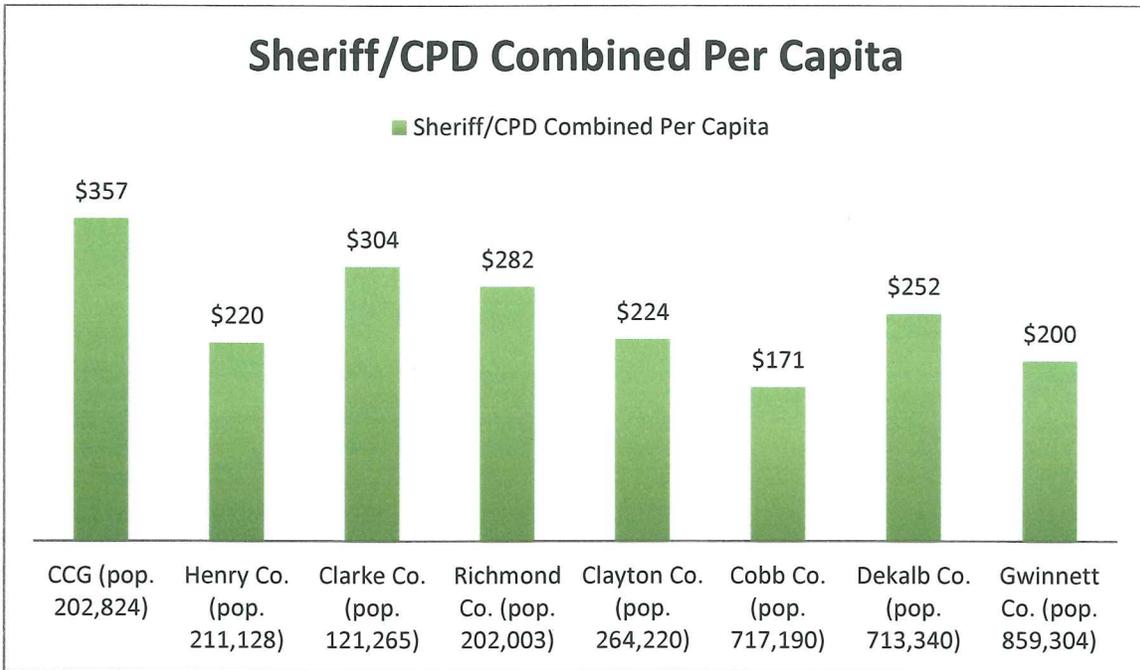
- Other materials and information available to CCG to include, but not limited to, media reports, verified anecdotal information and publicly filed or submitted documents.

In Columbus/Muscogee County, we spend \$612 per person per year on Public Safety.³ That is the highest per capita expenditure for Public Safety for any comparable city/county in the State of Georgia. The next highest per capita expenditure is Savannah, Georgia at \$479 per person, per year.



When we compare the operating and capital budgets of Columbus Police Department (CPD) and our Sheriff’s Office to those of other comparable communities, the discrepancy in investment remains:

³ Public Safety comparison includes monies for the Police Department, E911, Fire/EMS Department, Muscogee County Prison, Sheriff’s Office, Marshal’s Office and Homeland Security.



As shown above, CCG invests significantly more dollars per citizen on Public Safety, and law enforcement in particular, than other large counties in the State of Georgia.⁴ When the cost of the Marshal’s office is added to the per capita law enforcement chart above, the difference in CCG’s higher expenditures remains. The comparisons of law enforcement expenditures regarding the Marshal’s Office in other communities is difficult, though, as so few other Municipal Court Marshals engage in law enforcement activities outside the confines of the Municipal Court they serve.

Despite our greater level of investment, our citizens say to us repeatedly that they wish to have more resources expended for law enforcement “on the streets.” Citizens have been clamoring for years for efficiencies in our use of and investment in law enforcement services on the streets. Before simply appropriating more funds to “law enforcement,” we must first responsibly address whether we are spending our sizable funds in an efficient and effective manner to effectuate the desired impact on the street and our crime rate, or whether we have wasteful or unnecessary duplication in our law enforcement agencies.

⁴ Note that Augusta/Richmond County is a consolidated government like CCG and Athens/Clarke County; however, Augusta/Richmond County has a single combined law enforcement office that provides all the duties of a Sheriff’s Office and a County Police Department. Athens/Clarke County is consolidated, but maintains a separate Sheriff’s Office and County Police Department. Our inquiry revealed that the Athens/Clarke County Sheriff’s Office concentrates its resources on its required mission of maintaining a jail, protecting the courts, serving civil process and providing “some” law enforcement or peacekeeping services.

In order to make this assessment, the Columbus Council must look to the mission and jurisdiction of each said department or office and reduce or eliminate duplicative resources that do not directly appertain to the respective missions or prescribed jurisdictions of the Columbus Police Department, Sheriff's Office and Marshal' Office.

D. Separate Agencies Participating In Law Enforcement

1. Columbus Police Department

In Columbus/Muscogee County, the chief law enforcement agency is the Columbus Police Department (CPD), which has the maximum law enforcement authority allowed by law within the county. In our consolidated city/county government, there is no other municipal jurisdiction within the county limits with a separate law enforcement agency. The Columbus Police Department is the only law enforcement agency within this jurisdiction which receives and responds to 911 calls.

In 2014, CPD received 170,112 calls for emergency response, filed 57,035 reports, assigned 10,716 cases for investigation, wrote 43,225 citations and made 10,467 arrests. CPD is comprised of 488 POST-certified, sworn officers and 61 civilian workers. It is a highly effective office that could have an even greater impact on crime with well-placed, targeted additional resources.

a. Additional Personnel Resources

Intelligence-Based Policing has enhanced law enforcement practices by using state-of-the-art technologies. These practices and technologies have emphasized the need for analysts to sift through data and make important connections of related crime fighting and crime solving information. In addition to the some 75 additional police officers that we have put on the streets since our OLOST passed in 2008, it is evident that we need additional investigators particularly in the Robbery/Assault/Homicide Division to make certain we are closing the maximum number of cases possible and making the strongest cases possible against suspects resulting in convictions and appropriately long sentences. Currently, we have 86 sworn investigators spread over the 7 divisions of the CPD Investigations Bureau to field 10,716 new case each year. That is an **additional** criminal investigation caseload of 124 per investigator each year. In that vein, this recommended budget provides for 7 new sworn investigator positions and a new non-sworn analyst position.

CPD BUREAU	TITLE	GRADE	SALARY
Investigative Services	Sergeant	18	\$44,062
Investigative Services	Corporal	16	\$40,211
Investigative Services	Corporal	16	\$40,211
Investigative Services	Corporal	16	\$40,211
Investigative Services	Corporal	16	\$40,211
Investigative Services	Corporal	16	\$40,211
Investigative Services	Corporal	16	\$40,211
Administrative Services	Non-Sworn	16	<u>\$37,091</u>
Sub-Total (includes OLOST supplement)			\$322,419
Benefits Cost			<u>\$136,294</u>
TOTAL			\$458,713⁵

The addition of these positions will have a direct effect on decreasing investigator caseload, increasing closed cases, lengthening sentences for those convicted, reducing crime, reducing costly overtime pay and reducing unsustainable workloads for our current investigators. The addition of these positions will be budget neutral as they can be largely funded through the reallocation of duplicative law enforcement resources currently allocated to non-911 responder agencies, which have only ancillary law enforcement duties.

b. Reform and Restructure of Police Pay

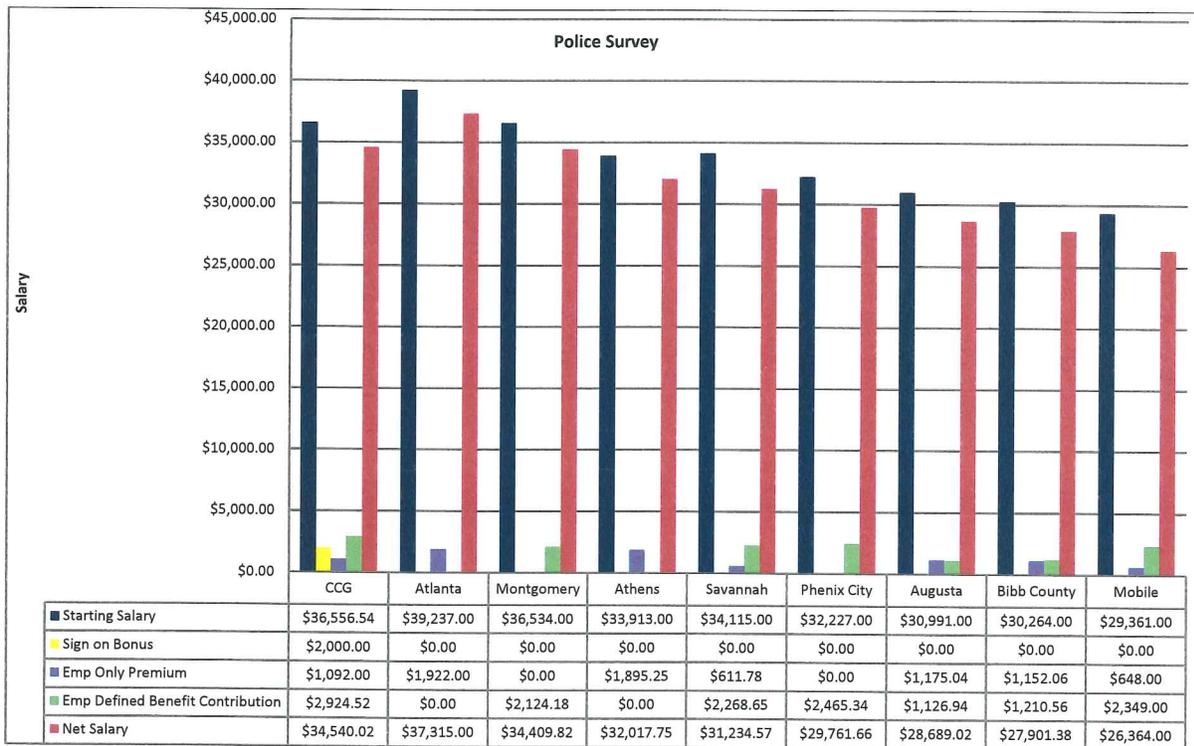
In years past, CCG has had a variety of pay plans for General Government and Public Safety employees. Those plans have not been funded regularly with incremental raises or even cost of living adjustments; though, the University of Georgia shows our current CCG pay plan is set at 100% of comparable market pay and we have provided 6% across the board pay adjustments for our employees over the last four years. The erratic funding of varying pay plans over several decades has resulted in pay compression throughout CCG. CCG is in need of a pay plan that is mandated to be followed and, accordingly, any such plan must be prudently and responsibly devised so that mandate can be met without hardship or dramatic effect to the normal functioning of CCG. Accordingly, a Mayor's Commission to Reform the CCG Pay Plan will be established for the purpose of providing recommendations to Council of methods to resolve compression and other salary and benefits issues regarding all of our hardworking employees.

In the meantime, we have an opportunity to apply a pilot project of sorts within the CPD using mostly existing monies already appropriated to that department for compensation purposes. This proposal addresses an immediate challenge our community faces, better uses our CPD existing funding, and may well serve as an exemplar of how we might structure a solution to salary compression throughout CCG.

⁵ Some \$34,300 in uniforms and equipment will be required for these new positions.

