

June 24, 1985

To: County Judge Lindsay and
Commissioners Lee, Fonteno,
Eckels, and Lyons

Fm: Dick Raycraft

Re. Sheriff-Constable Study

Introduction

Commissioners Court on May 21 requested that a study be prepared by July 1 as to how the court can implement a consolidation of patrol service under command of the Sheriff's Department. The court had previously, on April 23, requested a systematic analysis of the needs of the Sheriff's Department. This report includes parts of the systematic analysis as it pertains to the Patrol Bureau and certain related support services, and provides alternative plans for implementation of a merger of the constables' patrol with the Sheriff's Department. Recommendations regarding other aspects of the Sheriff's Department that are not contained in this report will be submitted in a subsequent study in order to complete the court's request of April 23.

Organization of Report

This study ran into a problem that can be found in most metropolitan areas which is the conflict between forces of centralization and decentralization. There is an interdependence of activities that calls for certain area-wide functions to be performed with the use of central management and modern technologies in order to achieve accountability and economies of scale. Yet there is also a need for small units for service so that recipients can have a voice and some control over the quantity and quality of that service. There are also issues of financial equity and response to the disadvantaged to consider. With these issues in mind, and following the order of the court for development of a plan for consolidation of patrol into one department, this study, in probing the needs of the Sheriff's Department, seeks to find a way the county can have a strong area-wide command structure while retaining the service-oriented system that has been the hallmark of the subdivision contract patrol and resident deputy programs. The goal is to structure a unified system that can be developed and strengthened as the county's population grows.

The report provides a discussion of the following items: Transfer of positions to the Sheriff's Department; the contracts with subdivision associations and role of the citizens; needs of the Sheriff's Department; and the needs of the constables after consolidation. Following the discussion of these items there is a list of suggested options the court could consider in order to achieve the goal of a consolidation of patrol services.

Transfer of Personnel

There are 14 regular supervisory and 25 regular deputy positions in five constable precincts, and five contract supervisors and 118 contract deputy positions in two precincts, for a total of 162 positions that are available for transfer to the Sheriff's Department. The table on the next page shows the distribution of patrol positions in the county including those currently assigned to the Sheriff's Department. There is a total of 402 patrol positions in the county, including the 28 regular supervisors, 152 regular deputies, and 60 contract deputies in the Sheriff's Department. Of the total of 402 positions, 47 are supervisory, leaving a total of 355 for street patrol purposes.

Upon consolidation, the court may wish to allow the constables to retain a certain number of their regular positions, or receive added positions, in order to enhance their ability to serve civil process and warrants. This matter, along with other items relating to the constables' non-patrol functions, will be discussed later in the report.

Positions that are transferred from the constables to the Sheriff will come under regulations of the Harris County Sheriff's Civil Service Commission. Supervisor positions that are transferred should be classified as Lieutenant-Subdivision, or Sergeant-Subdivision at this time, according to members of the Commission, in order to avoid problems with regulations regarding advancement procedures for personnel seeking regular lieutenant and sergeant positions. The subdivision classification could be changed once the incumbent leaves the slot, thereby allowing the position to fall within the regular path for advancement in accordance with the regulations. There should be no problems with a lateral transfer of the deputies, according to Commission members. However, they suggest that the Sheriff be asked to notify current department employees that the consolidation will allow for more openings in the future than are currently available because of the addition of such a large number of positions to the department. They recommend a complete explanation of the merger be made for the employees in order to avoid any misunderstandings.

The transferred positions would be placed on the Sheriff's payroll with the current incumbents filling those positions. The Auditor's contract forms would be used to establish each position and the employment of the officer. Civil Service Commission regulations call for a probationary period of 180 days for new employees of the Sheriff's Department. The Sheriff has stated, however, that upon the merger of patrol, there would not be a change in any of the incumbents in the affected positions unless there was an element in a person's background that made him or her unqualified to be a peace officer under Texas law.

Distribution of patrol positions in Harris County as of June, 1985.

	Sheriff's Department	Const. Pct. 2	Const. Pct. 3	Const. Pct. 4	Const. Pct. 5	Const. Pct. 8	Total
REGULAR SUPERVISORS							
Captains	4	-	1	2	1	-	8
Lieutenants	8	-	-	2	1	-	11
Sergeants	16	-	1	3	3	-	23
TOTAL SUPERVISORS	28	-	2	7	5	-	42
REGULAR PATROL DEPUTIES							
Day Watch	48	1	6	1	3	7	66
Mid Watch	46	1	-	1	2	-	50
Night Watch	44	-	-	2	1	-	47
Traffic Enforcement Division	14	-	-	-	-	-	14
TOTAL REGULAR DEPUTIES.	152	2	6	4	6	7	177
CONTRACT SUPERVISORS							
Lieutenant	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Sergeant	-	-	-	1	3	-	4
TOTAL CONTRACT SUPERVISORS.	-	-	-	2	3	-	5
CONTRACT DEPUTIES							
Number of Deputies.	60	-	-	54	64	-	178
TOTAL	240	2	8	67	78	7	402

