



DODGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Dale J Schmidt Sheriff Scott Smith Chief Deputy

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June Sheriff's Column

Dodge County Jail – Sheriff's Constitutional and Statutory Responsibility

Many are not aware of the various constitutional and statutory duties that the Sheriff must carry out. One of the largest mandated duties is taking charge and custody of the jail and taking charge of persons in the jail. The county board approves a budget but the Sheriff has constitutional authority to use that budget to carry out those duties.

What that means for Dodge County is that I am responsible for the security of the facility, the safety of the inmates and also to meet their basic needs. We house those who are arrested and awaiting court, those who are serving a sentence of less than one year, those who violate rules of their probation/parole and federal inmates from the US Marshalls and ICE. This takes a great deal of resources and hard work by my staff to keep our county safe and secure while also operating an efficient jail. On a daily basis we house anywhere from 350 to 466 inmates.

A huge thank you goes out to the men and women who work every day in the jail. Without them, we could not operate as safely and efficiently as we do.

You may have heard that I recently announced a return of about \$1 million to the Dodge County General Fund from the 2016 budget. Many have asked, how was that accomplished? The primary reason was that I was able to budget conservatively to ensure that expenditures would not exceed revenues. That is a basic concept in being fiscally responsible with your tax dollars. To really give input into our success, I would like to explain how it was accomplished in more detail.

For about 16 years, the Dodge County Jail has housed inmates for the federal government. The federal government rents our bed space which brings federal dollars back to Dodge County. In 2016 I budgeted for 235 federal inmates per day. We also maintained modest spending to maintain a balanced budget projection. I also worked hard to improve relationships with our federal partners. At the end of the year, I averaged about 284 federal inmates per day bringing in revenues of \$7.75 million, well above budget. Of course, in order to house and provide for these inmates, we must also provide security, staff, meals and purchase other operating supplies.

So that I could have a better understanding of how our budget compares to that of other jails, in 2015 I conducted a survey of other Wisconsin jails to estimate cost savings our jail provides

to county taxpayers. That survey showed 2014 costs to Dodge County of approximately \$1 million to operate the jail. I also found that jails in counties with similar geographic and population sizes operated their jails at a substantially higher price tag of \$3 million-\$5 million. What that means is that without the federal contract population bringing federal dollars back into Dodge County, your tax levy would likely increase by about \$2 million to \$4 million each year. While I haven't conducted the study of statewide numbers yet from 2016, logic tells me that by returning \$1 million to the general fund, the cost to run the Dodge County Jail in 2016 was significantly less than that \$1 million cost in 2014. Yes, it does cost money for upkeep and repairs but in the long run there is significant cost savings to your tax bill each year.

In conclusion, as Sheriff I work very hard to find ways to maximize the use of your hard earned tax dollars. By doing so, we can provide additional county services to citizens in keeping Dodge County as a safe place to live, work and visit.

Dale J. Schmidt
Dodge County Sheriff