Pay compression has been particularly impactful in the Columbus Police Department where the work schedule, promotion process and the application of a confused and inefficient payment system known as “Straight Time” or “Gap Time” have resulted in compensation resources being used in a manner that allows newly hired officers to be compensated at the same or similar pay scale as more senior officers. This has resulted in more than a decade of morale and retention issues.

In 2008, the citizens passed a penny sales tax known as the OLOST in part to address entry-level pay issues and to increase pay across the board for law enforcement officers. The entry pay for police officers at CPD is relatively competitive:



However, the pay supplement provided for officers’ was a flat amount of \$3,000, which exacerbated compression.⁶ In addition to the foregoing, officers in Columbus/Muscogee County have long considered themselves as hourly employees, though they are compensated as salaried employees and though the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) provides all such officers are partially-exempt salaried employees working up to a 171 hour schedule in a 28 -day work cycle for that salary. After said 171 hours worked, officers receive legally mandated time and one-half hourly overtime pay. Because of the years-long confusion over the correct application of officers’ salaried pay, many patchwork compensation schemes have developed. One has historically been called

⁶ This supplement amount is now \$3,121 due to the 4% pay increase due to Pension Reform. The supplement curiously is not subject to Cost of Living Adjustments. We are working to bring these supplements into the base pay for law enforcement officers in order to stop such anomalies.

“Straight Time” or “Gap Time” through which officers work 160 hours for their salary and then are paid hourly on top of their salary for any time worked up to 171 hours, after which point they earn the legally mandated time and one-half overtime.

This patchwork system works to the officers’ disadvantage in what is called “short weeks”, where officers are scheduled to work less than 160 hours and have their pay docked for this short fall. This utterly contrived payment scheme is inconsistent with federal law, guidelines and best practices. This so-called Straight/Gap Time scheme costs CCG millions of dollars (particularly in the Sheriff’s Office) in extra pay, creates erratic pay rates from year to year and ignores the FLSA provision of officers as partially-exempt employees. Quite simply, officers’ salaries need to be set at a rate that compensates them for up to 171 hours, whether they work all of those hours or not, and, thereafter, they will receive the legally mandated time and one-half overtime. In order to correct this dysfunctional and costly patchwork system and to relieve the damaging effects of compression, the compensation system within the Columbus Police Department must be structurally reformed with management directives and process that eliminates the culture of “Straight Time” or “Gap Time”.

In an attempt to begin to address compression and to end the inefficient pay practices of the Columbus Police Department, the Mayor’s Commission on Officer Retention and Longevity was convened in September of 2014. The Commission was comprised of approximately 30 members of the Columbus Police Department from varying divisions, ranks and seniority. Pertinent CCG staff from our Finance and Human Resource Departments and two Columbus Council members joined the regular meetings. Data and anecdotal information was received and various potential solutions and eight pay “Options” were vetted. The conclusions were not surprising given the complexity of the challenge and the natural resistance to change. Those conclusions are: 1) there is no consensus as to a potential solution because of sharply divergent interests by assignment, rank and seniority; and, 2) the consistent bargaining position of the officers was to correct the pay compression and other pay plan issues now and all at once, which is a cost of \$15 million or more and would require a new comprehensive pay plan.

Despite the lack of consensus on a particular option or proposed solution, there was broad consensus that something needed to be done and could be done. In the end, the Administration believes we can offer a proposed solution that uses the revenue currently spent for police pay to establish a better, fairer pay system which begins to address compression. This FY2016 Recommended Budget submits for Council consideration a reallocation of monies spent inefficiently for Straight/Gap Time and signing bonuses to a graduated interval pay plan.

Proposed CPD Salary Restructure					
Graduated Pay Increases up to 35 Years of Service	Base Pay Is Increased By	Total Cost of Changes 1 st Year	Total Cost of Changes 2 nd Year	2-Year Financial Impact	
After 1 Year Service	\$750	\$42,750	\$17,250	Remove Sign Bonus	(\$54,500)
After 3 Years Service	\$1,000	\$47,000	\$25,000	Remove Gap Time	(\$514,282)
After 5 Years Service	\$1,200	\$94,800	\$27,600	Add Increase Year 1	\$531,050
After 7 Years Service	\$1,200	\$60,000	\$36,000	Add Increase Year 2	\$173,350
After 10 Years Service	\$1,500	\$54,000	\$13,500	Court Pay	\$115,450 ⁷
After 15 Years Service	\$1,500	\$54,000	\$19,500	Net 2 Year Impact	\$135,618
After 20 Years Service	\$1,500	\$42,000	\$12,000	Benefits Impact	<u>\$6,182</u>
After 25 Years Service	\$1,500	\$67,500	\$7,500	Total 2 Year Impact	\$141,800
After 30 Years Service	\$1,500	\$69,000	\$15,000		
		\$531,050	\$173,350		

This proposal, which was known as “Option 2” to the Mayor’s Commission on Officer Retention and Longevity, provides that all officers would receive a graduated pay enhancement in FY2016 according to their years of service and, thereafter, would receive a pay enhancement only upon the anniversary markers provided in the chart. Effective July 1, 2015, every officer would find the last anniversary marker they have reached on the chart and their base salary would be increased by that amount. Thereafter, an officer’s base pay would be enhanced on the next anniversary marker, and not in between. The object of this pay scale is to incentivize longevity, reduce pay compression, and eliminate “Straight Time” or “Gap Time”. In application, this pay schedule begins to correct systemic pay issues within the police department and utilizes city revenue resources efficiently and consistent with FLSA guidance.

⁷ This new system creates an opportunity to greatly reduce Court Pay by scheduling court appearances (to the extent possible) within the 171 hours an officer is scheduled to work in a 28-day cycle. This is a management/scheduling issue and may result in as much as a \$100,000 reduction in the Total 2 Year Impact of this proposal, bringing the two-year cost of the proposal to approximately \$40,000.

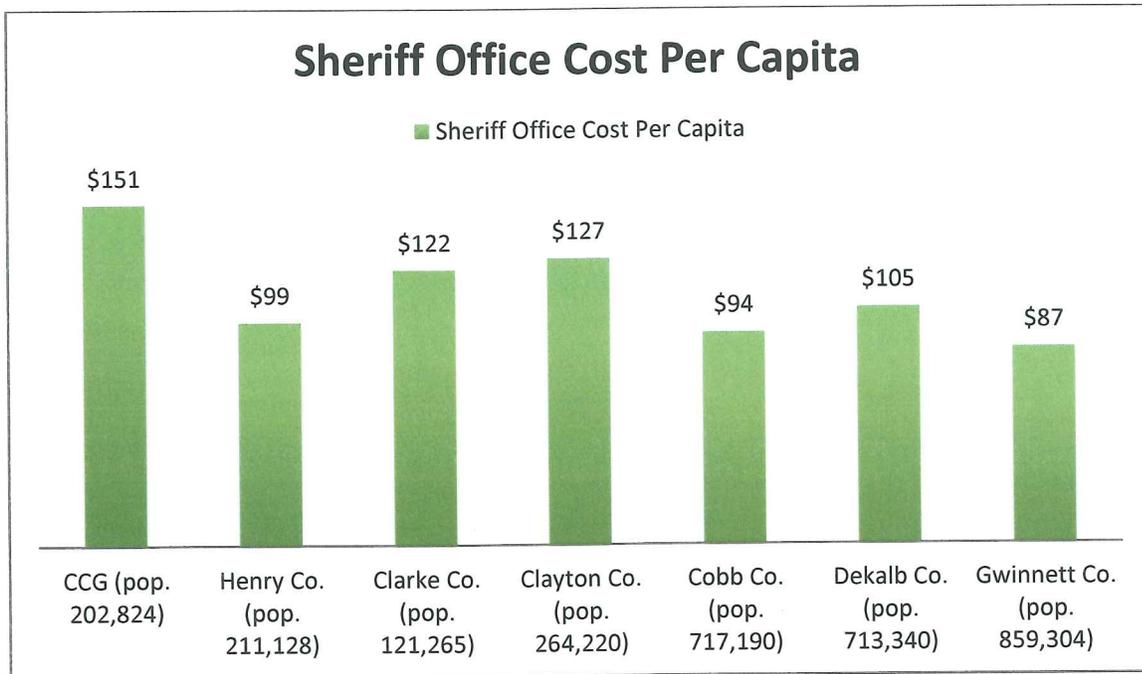
2. Sheriff's Office

The Muscogee County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) is in charge of civil service of process for the courts, security for the courts, a county jail and such other duties as may be imposed by law or are necessary to the Office. The Sheriff's Office must be funded to perform "some" law enforcement or peacekeeping services, but those services are ancillary to the services provided by the Columbus Police Department and are not required to be duplicative of other law enforcement resources within the county. It is the exclusive role of Council to review law enforcement resources within the county in determining budget appropriations.

In the last six years, the Sheriff's Office has been \$11.3 million over budget and has required CCG to expend some 22 days from our General Fund Reserve monies to cover those overages. These overruns have occurred despite \$24-\$29 million in annual funds allocated to the Sheriff's Office in each of the last six years.⁸ Had it not been for these overruns, our current General Fund Reserve would stand at over 83 days, well over the required 60-day Reserve minimum. These annual overruns, together with the stagnant revenues following the Great Recession, have brought CCG perilously close to the edge of financial stability. Often these overruns are not known to CCG because the accounting management practices of MCSO result in hundreds of thousands of dollars in invoices being held and not submitted to CCG until months after the close of the fiscal year in which the expense was incurred.

CCG has reviewed Sheriff Offices in counties around the state where there is both a Sheriff's Office and a County Police Department as in Muscogee County. We have learned that Muscogee County appropriates considerably more revenue per capita for the MCSO than other such jurisdictions:

⁸ The Sheriff's Office has expended \$173,276,203 in six years, which comprised 11.67% of all CCG expenditures for over 50 departments, elected offices, agencies, boards, and authorities funded by the taxpayers of this jurisdiction



Indeed, this graph demonstrates that Muscogee County spends approximately \$5+ million more in comparable per capita dollars per year for our Sheriff’s Office than any other community with the same County Police Department/Sheriff’s Office construct. No matter how we look at the numbers, whether by resident population, jail capacity, number of municipal entities within the county or whether the county has a consolidated government, CCG expends more per capita than any other jurisdiction with a Sheriff’s Office and a County Police Department.

As a result of: 1) Council’s referral to review expenditures and structure for duplicative law enforcement services; 2) years of citizen inquiries regarding duplicative law enforcement services; 3) dramatic financial effects of budget issues within the Sheriff’s Office; 4) internal and independent analyses of comparable costs of Sheriff Offices in other communities; and 5) concerted efforts of numerous elected offices to curb inefficiencies affecting court process and jail costs through collaborative action, we hereinafter recommend the realignment of certain law enforcement and other resources for purposes of efficiency and effectiveness. We note that this analysis should not be a one-time consideration. Such an analysis should be undertaken each year during the budget process to ensure that the legal mission of the Sheriff is funded and that duplicative law enforcement resources are minimized, because the existence of three separate agencies with asserted law enforcement capacity will tend toward duplication without budgetary review and oversight.

a. FY2016 Recommended Budget for Sheriff’s Office

Based on the information and data presented in this letter, the attachments hereto and the voluminous additional data and information tendered and made available to Council to include the

MCSO's FY2016 budget request forms, the total recommend FY2016 budget for the Sheriff's Office is \$26,972,433. This recommended budget includes proposed additions to MCSO's FY2015 budget of \$237,200 for capital, such as new jail washers, dryers, kitchen equipment, clinic medical equipment and updated security equipment, among other proposed capital expenditures. The FY2016 recommended budget for MCSO also is increased \$600,000 due to monetary transfers for recently filled positions.

The FY2015 Adopted Budget for the Sheriff's Office was \$27,653,956, an approximate \$410,000 increase over its FY2014 Adopted Budget.

b. Duplicative Investigative Resources

In assessing duplicative law enforcement resources for purposes of this FY2016 budget, we note that CCG has been funding twelve positions within the Investigation Unit of the Sheriff's Office, though the mission of that office is limited to running a jail, providing court security and service of process, and providing some law enforcement service within the county. Rarely should MCSO investigate crime that is associated with a 911 request or that is not in collaboration with another law enforcement agency. The twelve Investigation Unit positions are comprised of: 1 Lieutenant; 1 Sergeant; and 10 Deputies or Deputy Technicians. The Sheriff's FY2015 Service Allocation demonstrates that the job assignments associated with these positions include activities that are duplicative of many of the efforts of the seven divisions of the CPD Bureau of Investigative Services. The stated tasks of the MCSO Investigation Division include: Criminal Investigations (surveillance, interviews, Computerized Voice Stress Analysis (CVSA), criminal warrants, searches, crime reports); Narcotic Investigations (same); and Internal Investigations (jail investigations, K-9 searches, interviews, CVSA, drug testing, assistance to other law enforcement agencies). Two of the three stated activities of the Division are duplicative of law enforcement services provided by CPD. Attached as **Exhibit D** is a chart showing the overlapping job descriptions and listed duties of investigators in MCSO and in CPD.

If CCG wishes to reduce duplicative law enforcement resources, it is recommended that Council limit its funding of this function and maintain funding only for the Sheriff's Office Lieutenant, Sergeant, and two deputy investigation positions. This allocation maintains in MCSO the deputy position funded by OLOST proceeds. It is recommended that the MCSO budget be reduced by the value of eight positions at a Grade 16 with a salary of \$37,091, plus OLOST supplement of \$3,121 and \$17,356 in benefits for a total recommended budget reduction of \$460,544, so that these monetary resources may be reallocated to CPD in order to fund the needed investigation positions identified above. This budgetary reallocation will increase efficiency and maximize the law enforcement effectiveness on the streets of our community and in the lives of our citizens.

This reallocation leaves the Sheriff with funding for Internal Investigations, assistance with investigations of other law enforcement agencies when needed and some other law enforcement activities. Should the Sheriff wish to maintain these duplicative investigative resources within MCSO, he may have that prerogative and may do so through management and priority judgments by redistributing monetary resources otherwise appropriated for the prescribed mission of the

office. The Sheriff also may reallocate appropriated funds through enacting efficiencies, which create savings to be redirected. Doing so may suggest those funds are not needed for the mission for which they have been appropriated; however, nothing requires that CCG allocate funding simply because the Sheriff or any other elected officer wishes to provide a service; and, certainly, nothing requires CCG to fund services primarily provided elsewhere.

It is not the object of this reallocation to layoff or end the employment of any existing investigator employed with the Sheriff's Office. In addition to the possibility of the Sheriff finding a way to fund the positions through his FY2016 Adopted Budget, the individuals that currently hold the MCSO investigative positions can have the right of first refusal for the CPD positions, for which they should qualify and be otherwise eligible.

c. Duplicative SWAT Team Resources

The MCSO uses paramilitary equipment to include a converted armored tank with turret, which was obtained through a Homeland security grant, and a mobile command unit. This equipment was recently the subject of an Internal Audit by CCG. A report was issued and some equipment reassigned to the appropriate agency for purposes of a coordinated Homeland Security objective. Some equipment was left housed within MCSO by agreement, and it is expressly held for the general and shared use of any CCG Department or Office. Any equipment purchased or maintained with funds of, or by agreement with, the local governing authority, here CCG, and used for the shared benefit of the community, is the property of CCG regardless of where it may be housed on a daily basis.

MCSO regularly conducts SWAT team exercises, including sniper training, crisis negotiation, and tactical team training. See Exhibit E (newspaper article regarding MCSO SWAT team exercise). This equipment and these activities are similar to and duplicative of SWAT and tactical resources provided by CPD. The MCSO Service Allocation ascribes combined full-time equivalent units of approximately 3 positions to these SWAT team and tactical services.⁹ Since these services are not mandated by the mission of MCSO, this FY2016 Recommended Budget proposes that Council reduce the Sheriff's Office budget by the salary and benefit value of three deputies, or \$159,186, in order to avoid duplicative or wasteful resources. It is recommended that these resources be allocated to replenish the General Fund Reserve, from which it may be reallocated by Council for non-duplicative law enforcement needs.

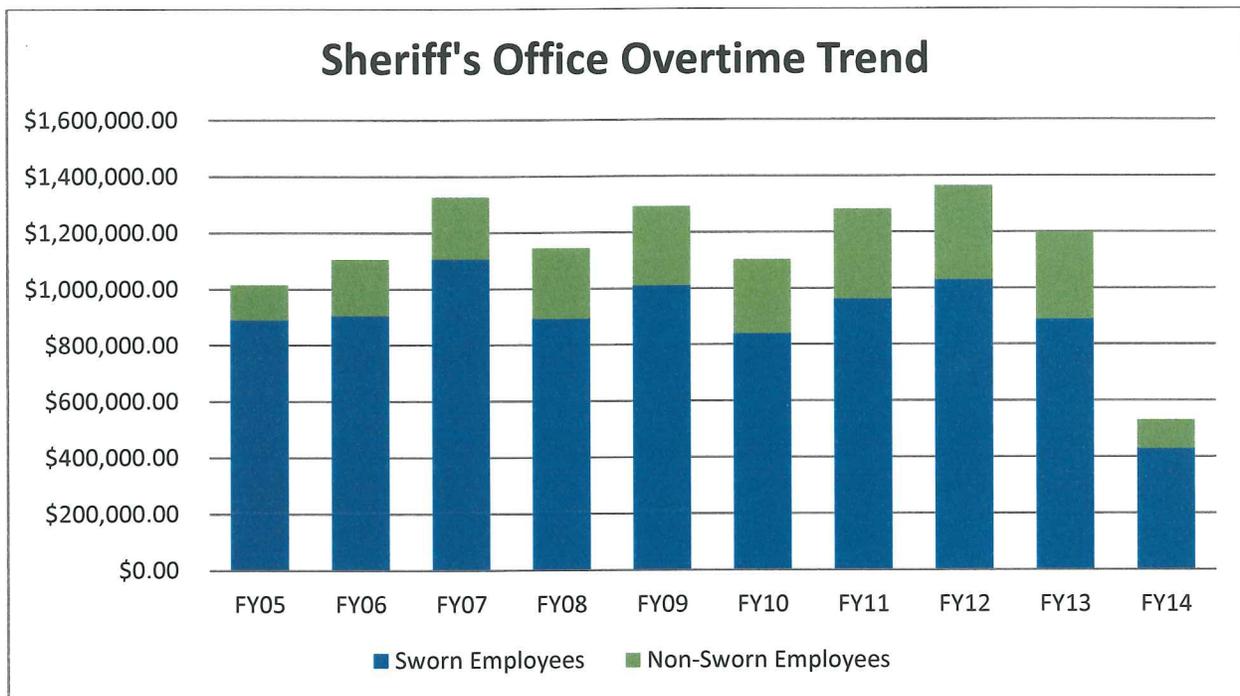
Should the Sheriff wish to maintain these duplicative SWAT and tactical resources within MCSO, the Sheriff may have that prerogative. He can do so through management and priority judgments by redistributing monetary resources otherwise budgeted by Council for the prescribed mission of the Sheriff's Office. The Sheriff also may reallocate appropriated funds through enacting efficiencies, which create savings to be redirected. Doing so may suggest those funds are not

⁹ A Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) is a unit that indicates the workload of an employed person and can be comprised of fractions of multiple duties or part-time positions. An FTE of 1.0 equates to a full-time worker.

needed for the mission for which they have been appropriated. However, nothing requires that CCG allocate funding simply because the Sheriff or any other elected officer wishes to provide a service; and, certainly, nothing requires CCG to fund services primarily provided elsewhere.

d. Duplicative Monetary Resources for “Straight Time” or “Gap Time” Pay

For years MCSO has used overtime as a compensation enhancement strategy, not as an exception to the normal work schedule. MCSO has expended on average \$1,129,377 in overtime annually over the last six years. The majority of that overtime average, or some \$860,455, is related to the scheduling of sworn officers and the discretionary payment by MCSO of costly Straight/Gap Time.



Though improvement was made in MCSO overtime in FY2014, we have determined that 90% of MCSO overtime pay to sworn officers is due to a managerial scheduling decision, which builds in Straight/Gap Time pay and results in increased payroll and increased benefits costs to CCG.

As noted above, Straight/Gap Time pays sworn employees an hourly rate on top of their salary, or double time. This pay method is not required by law or the mission of the Sheriff’s Office. It is a managerial decision to inflate pay, which is in conflict with FLSA directives and is duplicative of salaried pay provided. The citizens and CCG are not required to, nor should they in the exercise of fiscal prudence, pay for such duplication of compensation.

Based on personnel and payroll records, presentations and public discussion at Council meetings, and other information gathering meetings with city leaders (to include the Sheriff) regarding Straight/Gap, this recommended budget provides for \$50,000 in overtime to MCSO, which we would hope would be dedicated to only that overtime required under federal law by the FLSA.

Should the Sheriff wish to continue the Straight/Gap Time pay supplement, he may redirect savings from efficiencies or other monies Council appropriates to MCSO for its required office mission. The \$300,000 normally budgeted to MCSO for overtime is recommended to be placed in the General Fund Reserve until otherwise appropriated by Council for non-duplicative law enforcement needs.

e. Expedited Prisoner Disposition Efforts

Over the past year, Superior Court Chief Judge Gil McBride has led an effort to reduce the time it takes to move criminal defendants through the court system thereby reducing the days spent in the jail and the attendant costs per prisoner per day. The Sheriff, the District Attorney, the Public Defender, and many other stakeholders throughout the community have participated in this process. These elected officials, to include the Sheriff, have proposed an early prisoner release program known as the “Rapid Resolution Initiative” (RRI). The object of RRI is to streamline or expedite less complicated cases, such as first offender cases or cases where the defendant wishes to enter a plea deal. See Exhibit F (information on the proposed RRI program). Currently, due to strained resources and structural inefficiencies in the prosecutorial and court systems, these cases can take as long to process through the courts as much more complex criminal cases. Too often, defendants sit months in the county jail awaiting the adjudication of their case, when under a targeted RRI program, that wait could be reduced to a few weeks, or less. With a \$40 per day per prisoner cost, county jail savings can be realized through the lessened jail stay. It is estimated that with an investment of \$458,093, RRI will return an immediate and conservative FY2016 savings in jail costs of \$540,000.

RRI has the following estimated costs:

OFFICE	NUMBER	POSITION	COST WITH BENEFITS
Public Defender	1	Assistant Public Defender II	\$73,302
Public Defender	1	Assistant Public Defender II	\$70,046
Public Defender	N/A	Equipment/Supplies	\$65,440
District Attorney	2	Assistant District Attorney	\$145,266
District Attorney	1	Investigator	\$50,772
District Attorney	1	Clerk	\$40,900
District Attorney	N/A	Equipment/Supplies	\$12,367
TOTAL RRI COSTS			\$458,093

Accordingly, it is recommended that Council recoup and reallocate \$458,093 of the expected savings of this RRI program from the Sheriff’s Office budget.

f. Pursuit Vehicles and Take-Home Cars

CCG has funded some 113 vehicles for MCSO. Approximately, 61 of these vehicles are pursuit vehicles and approximately 55 of those are take-home pursuit vehicles. Pursuit vehicles cost roughly \$50,000 each. That increased cost is due to a \$25,000 technology package added to each pursuit vehicle. Take-home cars also are costly because those cars use city fuel to travel to and from home and to serve in off-duty security jobs, which fuel is funded by the taxpayers.

Because the Sheriff's Office is not required to provide traffic enforcement, law enforcement patrol services, or respond to 911 calls as part of its mission, the number of costly pursuit vehicles funded by CCG is duplicative and excessive for the actual mission of that office.

Accordingly, it is recommended that Council fund no more than 26 pursuit vehicles and no more than 26 take-home cars for the Sheriff's Office. According to the MCSO Service Allocation, the Sheriff's Office has approximately 21 positions in its "Patrol" division, which primarily serves civil process and warrants throughout the community. The Sheriff may assign the pursuit/take-home vehicles as he sees fit. This is a policy recommendation that is not expected to have any capital budget impact in FY2016 as the current number of pursuit and take-home vehicles assigned to the Sheriff's Office far exceeds these recommended numbers so that these new thresholds can be achieved over the next several years via attrition. It is expected that this more fiscally prudent change in policy will result in saving \$875,000 in capital expenditures in immediate future years and should be adopted now to enhance the ease of implementation. There will also be a sum saved in fuel cost by reducing the number of take-home vehicles, and it is here recommended that the Sheriff's Budget be reduced by \$20,000 due to fuel savings and said sum be placed in the General Fund Reserve until otherwise appropriated by Council for non-duplicative law enforcement needs.

g. Other Budgetary Resources

The foregoing proposed reallocations are in no way meant to be a comprehensive assessment of resources that are potentially duplicative or beyond the mission of the Sheriff's Office. This review has indicated that there are other opportunities for better use of fiscal resources, which should be explored by the Sheriff and Council. Should Council wish to have a work session to discuss these additional areas for future budget years or wish to conduct an audit of the Sheriff's Office, as is its right, we may pursue that. At this time, however, it is recommended that the above limited reallocations be adopted by Council.

3. Marshal's Office

The Municipal Court Marshal's Office has similar duties and powers of the sheriff of Muscogee County, but only so far as said duties and powers may be applicable to the Municipal Court of Columbus/Muscogee County and only so far as those duties and powers are not inconsistent with the Local Act which defines the jurisdiction of that Court. Accordingly, any law enforcement or peacekeeping services of the Marshal's Office are limited to the jurisdiction of the Municipal Court and, like the Sheriff's Office, are ancillary to the services provided by the Columbus Police

Department. Said services are not required to be duplicative of other law enforcement resources within the county.

The Municipal Marshal's Office is comprised of 22 full-time positions. Council also provides funding for bailiff positions. In FY2014 the Marshal's Office was \$13,500 over its \$1,589,196 Adopted Budget. In FY2015, the Marshal's Office was appropriated \$1,579,177. This recommended budget proposes the Marshal's Office FY2016 budget at \$1,236,498.

a. Duplicative Law Enforcement Resources

Of said full-time positions, the Marshal has 19 deputies for the purposes of court security, service of civil documents, and the execution of evictions associated with the Municipal Court. Regularly, however, these deputies are seen throughout the community conducting traffic enforcement details with nine or ten Marshal's Office pursuit vehicles. See Exhibit G (an exemplar media report of a Marshal's Office traffic detail). These traffic details last hours and are not within the mission of the Municipal Court Marshal's Office. Said traffic enforcement efforts are, however, within the purview of CPD. Accordingly, this proposed budget recommends a reduction in Municipal Court Marshal deputies to 13, which results in a savings of \$ 318,384 to be reallocated to the General Fund Reserve until appropriated by Council for non-duplicative law enforcement purposes. Because CPD currently has open/funded patrol positions which engage in traffic enforcement, the individual deputies can have the right of first refusal for those positions, for which they should qualify and be otherwise eligible.

b. Pursuit Vehicles and Take-Home Cars

The Marshal's Office has some 25 vehicles purchased by CCG. Approximately, 13 of these vehicles are pursuit vehicles and approximately 18 are take-home vehicles. Pursuit vehicles cost roughly \$50,000 each as discussed above. Because it is not within the mission of the Municipal Court Marshal's Office to provide traffic enforcement, law enforcement patrol services, or take 911 calls, the number of costly pursuit and take-home vehicles is duplicative and unnecessary.

It is recommended that going forward Council fund no pursuit vehicles and no more than 5 take-home cars for the Municipal Court Marshal's Office. This is a policy recommendation that is not expected to have any capital budget impact in FY2016 as the current number of pursuit and take-home vehicles assigned to the Marshal's Office exceeds these recommended numbers so that the new thresholds can be achieved over the next several years via attrition. It is expected that this more fiscally prudent change in policy will result in saving \$325,000 in capital expenditures in immediate future years and should be adopted now to enhance the ease of implementation. There will also be a fuel cost savings due to the reduction in take-home vehicles in FY2016. It is here recommended that the Marshal's Office Budget be reduced by \$3,000 due to fuel savings and that said sum be placed in the General Fund Reserve until otherwise appropriated by Council for non-duplicative law enforcement needs.

As for excess pursuit vehicles due to the reduction of the 6 deputy positions, it is recommended that CCG transfer any idle vehicles to CPD where there is need for such vehicles to fulfill their law enforcement mission.

c. Duplication of SWAT and Tactical Operations

The Marshal's Office uses tactical equipment and trains its deputies in SWAT and tactical type operations. See Exhibit H (media articles about the Marshal's Office acquiring drones for surveillance purposes and running active shooter response and other tactical scenarios). These acquisitions and activities have a financial impact on CCG. These activities, training courses and equipment are beyond the mission of the Municipal Court Marshal's Office and are duplicative of resources provided by the CPD SWAT and tactical units. Accordingly, this recommended budget proposes a reduction in operating expenses of \$17,000, which is proposed to be moved to the General Fund Reserve until appropriated by Council for non-duplicative law enforcement purposes.

III. Conclusion:

This Mayor's FY2016 Recommended Budget Letter is presented together with the City Manager's budget letter and the FY2016 Recommended Budget Book. This FY2016 Recommended Budget has been presented earlier than is typical in order to allow Council ample time to deliberate the important policy issues set forth herein. Through the next two months of budget meetings, I believe Council will find this recommended budget sets a reasonable and balanced way forward. We should be emboldened by the progress we have made over the past few difficult years, and know the decisions we make this year will likewise move us toward greater financial security and community prosperity.

I want to thank our City Manager Isaiah Hugley, Finance Director Pam Hodge, our Department Heads, our elected partners and staff for their tremendous assistance in the effort of composing this Mayor's recommended balanced budget.

To our Council, I thank you in advance for the hard work that will be necessary to complete this budget process. This is the Columbus, Georgia Consolidated Government Mayor's Recommended Fiscal Year 2016 Budget submitted for your consideration and approval.

Very truly yours,



Teresa Pike Tomlinson
Mayor
Consolidated Government of Columbus, Georgia

Recommended Fee Increases

Fee	Current	Proposed	Increased by	Total Increase
Impoundment Fee	\$50	\$95	\$45	\$131,268.00
Board Fee	\$5/day	\$10/day	\$5/day	\$7,220.00
Hobby Kennel Permit	\$25/year	\$100/year	\$75/year	\$200.00
Guard Dog Permit	\$25	\$50	\$25	\$150.00
Dangerous/Vicious Dog Permit	\$100/year	\$150/year	\$50/year	\$3,000.00
Cardboard Carriers Fee	\$5	\$7	\$2	\$840.00
Trap Rental User Fee	\$0	\$10/renter	\$10/renter	\$500.00
Owner Surrender Fee	\$0	\$20/each	\$20/each	\$38,140.00
Owner Requested Euthanasia Fee	\$0	\$10/each	\$10/each	\$1,340.00
Small Animal Disposal Fee	\$0	\$10/each	\$10/each	\$4,440.00
Fence Check Fee	\$0	\$25	\$25	\$500.00
Lot Clearing Administration Fee	\$0	\$75	\$75	\$45,900.00
TOTAL				\$233,498.00

One Day per Week Trash Pickup

The shift in schedule to one day per week pickup can be addressed simply. We will be picking up trash on the same day as recycling is picked up at all residences. On weeks with Monday or Tuesday holidays we will do our usual shift in days using Wednesday to accommodate the four day week. For those holidays resulting in two days off, such as Thanksgiving, we will perform all trash pickups on Mondays and Tuesday of that week, reverting to the old schedule. (We will not be able to do a make-up day for yard waste or recycling.)

A change to one day per week trash pickup will accomplish several goals. First and foremost, it will reduce the number of trucks and drivers needed for garbage collection, freeing up those drivers and trucks to help make up the existing shortfall of drivers we are currently experiencing for recycling collection due to increased tonnage. Further, it will encourage an increase in recycling, thereby reducing the volume of trash being taken to the landfill, reducing annual landfill set asides for closure and post closure costs, delay future landfill construction costs and increase revenues from the sale of recyclable materials.

Cost avoidance for three drivers, trucks and fuel reassigned to recycling is \$495,000 annually (assuming lease of trucks and no repair/maintenance costs).

During FY14, the estimated life of the landfill increased by nearly four years, from 28.7 years life expectancy to 32.3 years, rather than being reduced by one year, resulting in five additional years of life. This is the direct result of diversion of material to the recycling plant, as well as improved compaction due to the purchase of a new compactor and hiring of a new operator.

Yard Waste Recycling

The change from the use of plastic bags for yard waste to either containers or biodegradable bags will also result in more efficient collection operations, freeing up three trucks and drivers that can also be moved to recycling with the same operational savings of \$495,000.

In addition, the City would see savings of \$23,400 for bags to put the citizens' bags in, \$1,500 for box cutters to open the bags and \$1,500 for fuel to take the plastic bags to the landfill. Those bags also consume landfill space.

OLOST PUBLIC SAFETY CAPITAL RECOMMENDATION

POLICE	1,007,300	(20) Police Pursuit Vehicles with Technology Package
POLICE	80,835	(3) Harley Davidson Motorcycles with Radar Unit
POLICE	394,380	(21) Unmarked Police Vehicles
Subtotal	1,482,515	
FIRE & EMS	1,300,000	Burn Building
FIRE & EMS	44,000	(40) SCBA Cylinders
FIRE & EMS	156,000	(120) Protective Clothing for existing personnel
FIRE & EMS	510,000	(2) Ambulances
Subtotal	2,010,000	
MCP	15,327	(3) Motorola APX7000 Radios
MCP	1,878	(4) Radios
MCP	22,500	(15) Motorola PM400 Radio (Emergency Handheld)
MCP	1,650	(15) Motorola XTS 1500 Radios
MCP	28,355	(1) Pursuit Vehicle with Emergency Package
Subtotal	69,710	
SHERIFF	47,350	(1) Washer
SHERIFF	9,800	(1) Dryer
SHERIFF	16,793	(1) Tilt Kettle
SHERIFF	9,370	(2) Food Warmer
SHERIFF	39,600	(12) Motorol Radio & equipment
SHERIFF	7,964	(4) Ice Machines
SHERIFF	9,648	Centurion Panic Alarm System (Retrofit)
SHERIFF	58,000	Fire Alarm System
SHERIFF	6,200	EKG
SHERIFF	24,000	(8) AED
SHERIFF	2,375	O2 Concentrator
SHERIFF	4,400	(2) Hospital Beds
SHERIFF	1,700	Specialized lift for oversize wheelchair patients
Subtotal	237,200	
CAPITAL RESERVE	90,000	
TOTAL	3,889,425	

Sheriff's Office and Police Department Positions

Major duties for each position; all positions are in exchangeable.

Sheriff's Office	Sheriff Office	Police Department
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Investigator G-16</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducts criminal investigations of incidents within the Sheriff's Department. • Conducts criminal investigations of crimes committed against local businesses. • Investigates a variety of crimes, including assaults, thefts, identity thefts, and sex crimes. • Executes high risk search warrants and high risk arrest warrants. • Conducts special investigations involving mid- to upper-level narcotics dealers. • Conducts interviews using the Computer Voice Stress Analyzer. • Performs special details such as dignitary protection or building security. 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>ID & DS Technician G-16</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fingerprints, photographs and identifies inmates. • Classifies fingerprint cards. • Files fingerprint cards, photographs and criminal history records. • Runs checks on the computer for information on individuals. • Locates inmates in the jail for identification purposes. • Records identifying information obtained through interviews with inmates. • Fingerprints, classifies and searches files to obtain an identification of inmates giving false information. • Arrests persons on outstanding warrants, bond surrenders, and criminal offenses with probable cause. • Completes arrests and booking reports. • Attends court sessions and testifies as required for arrested persons, and in cases involving identification sergeant duties. • Assists with the provision of jail security and processing of inmates. • Enters data to the computer system. • Makes photographs from 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Detective, Technician and Corporal G-16</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigates assigned cases. Processes crime scenes; obtain facts and evidence about cases. • Retrieves, process, examine and secures physical evidence; transports evidence to the lab. • Writes reports; records the progress of each case; maintains case files. • Interviews victims and suspects. Interacts with victims and the family members of victims. • Reviews latent fingerprints. • Performs interrogations; conducts polygraph examinations. Determines proper charges; prepares case files for the District Attorney. • Serves as recruiting officer and conducts background investigations • Testifies in court as needed. • Serves arrest and search warrants. • Oversees the processing and maintenance of police reports and records. • Follows up on old open cases. • Performs the duties of a Field Training Officer. Supervises and disciplines assigned personnel. • Issues and orders uniforms and patrol equipment. • Issues and maintains vehicles and radios.

	<p>negatives on file.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selects and provides photographs for line-ups as requested. • Maintains and files a variety of computerized and paper records pertaining to the identification of inmates. • Conducts crime scene searches as requested; examines scenes to obtain clues and gather physical evidence. • Identifies, collects, marks, analyzes and preserves physical evidence; photographs crime scenes, lifts and classifies fingerprints, and makes composites. • Develops leads for suspects in cases after analyzing physical evidence collected at crime scenes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attends community relations events. • Supervises crossing guards.
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FTO's in Sheriff's Office, G16, similar to Corporal, G-16, in CPD.

LOCAL & REGION



Dimon
Kendrick-Holmes

Online extra

Police say a Pennsylvania man caused more than \$14,000 damage to several other vehicles when he took a dare to do a "doughnut" with his pickup truck in a bar parking lot. Police say 35-year-old Brett Whitmire's truck kicked up damaging stones as it spun in a tight circle in the parking lot of the Beer Garden in Washington Township on Aug. 18. Butler County prosecutors say they're willing to drop a felony criminal mischief charge if Whitmire, of Butler, pays for the damage.

Read the full story at www.ledger-enquirer.com

Online comment of the day

"Beautiful story. These babies are so lucky that they are going to be born to such loving Christian parents who are committed to giving them the best life possible no matter how long or short it may be. May God continue to bless this family." — From "Margie Kekko" on a story we brought you earlier this week about a local woman who is pregnant with conjoined twins.

Add your voice! Story commenting is available on most stories at www.ledger-enquirer.com

Things that go boom

We all shared a big surprise this week. You know, the sonic boom.

More often, we get individual surprises. Sometimes it's bad news, like when your car breaks down at a red light. Sometimes it's good news, like when somebody emails you from a foreign country saying they're about to make you a millionaire.

These individual surprises aren't particularly interesting to the masses, but they're darn interesting to you, and you tell your friends about them, and your friends share your pain or your joy or sometimes they tell you you're a moron.

Which reminds me of a surprise I got this week.

I'd driven to a lunch meeting with two co-workers, and we'd returned and were walking out of a downtown parking garage. They took the handy walkway, which was just wide enough for a couple of people. Instead of waiting and following them, I just walked out the driving entrance, pausing first to allow a car to pass.

That's when I got my surprise.

Something went boom on top of my head.

My first reaction was surprise. My second thought, after realizing that the parking barrier arm had dropped from the sky and bounced off my head, was that I was a moron.

Perhaps it was an even bigger surprise that my companions didn't burst out laughing. But the bar had dropped with such swift violence that they immediately began dispensing the kinds of advice people give to potential concussion victims. You know, like don't take a nap if you suddenly feel sleepy.

They may have even asked me how many fingers they were holding up. I'm not sure.

But I got back to the office and felt fine, which was kind of disappointing because the barrier was heavy, it made a loud noise when it bounced off my head, and it all felt like a big deal, which apparently it wasn't.

That was my surprise. It didn't affect you, but I'm sharing it with you now in the hope that perhaps you will find it mildly amusing — or at least think that I'm a moron, which will make you feel better about yourself and give you the confidence to do something impressive that could benefit society.

On the other hand, the sonic boom was something we all shared. At first you may have

COURT: WOMAN BURNS CAR WITH MOLOTOV COCKTAIL

By TIFFANY STEVENS

tstevens@ledger-enquirer.com

A feud between two women led one 19-year-old to torch a Cadillac de Ville in front of a Third Avenue home using a Molotov cocktail, according to court testimony.

Myshonique Maddox, 19, faced destruction with in-



Maddox

dent, first degree arson and possession of tools used to commit a crime during a Friday morning Columbus Recorder's Court hearing. Firefighters extinguished

the car around 12:30 a.m. Saturday. Columbus Fire and Emergency Medical Services Fire Investigator Danny Irions told the court the vehicle, worth \$1,900, was totaled from the fire.

The car owner later told Irions she and two other witnesses watched Maddox throw the improvised fire

bomb into the passenger side of the vehicle in front of her 4200 block home, according to court testimony.

"Three people witnessed her hold the bottle, light the rag, and I quote: 'Ha b----!' " Irions said, mimicking Maddox throwing the bottle into the car.

Irions said witnesses tes-

tified that Maddox had been involved in several conflicts with the car owner and an unidentified man she was once acquainted with. Irions did not specify the exact reason for the argument between the three.

Judge Michael Ceilinski set Maddox's bond at \$32,500.

In brief

Police seek suspect in August robbery and assault

A 23-year-old Columbus man is being sought in connection with an early August robbery and aggravated assault, as well as two counts of parole violation, police said Friday.



Williams

Marrikus Dayquan Williams allegedly robbed someone outside on Pembroke Drive.

Police said that during robbery, Williams assaulted the victim, who has since recovered.

Williams is described as a 5-foot-4 and 145 pound black man, with three tattoos: the words "C town" and "Mookie" on his right arm and the word "Tarsha" on his left.

Anyone with information about Williams' whereabouts should contact Investigative Services at 706-653-3400.

— Adam Carlson

Robbers pistol whip man on Winston Road

A 25-year-old man suffered a laceration to his cheek after he was pistol whipped Thursday by three robbers on Winston Road, according to a Columbus police report.

The injured man and the 23-year-old victim accompanying him told police the robbers approached them on the 700 block and robbed them of an iPhone around 10:40 p.m.

Anyone with more information should contact In-

EMERGENCY TRAINING AT COLUMBUS TECHNICAL COLLEGE



Law enforcement officers with the special operations group at the Muscogee County Sheriff's Office prepare Friday morning to enter Carl Patrick Hall at Columbus Technical College as part of an emergency training drill.

Officers in the special operations group at the Muscogee County Sheriff's Office spent part of Friday training on the campus of Columbus Technical College.

The scenario for the exercise was that of an active shooter inside Carl Patrick Hall. Campus police officers acted as first responders during the scenario, securing the inner perimeter until the special operations group arrived. Criminal justice students at the school played various roles inside the building.

The training exercise is required by the Technical College System of Georgia. Officials said they will review and evaluate the training exercise to determine if they need to make adjustments so staff and students can be fully prepared in case of a real emergency.



Members of the Columbus Technical College campus police department Felix Davila, front right, along with, from left, Diwana Patterson, Charles Lucas, Cpt. Grace Black and Cpt. Leatha Cyprian, prepare for the emergency training drill by ensuring there are no live rounds in their weapons or on their persons.

Photos by
MIKE HASKEY
mhaskey@ledger-enquirer.com



BEMON G. MCBRIDE, III
CHIEF JUDGE OF SUPERIOR COURTS

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P.O. BOX 1340
COLUMBUS, GEORGIA 31902-1340

TELEPHONE
706/225-4275
FACSIMILE
706/653-4269

March 24, 2015

The Honorable Teresa Pike Tomlinson
Office of the Mayor
P.O. Box 1340
Columbus, GA 31902

Dear Mayor Tomlinson,

Thank you for the time you, the City Manager, Mrs. Hodge and others were able to spend with us a couple of weeks ago concerning the proposed Rapid Resolution Initiative ("RRI").

We are enclosing a summary which outlines this initiative, together with projected cost savings. As we have discussed, RRI is a refinement of a proposal made two years ago to Council.

We continue to believe the need for such a program is present. We believe RRI represents enhanced ability to protect constitutional rights of persons in the Muscogee County Jail with significant financial savings over time to the City of Columbus and its citizens. RRI has been developed in consultation with a number of community leaders and groups, to include the NAACP Columbus Branch, the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance, Project Rebound, the Southern Anti-Racism Network and Sheriff Darr.

As you know, we appreciate the consideration which you, the City Manager, members of Council and Mrs. Hodge bring to this process. We look forward to addressing your questions.

Sincerely yours,

Bemon G. McBride, III
Chief Superior Court Judge

Pura Moffett Flournoy
Chief Circuit Public Defender

Julia Slater
District Attorney

Rapid Resolution Initiative ("RRI")

As outlined in more detail in the attached PowerPoint, the RRI stated goal is to reduce the time between arrest and final case disposition.

By addressing and resolving cases early, we achieve the following:

- Ensure protection and guarantee of constitutional rights;
- Protection of and closure for victims;
- Reduce the daily jail population average as follows:
 - First phase from 900 to 800 per day; and
 - Second phase to 700 per day;
- Increase Court availability for more complex cases;
- Improved relations between the city, courts and community; and
- Realize both short and long term cost savings to the city.

Cost Factors

The program is primarily personnel cost driven as follows:

District Attorney's Office
Four (4) Positions

\$244,402

Public Defender's Office
Three (3) Positions

\$142,670

One position is cost neutral and is a result of reclassification in the current budget creating a new position (\$76,000)

Both offices will incur one time capital outlay cost for office space reconfiguration.

Cost Savings

The program will have both immediate and long term savings. While the average daily cost to house a defendant in pretrial custody is an average of \$40 a day, much of that cost is institution- wide and annualized. A conservative cost savings realized immediately upon release is \$15 a day per inmate.

Immediate Savings

A decrease from 900 to 800 average daily population yields a cost savings of \$45,000 a month and \$540,000 annually.

Long Term Savings

A 900 to 700 decrease in average daily population would not only save \$1,080,000 but would also eliminate the need for a \$40 million plus jail capital expansion and the accompanying annual staffing and maintenance cost.

This would result in additional court resources for more complex cases, leading to early completion and reduced jail time in these cases as well.

This is a collaborative effort involving and supported by the Superior Court, the District Attorney, the Public Defender and the Sheriff.

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Deputies target speeders in Columbus traffic detail

Posted: Nov 06, 2014 6:29 PM EST
Updated: Dec 04, 2014 6:29 PM EST

By Sarah Panko [CONNECT](#)

Several News 3 viewers called our newsroom Thursday, wondering about the increased presence of deputy marshals on Columbus streets.

The Muscogee County Marshal's Office says about half of their 20 deputies patrolled areas where traffic safety is a major concern like the school zone at River Road Elementary and Victory Drive.

"Our primary responsibility is the civil process that's what we do every day, but to and from eviction and civil processes if the deputy sees something that's egregious, then they have a responsibility as a sworn officer to take action," says Captain Curtis Lockette.

The following are the statistics from today's detail via the Marshal's Office:

- Speeding- 14
- Speeding (Warning)- 5
- Speeding School Zone- 9
- Speeding School Zone (Warning)- 2
- Driving While License Suspended (DWLS)- 1
- Red Light- 1
- No State Tag- 1
- No Seat Belt- 2
- Suspend Registration- 3
- Failure To Exercise Due Care- 1
- Arrests- 3
- Outstanding Warrants Cleared- 3
- Total Citations: 39

If speeding is a problem in your neighborhood, give the Marshal's Office a call at 706-653-4385.



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Drones to be used in Columbus for law enforcement

Posted: Nov 13, 2014 10:31 PM EST

Updated: Dec 11, 2014 10:46 PM EST

By David Hurst CONNECT

COLUMBUS, Ga. - Cameras are just about everywhere these days and law enforcement wants to put them in the air by using drones. One local agency has already started using one and others say they want one too.

Last year, the Muscogee County Marshal's Office purchased a drone after a man threatened deputies over an eviction notice. The Marshal's Office says they could have used the drone to survey the perimeter and find the best way to approach the house.

The Marshal's Office hasn't had an opportunity to use their drone, but they believe just having one -- makes them ahead of the curve.

"It's almost like handguns and ammunition, everything is advancing -- cameras, cell phones and now, of course, drones," said Sgt. Rick Bowers of the Muscogee County Marshal's Office.

Bowers says agencies with a search warrant could use drones to gather evidence. Before, if the Marshal's Office needed an aerial view of a scene, the only option was the Columbus police helicopter. Now, they can use their drone. Bowers says it saves manpower, time and money.

"It helps us get surveillance pictures of the area and what we're looking at to see if there are any other angles of approach we may want to use to try to advance on a house to serve a warrant," said Bowers.

Other government agencies have also expressed interest in using drone technology. Russell County EMA Director Bob Franklin says having a drone would have been beneficial to [survey the damage after this year's tornado](#).

"I think something of this size, you could probably purchase one of these for what it costs to fly that helicopter for an hour," said Franklin. "It would save us a whole lot of money."

However, some have concerns about privacy with having a so-called "eye in the sky." State Senator Josh McKoon proposed a bill last session about drones and privacy after constituents expressed some fears about drones.

"We want to strike a very careful balance, and that is, we want to protect the individual rights of the public at large, but we also want to make sure that this technology continues to be developed and continues to be developed here in Georgia," said McKoon.

McKoon explains the government's use of drones is limited by the 4th Amendment, which prohibits "unreasonable search and seizure." The state senator expects a bill to pass in the next legislative session that sets parameters on law enforcement's use of drones.

"Using drones for law enforcement is something that should be encouraged, we just need to make sure it's done in a lawful way that respects everyone constitutional rights," said McKoon.

Bowers says he understands the privacy concerns and wants you to know they're only using the drone for public safety.

"These days, people think automatically the cops and the government are spying on us," said Bowers. "But we're not using it to spy on anybody. We're not using it to invade any

body's privacy. It will only be used in occasions where law enforcement safety is at stake."

The FAA has set regulations limiting the use of drones for commercial purposes. They just recently gave the green light for several film companies to use drones. The agency has also allowed exemptions in some cases for law enforcement, firefighters and rescue operations.

Columbus Police and Fire & EMS also say they have plans to purchase drones but may wait for the state regulations to be clear about the parameters.

Continuing Coverage:

>>>November 10, 2014: [AP Exclusive: Drone sightings up dramatically](#)

>>>December 2, 2013: [Amazon.com sees delivery drones as future](#)



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1350 13th Avenue
Columbus, GA 31901

Telephone: 706.323.3333

Fax: 706.327.6655

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Columbus Ledger Enquirer

Sunday Interview with Marshal Greg Countryman: "This is a ministry to me"

By CHUCK WILLIAMS

chwilliams@ledger-enquirer.com January 24, 2015

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ROBIN TRIMARCHI rtrimarchi@ledger-enquirer.com Muscogee County Marshal Greg Countryman talked with Ledger-Enquirer senior reporter Chuck Williams for the Sunday Interview.

ROBIN TRIMARCHI — rtrimarchi@ledger-enquirer.com | [Buy Photo](#)



Muscogee County Marshal Greg Countryman has been controversial and outspoken at times.

He has been in public disagreements with other elected officials, including Columbus Mayor Teresa Tomlinson. The Georgia Bureau of Investigation investigated and did not pursue claims of financial wrongdoing with a federal grant in the Junior Marshal Program. Countryman, along with three other elected officials, is suing the city over budget concerns.

Elected 10 years ago, Countryman speaks his mind and speaks openly about his Christian faith.

Recently, he sat down with Ledger-Enquirer reporter Chuck Williams.

You are currently in a lawsuit over your budget and your financial resources. You are suing the city, the mayor and city council. Why?

Well, I'm not going to comment on that presently because it's in active litigation. As you know, I sent a letter to the Ledger because there was a lot of misinformation out there that I wanted to clear up. The case is in the court system. It's in the best place possible. I am going to allow the court system to do what the court system does best.

So, you don't want to talk about that now. One question on that is the point you made in your letter (about) what your office does, right? That was what you were trying to get across in that letter was the responsibilities your office has and financing those responsibilities, right?

That is correct.

What is the primary job of the marshal of Muscogee County?

Our primary duty is to handle civil process through the Municipal Court. We carry out all the precepts of the Municipal Court. We work in conjunction with the clerk of Municipal Court's office, too. As you may not know, the marshal's office was revamped August 12, 1915. The marshal's duties were changed a lot. In the early stages of the marshal's office, the marshal did everything in the city.

... The marshal's office and the sheriff's office predates the police department and the marshal gave an official proclamation to the Georgia census as 1,152, in 1830. If you go back and look at the history, the marshal and the sheriff have pretty much done the same thing for the past 185 years. If you go back and look at the history of the marshal's office, in the 1840s, if the city levied a fine — which they had aldermen back then, they didn't have city councilmen, they had five aldermen and they had a mayor — but if the aldermen levied a fine against a person for taxes or for anything of that sort, the marshal would go out and deal with that. If it was \$100 or less, the marshal dealt with it. If it was \$100 or more, then the sheriff would deal with it. But the marshal did everything from tax collections, and we have to consider the times in which we're talking about — we're talking about the 1800s.

The frontier days?

Yeah, frontier days, but there were also some things that are very sensitive to talk about now, even, dealing with the African-American community. Because back then, if an African American had his porch light on past a certain time of night, then the marshal or his deputies had to inflict 20 lashes on them. So, the marshal has gone from issuing lashes to really issuing love in the community.

The marshal carried such a great impact in the city until Nov. 29, I believe, 1898. The city had a legislative act done to just take the name marshal away from police and they established the office of chief of police around that time.

Modern day marshal's office — the bulk of your work is eviction work, right?

We do 31 different types of civil process, everything from levy to garnishments, evictions, dispossessory warrants. Evictions is what we handle the most. For the past years, it's been pretty consistent. We've received over 5,300 evictions per year; some years it has gone up to almost 6,000.

How many deputies does it take to handle 5,300 evictions in a year?

Currently we've been doing it now with about 14 in the field, but we have narrowed things down to a science. Before I got here, it took around eight to nine weeks to deal with evictions. Under my administration, it takes between two and three weeks.

From the time the landlord walks in and files the initial paperwork?

No, sir. Once a defendant has filed an answer to an eviction, then they can go into the court and then the Municipal Court judge will deal with from there. If he issues a writ to the plaintiff of the case, then the plaintiff has to pay \$5 to the clerk's office and then they come to the marshal's office to set up an eviction. So, from the time they get the writ from the judge, once the judge deposes of things, it comes to our office.

How big is your department now?

Counting reserve, civilian and full-time, it's probably about 30.

How many full-time?

We have about 20 or 22 on the road.

And 14 of those are used ...

In the field. And then we have deputies here that work in the office. Those are the ones who handle the admin part, answering the phones, answering questions about evictions, entering the documents into the system. Every document that comes into our system from the clerk's office, let's say we get 30,000 documents, those two deputies have to run every name through GCIC (for criminal history of outstanding

warrants).

So, they have to run those names through to make sure that when we get those documents out in the field, those deputies are not going to encounter someone that has a warrant. The deputies have a very, very dangerous job. Marshal deputies do more building clearing than anybody in the city. It's a good training too for "shoot, don't shoot," if you will, because when we go do an eviction, the landlords can't go into the house.

We have to go into that house to render that dwelling safe. So, that means we have to take out our weapons, we have to hold traffic on the radio, we have to go in and clear every room and render that dwelling safe, and then we can let the landlord know it's safe to come in. Because we've done evictions before where we knock on the door and the next thing we know we hear "Hold on a second" — Bam! — and someone has committed suicide.

How many times has that happened?

I can think of maybe twice that has happened. ... So, those things happen; it's not anything pleasant. We get a lot of intel. We walk into evictions, and based on our training, we know that this may be a meth lab or marijuana growth lab, or it may have something in it that may interest another agency. So, we've had other agencies to come in because we look at the mail people leave, so it's a good tool for us to create a database.

Of the three law enforcement agencies in the county — marshal, sheriff and police department — you're far and away the smallest, right?

Yes, correct.

You are elected, the sheriff is elected, police chief is appointed by council. As a leader of a law enforcement agency, are you on par with the chief of police and the sheriff?

Yes. Yes, I am.

Why do you say that?

Because the chief tells me constantly, "If you ever need anything, give me a call." If I ever needed something I could call Chief (Ricky) Boren. He has never said no to anything that I've asked for. And understand, Chuck, we complement each other. With the chief, the sheriff and myself, experience alone is almost 100 years. So, there is an inner genius in everybody. There is a different experience level in everybody. So, sometimes I can pick up the phone and ask the chief about a certain procedure that I'm not familiar with. If I create a different policy for something, I may have to ask him to send me his policy in order to get me his take on things because I trust him for that.

You and the chief have had some issues, but y'all are working well together now, right?

Even if you have an issue, it's sort of like a relationship because you can consider us sort of brothers in this, because this is a family. Even in your family household, the family will go through problems, but you don't cease talking. If we ceased communication, it doesn't affect us, it affects the community. Because if he calls and asks us for help, which that happens from time to time, if there is bad weather and they are tied down with calls, guess what?

The marshal's office will go out and answer 911 calls and assist the police department to get their calls down. Once we get their calls down, then we get what we call "1080," we get back in service.

So, you respect Chief Boren.

A great deal. I think he is a very, very brilliant man, and I've said to my chief deputy a number of times, I respect Ricky Boren and his knowledge and I think he's a good chief.

What did you learn at the sheriff's office?

Well, when you're coming from an agency like the Columbus Housing Authority police, my experience was based on what we had to deal with. We were referred to by some police officers as renegades because we had to have a certain mindset going in to public housing. Public housing is not a bad thing, but we've done research and back then 95 percent of the arrests that we made were of people that didn't even live in public housing. Public housing has a negative image, but it seems to draw a certain kind of people.

What kind of people?

Well, there were a lot of drugs in public housing. And when you have people that have been arrested two or three times for drugs and they know what's going to happen to them, it's normally a fight if you have to arrest them — it's normally a foot chase. So, things can get highly dangerous. When Baker Village was there when I worked evening shifts, they would shoot out the lights.

Street lights?

Street lights. So, if we had a call, we had to hold our flashlight a certain way because we didn't want to get a brick thrown at us. So, our minds were conditioned for a certain type of call or a certain type of fight that we had to go into.

How did that concept change when you joined the sheriff's office?

I finally saw the way that an agency operates, and I had a great lieutenant at the time, Lt. Mike Massey. I give a lot of credit to Maj. Massey now, that I say I proudly respect more than anybody because (he) took up the most time with me. And I'd like to say that he helped to develop me, and he saw something good in me.

Was Maj. Massey one of your mentors?

Yes, big time. He is somebody that I look up to, somebody I can call on, and somebody that I do call on. Lt. Mike Farley, who worked in field services with me, he's here now. He was Deputy Mike Farley and then he was promoted as a sergeant in the sheriff's office and I brought him over here with me when my lieutenant left. The sheriff's office is a great agency. Just like my agency, we are people-oriented and when you work in an elected office you understand the importance of an elected official because you understand that the decisions that you make are the decisions that will affect your boss.

As an elected official, who is your boss?

The citizens of Columbus and the governor of this state.

What's the difference in the marshal and the sheriff?

The marshal was created through a legislative pact. The marshal handles the precepts of the Municipal Court and some Magistrate Court. The marshal has a distinctive duty, as the sheriff has a distinctive duty. When the office was created, it gave the marshal the same authority of Municipal Court that the sheriff would have in Superior Court.

Correct me if I'm wrong, the sheriff is a constitutional officer of the state. Are you a constitutional officer of the state?

No, I am not. I'm a municipal elected official. There are only four constitutional offices other than many elected officials: the probate court, the clerk of Superior Court, the sheriff and the tax commissioner.

You were in the sheriff's office and you had to resign your position to run for marshal, and you ran against Ken Suddeth, correct?

That is correct.

First of all, that was a leap of faith to resign from that job of how many years at the time?

I think it was a little over six years, maybe going on seven.

Did you have any kind of safety net when you did that?

I'm glad that you asked that question because my faith is what sustains me. Even before this interview, I had to fast just to get my mind cleared because when I communicate with God, I don't want there to be any type of blockage. It was not a full fast, but I did fast from certain things because I want to give up something in order to get something in order to give you a great interview.

My faith is what drives me. Every morning I get up and I do my daily devotional. I send out right at 80 messages each morning to other fellow citizens in the community. So, when I decided to run for the office, it's funny because I can remember me sitting in my living room on the couch and I had just gotten off of the phone and it just came out of my mouth, "I'm going to run for marshal." I don't know where it came from, and as I did that, I saw doors just opening. At the time the marshal said that I was campaigning on the job, and that was not true. So, what I did, because the sheriff had talked with me about it and said he got a call about it and he said it wasn't true because if it were true, he would know.

Sheriff Ralph Johnson?

Sheriff Johnson. And I can appreciate him because even at the time he called the sheriff in Harris County, and the sheriff in Harris County hired me, but I never took the job because my wife worked out of town and we had a 5-year-old at the time and we had a newborn. So, with her working out of town, I was not going to work in another county and something happen to my children and I couldn't get back to them.

So, yeah, it did take a leap of faith. However, I know my wife and I came together and prayed over it and I moved forward with it. So, I wasn't worried about what was going to happen because I had the assurance within. And when God communicates with you, you know when He communicates with you. So, I knew I had to go through the motions. I knew there were going to be some tough times because there was some tough times going 20 months without having a full-time job. You learn how to live off of ramen noodles. It's sad because I didn't have a safety net. We had just bought another home. We had refinanced our house to a 15-year mortgage, so things got a little bit tough. I had two car notes. We had children that were in day care. So, Chuck, it got to the point that we didn't have money for my children to get their hair cut. As a man, wanting to provide for your family, just to watch your wife cut your kids' hair because you can't afford to take them to the barbershop is not a good feeling. But I can assure you of this: we never missed a mortgage payment. We never missed a car note. We would make sure our kids ate well, if my wife and I didn't eat anything but a peanut butter and jelly sandwich or ramen noodles or anything we could, because we were in this together. It was not just me, we stepped out on faith.

Where does your faith come from?

Faith is something that grows on you. Faith is something based on your experience and that's why I never look down on a person because you never know who that person is. You never know where your wisdom is going to come from. My mother was a Christian. She was a Jehovah's Witness and that's how she raised us. Faith has always been in my life and even when I have strayed, I knew how to come back because I knew my mother raised me to have a Christian conscience.

I can remember her telling me things such as "If I'm here you know God is watching you." So, even though she told us not to do something, not to go into the cookie jar, and even if I opened up the cookie jar and put my hand in it, I knew to put the cookie back because I was trained to feel that God is watching you no matter if your mother is there. And I still tell my kids that today.

Where is your church home now?

Kingdom Metropolitan Worship Center on Airport Thruway. My faith is what drives me because every day I come here I have to ask for daily discernment for me to run this office before this office has grown. You know what this office was before I got here. We had one taser, didn't have any carpet on the floor, had the same floors from when the building was built. It was very, very gritty and grimy.

I got with the city manager at the time, Carmen Cavezza, and said, "Look, I can't work in a mess." I'm not saying that the other marshals could, but I wanted to raise this office to have a standard. I wanted to raise this office to have a professional image. ... I wanted to create a spiritual atmosphere for me to allow God to come in to work through me, to work through this office.

So, you believe your job as marshal is a mission and a calling?

Right, this is a ministry to me. That is one reason I formed the Junior Marshal's Program. I made a covenant with God that if you get me here, I'll use my authority for the good, and I wanted to reach back to kids that were just like me. A lot of people may not know this but when I graduated from ... Baker High School in 1984, I graduated as a special ed student. I had a learning disability. I had a very bad stuttering problem. I had problems trying to comprehend.

You don't stutter now.

I do stutter. You just don't pick up on it. I've learned to say words that are easy to say. That's why I don't use a lot of big fancy words because I will fumble over them. I couldn't enter college because I couldn't pass an entrance exam. I had problems reading, I had problems writing. I could not write a structured sentence. People knew that I stuttered because they use to make fun of me.

Do you remember some of the names they use to call you?

They used to say I sounded like a car trying to crank up. Even my grandmother would make jokes from time to time, but she knew I was a very sensitive person about that. Even when I get with kids now I try to look at the best in every child that I see to give them the opportunity that I had, because even though I had those challenges, I had a mentor in my life, and I would hate to know where I would be if I didn't have a young man by the name of Tony Alexander. Tony Alexander was older than me. His mother was not my grandmother but we called her grandmother; she was the neighborhood grandmother. He was a very mature person for his age.

What neighborhood did you live in?

Willis Plaza, off of Cusseta Road. I grew up on Swan Street. My neighbors were Judge Albert Thompson and A.J. McClung. But even with that I couldn't enter college, but now I teach on a college level. So, I understand how far God has brought me because every step I move I can look back and I can look at how far he's brought me. ... But where we are today, I'm grateful because I could not have done this on my own. There's no way, because even when I was supposed to fall, when people tried to make me fall, I couldn't fall because I would never abandon God because I never want Him to abandon me. A lot of people may say, "You're this guy that talks all of this..." Well, guess what? I have a right to do that because I understand where I am, I understand who I am, and I understand more importantly whose I am, because this office has been a ministry to me. I have had people ask me to do different things, but I am going to stay here until God speaks to me.

What verse is your Bible open to?

It should be Ephesians and I have my devotional here, which is written by Jack Countryman, no relationship.

You contend that it is on par with the other agencies, and you have asked for the equipment to make it such. Why do you need police cruisers for your deputies?

The question would be why don't we need them. If you say that we are equal — and to which I say that we are equal, we go through the same training, we get the same pay, we get the same retirement... — marshals should have the same thing because although we have a prominent duty to be civil processors, we also have a secondary duty to protect and serve.

The police can't be everywhere. The sheriff can't be everywhere. That's a mindset, and as an elected official I have a budget, and as an elected official, I get to utilize my budget to buy the type of cars that my

deputies need to fulfill their duties, because if a police officer has to have a certain car for their purpose and the sheriff outfits his people with a certain car, what is the difference in the marshal doing the same thing? If we are the three law enforcement agencies, then we should be able to drive the same car.

(Councilor Gary Allen's) Ford Fusion remark still bothers you, right?

It was very degrading,

Did you tell Councilman Allen that?

I did. I told him it was very, very degrading. This is it: I have three boys and my oldest son is not of my loins, but he has never heard me call him stepson. I have three boys. I've raised them all, they are my sons. When you start to imply certain things, it creates a certain prejudice, it creates a certain mindset, it puts misinformation out there. You can't say we have a public safety and you say one agency is the primary public safety agency. We have three law enforcement agencies. You don't hear the President of the United States say we have a great Marine Corps or we have a great Coast Guard. He says we have a great military. Because we are military, that although we have a distinct mission, we all train the same way, we have to meet the same requirements, we have to meet the same requirements to maintain our arrest powers.

Do we need three law enforcement agencies in Columbus?

We do need three law enforcement agencies. We've had two where we had the marshal and the sheriff, but we need a police department, we need a marshal's office and we need a sheriff's office. We all complement each other. What would you think would happen if we had two agencies that did the same thing and thought the same way, and nobody could check the other agency — it's checks and balances. The marshal's office is a crucial part of public safety.

Do we have a crime problem in Columbus?

If you have one house broken into, that's a crime problem. Do we have a crime problem? I think we can do better when we come together and work together for one common cause, and that is for the citizens. That is why from where I sit, my deputies have to go out and have to communicate with three citizens every day, list their names and bring that back to this office, because that is part of community policing.

Before I took office I met with Jim Wetherington because I wanted to pattern my leadership after him. One thing that I watched and have seen over the past 20 years is community policing is necessary to reduce crime. Traffic enforcement is necessary to reduce crime. A lot of people may not know what the studies say, but when you can involve the community and build that trust with the community, because in the wake of things happening in Ferguson and New York, public safety law enforcement is going to be forced to do things in a certain way anyway.

I'm going to ask you the same question I asked Chief Boren: Are you a cop or are you a politician?

I'm a public servant that happens to be a law enforcement official. I believe that everybody that commits a crime should not have to be arrested. I believe that. Once upon a time I had a problem drinking. I knew I did; I'm not a perfect person, but I can appreciate where I am now. But even then, my conscience would bother me because I knew I had drank and drove. If I went to the club in my single days to drink and made it home but I was never pulled over, but I was never to the point where I couldn't drive, I made a bad decision.

Sometimes people make bad decisions and that officer has the discretion to arrest or not to arrest. Some people's philosophy may be different because of the agency they work with, and they may feel like everybody needs to go to jail.

So, does that make you a cop or a politician?

I'm a public servant. Every law enforcement officer, whether you're Columbus State (University) Police, sheriff's office, everybody is a cop. Because if you wear that gun and that badge and you have arrest

authority, you are a cop. It's a mindset. So, I'm a law enforcement officer who happens to be elected and a public servant.

I'd like to talk to you about your relationship with Mayor Tomlinson. When she was elected four years ago you worked very hard for her, right?

I did.

In the most recent election, you were very vocal and very high profile against her. You were sitting on the front row...

Sitting on the front row does not make you vocal, and if you ask anyone, my concern — and even my comments were in your paper — is public safety. And my concern now is still public safety. My concern will always be public safety. I absolutely have no disdain in my heart for Mayor Teresa Tomlinson. I have no ill will in my heart for Teresa Tomlinson or anybody in city government. I believe I had the right to my opinion and as a public safety agency here, I worry about how public safety is being handled. In 2008-2009, as you know, we had a 1-percent sales tax, and don't think that all of this was a sudden change. I'm the type of person, Chuck, that likes to communicate behind closed doors before I have to take anything public. I don't believe in being a radical person, although I think sometimes you have to take radical actions to make your point known. Even as a child, I never saw my mother and father argue.

They never argued?

Yes, but not in front of us out of respect. My kids can never say they heard my wife and me argue even if there is a fundamental difference. We wait until there is a time and place for us to communicate. With the Mayor, you never saw me publicly go out and argue about something she has done. We've communicated via email, and I've told her, and I will tell you because we're doing this interview, that this should be a partnership and not a dictatorship.

Do you think it's a partnership right now?

Well, I think that time will tell. There is always time to heal. Certain things have to happen, but that's why you have some marriages that will break up and some marriages that will get back together; you see people remarrying.

So, do you plan to remarry the mayor?

I'm already married and I'm happily married. (Laughter)

Do you plan to politically remarry the mayor?

I have no problem working with Mayor Teresa Tomlinson on any project that she needs my help on. I absolutely have no problem with that, but understand this, Chuck, public safety is my heart. I watched Mayor Wetherington and I sat in the room with him, Fire Chief Jeff Myers, Sheriff Ralph Johnson, City Attorney Clifton Fay, and the city manager, and when (they) came up with the concept of a percent sales tax, I remember the city manager say "dream big." I'm thinking we can't even hope big. So, "dream big," we would have x-number of dollars coming in that we can fund these different functions of public safety. And initially it was for the police department, the sheriff's department and the marshal's office. ... But, we haven't been able to dream because now the Civic Center is getting part of the LOST, METRA, Parks and Recreation is getting it. So, the number of people that receive the LOST who benefit from it has spread. That means that the money is drying up.

Do you think Mayor Tomlinson has protected the sales tax that was primarily for law enforcement?

I'll give you an example. If I had to maintain \$6,000 in my checking account, no matter what in order for me to have a good credit rating, the bank has to see \$6,000. If I for some reason don't have \$6,000 and I all of a sudden have \$3,000, but in my savings account which is for maintenance for my vehicles, if I could move that to over here, technically you have \$6,000. But you have exhausted \$3,000 over here so you can no longer perform maintenance on what his money was originally for.

Money is just being shifted?

Councilman (Mike) Baker, who has just been sworn in, has said one of the things he wants to do is to build back the city's reserves. We don't have a true reserve, because any time you have to combine money to make one then the money is not being used properly. I have asked and I have communicated and I will not call the councilman's name, but I have asked several councilors to explain how the money is being used, because it's talked about quietly amongst public safety. Even now, the police department wants cameras. The marshal's office is looking at different types of cameras. The sheriff's office is looking at cameras. There should not be an alternative funding for the needs of public safety. The money should be there to where we can purchase those types of things because that's what the taxpayers voted for. I think that's what we should give them.

Do you think Mayor Tomlinson has acted in the best interest of public safety? Yes or no?

No. If you ask me point-blank, no, because the money should be there and I think that the taxpayers deserve to know where the money is. I think the taxpayers need to know how they've spent the money. I think it would be good to not just to hide it into a system where you can go in and look for it. There should be a quarterly report that goes out to the public on a web site where they can see expenditures, because if you can look at an elective office and cast judgement on an elected officer and say that the sheriff misuses his budget, that's a stretch if you've never worn the uniform. That's a stretch because I can't tell you what the mayor does in her office. I don't know anything about the mayor's office.

But she's the public safety director?

She's the public safety director for the police department and the fire department and the Muscogee County Prison. I've worked in the jail. I've worked in the sheriff's office. That's not an easy task. Even myself as marshal, I know how difficult the job of a sheriff is, because you can't please everybody. And he has to have a budget, everybody has to have a budget that is going to be efficient. You can do great things when you have a great budget, but look at the agencies like the marshal's office that doesn't have a large budget.

So, money solves problems?

Well, just let me tell you this: When I got married I had a guy tell me that love is love but money makes it easier to love. I think that money allows you the ability to run your office or your department in a way that it should be run. We go to conferences each year and we see new technology that may come out and if we need to purchase something we can't. Those things benefit our agencies because if you don't have a camera now, and cameras could have been purchased... Say there is an incident. There is no independent witness. That camera system is an independent witness that will not lie, that you cannot alter. That's why I tell the truth because often times it's one person's work against another. Once the public can see those kinds of things, believe me, Chuck. ...

As the NFL has taught us, sometimes it's inconclusive.

Well, even if that happens, the level of transparency should be there, because you have to have transparency. Do I like transparency? I've learned to love it because this office is open to traffic. I can't tell you the number of times that I've gotten open record requests for things I know I'm going to have to do all of this work.

I've sent a few to you.

Oh, yeah, you have. But, transparency needs to be there because it promotes integrity and promotes public trust. And if we are going to try and build a bridge from one side to the other, the most important part of building a bridge is you have to build them in sequence from left to right. But what's most important is what is in the middle. You have to be able to build those.

You've got public trust and you've got public safety here; you have to be able to work in conjunction. So, once you get to that middle part, it can withstand the harshest weather. It can withstand the traffic that

comes in the door because once the public trusts public safety... Even if you make a mistake. own up to that mistake.

Solicitor (Ben) Richardson taught me three things when I took office. He said, "Greg, let me sit down and talk with you." He said, "If you ever encounter something in your office, first recognize there is a problem, whether you want to recognize it or not. Secondly, you have to have a solution

You called for an investigation of your own department.

I did, because that was integrity. That's integrity.

You've called for investigations twice, right?

Right, twice. Because the first time for the Junior Marshal's program there were some who were saying we had a ghost employee. And at the time I was seeking a job to be the United States Marshal for the Georgia Middle District, which I felt I had a great opportunity for that.

Did that investigation cost you that job?

I was asked to come off of that list. I was asked to be removed off of the list, and after it was cleared and I was cleared of no wrong doing, I was told I could go back. I didn't want to go through that because integrity matters to me, Chuck. As I told you when I left the sheriff's office, someone was putting out false information. My integrity means something to me. I resigned and I left and I sought this office and I got the reward. There were rumors of certain things. I called the GBI on myself and I can remember that call clearly, because they said, "You're calling us to look into you?" They said, "You know, we have the resources to turn over every rock." I said, "I want you to." So, I called the state-level FBI agency to come in and look into the Junior Marshal's program. There was no wrongdoing. I called the GBI to come in and look into another personnel issue that I caught a lot of flak for by some people.

Which one was that?

The one with Alicia Davenport.

She's no longer in your office, right?

She is technically an employee in this office. She is on admin leave without pay. So, the GBI looked into that because when things happen in your office, one thing that I have learned is you have to act swiftly. You can't sit back on things because I call that leading from behind. You can't lead from behind. You have to set a standard, you have to believe in that standard, and you have to move forward based on that philosophy.

Are you considering a run for sheriff?

Chuck, I've had people ask me to run for sheriff since I've been marshal.

Are you going to do it?

I have no plans at this time to run for sheriff. I am going to be obedient. I've told the Sheriff to his face that I can sit here in this office and retire if God wants me here.

So, if John Darr runs, you wouldn't run against him?

I consider John Darr a friend. I consider Ralph Johnson a friend because he hired me. When I ran for office I ran on three things: honesty, integrity and loyalty. Those things mean something to me. John is a great friend of mine, but he knows that if God puts it on my heart, then I am going to be obedient to God rather than the man. Do I want to run? I have no intentions.

But if the Lord tells you to run?

If it is placed on my heart, I'm going to be obedient, but I have no plans in my heart. In my heart of hearts, I consider John a friend. This office doesn't belong to me. Neither office belongs to either of us. It belongs to the people. I have no intentions of having the headache of being sheriff.

You've already got a headache, the marshal's office.

But, I love this headache. I can deal with this headache. I enjoy being marshal. I enjoy serving the citizens of this great community, and I like where we are as an office now, because I have kept up with all of the data, the history, the photos, and you can go out and look at the monitor and it shows where we were when I first got here and where we are today. We went over to the west wing — we didn't have the west wing. When I first started we have 14 people in 670 square feet of office space. Imagine if you had 15 children in your house and how chaotic it would be.

Based on your faith tradition, you believe judgment day is coming, right?

Yeah.

... What do you think the judgment is going to be of you?

Well, Chuck, if I die tomorrow, I feel good about where I am, because one thing about it, the Bible tells you when you know right and you do wrong that you sin.

So, I have always tried to do right because I know at the end of the day when I go shower and brush my teeth, when I look into the mirror, I'm happy. I pray when I lay down. I pray when I get up and I thank God for being where I am. Do I think we're living in the end of time? You can look at where we are as a world, you can look at where we are as a nation. I try not to get caught up in foolish things. I got a call from a good friend this morning. He has had a stroke and he called me to say, "Hey, I love you." We don't have time for foolish games and we don't have time to hate on each other, and we need to learn to celebrate each other.

I've been preaching that and saying that for the longest. Do I feel like I need to pick up what I do in a spiritual sense? I'm just not going to be misled or led by foolishness. And I think judgment day is near. It will come as a thief in the night, so we have to always condition ourselves, condition our minds to be where we need to be spiritually.

So, that day is going to come whether I see it or whether it is beyond me and my children see it. I'm always going to prepare for it because I just never know. If I lay down tonight and don't awake tomorrow, I can't say, "I'm going to get myself right." My preacher preached last Sunday on the time is now for all of us to get ourselves together, not be consumed by foolish things, because the things we quarrel over are nothing. I think we're all going through the motions.

Everybody's fate is pretty much decided because if God can tell you every number of hair that's on your head, if he can create earth and within a fraction you either burn or you freeze. We serve an awesome God and we have to get ourselves conditioned for the race. I believe in judgment day and I believe everyone will have to answer. That's why I try to utilize this office in every decision that I make that is key. I imagine the citizens being outside of this door, and once I make my decision, I can go outside this door and justify my actions because it's not your actions that will get you into trouble, it's your inactions.

Bio Name: Greg Countryman Age: 48 Job: Marshal, Muscogee County; part-time assistant professor, Georgia Military College. He worked previously as deputy for the Muscogee County Sheriff's Office and officer for the Columbus Housing Authority Police. Education: Baker High School, 1984; Georgia Military College, associate degree in criminal justice, 1997; Troy University, bachelor's degree in criminal justice, 2003; Columbus State University, master's in public administration, 2007. Wife: Angela, married 15 years; sons Christopher, 21, Greg Jr., 14, and William, 7.

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