MEMORANDUM

Date: June 21, 2021

To: The Honorable Chair and Members
    Pima County Board of Supervisors

From: C.H. Huckelberry
      County Administrator

Re: June 18, 2021 Letter from Sheriff Nanos Regarding Deputy Sheriff Increases

Sheriff Nanos has asked the Board of Supervisors to seize “an unprecedented” opportunity due to the Federal American Rescue Plan monies to “fix compression, provide competitive wages and retain talented staff,” by providing fair and competitive pay for Sheriff Department members. The basis for this request is the “City of Tucson’s (COT) massive pay plan for all its employees.”

Using one-time federal grant money for an ongoing expense will be a fiscal disaster.

I am requesting the Board members not make an expensive and hurried decision; but rather, to make adjustments based on actual, measurable data which supports the need to make such changes. First, we currently do not know COT’s “massive plan,” as this has neither been approved or published. While the Sheriff states that the COT has simplified the classifications and resolved many compression problems, the County cannot resolve its classification and compensation issues based on another organization's unverified plan or by merely applying federal funds in a haphazard manner. Instead we must identify our compensation concerns specific to our own organization and identify the best course of action for ourselves.

Second, the County should not move to “lead the market” based on what our competitors “may” or “will” do. Good business sense provides that we must determine if there is a need to make such changes and these decisions are typically based on turn-over rates and vacancies that cannot be filled. Turn-over rates for Deputy Sheriff positions remains low and there is no difficulty filling current Deputy Sheriff vacancies. In fact, the turnover rate for all of Calendar Year 2020 was 9.07 percent and is at 5.35 percent for the first six months of this year.

The County should rely on data before making costly decisions and not attempt to predict the market. Relying on an unknown pay structure of a competitor who is also our comparator is not sound. Any compensation study that the County would embark upon would not be duplicative as it should take into account all the extra pays and benefits that Deputy Sheriffs currently receive, i.e. over-time, on-call pay, call-back pay, uniform allowance, shift differential, take home vehicle, special assignment pay, etc.
As I have previously indicated, the starting pay for a Pima County Deputy is the highest in Arizona for any county, including Maricopa.

If you add in just one area of extra pay, on-call pay, each deputy makes on average approximately $3,689 more per year, the Pima County deputy ranking in statewide County compensation grows even larger. Of the 15 counties in Arizona, 10 other counties do not even have on-call pay and the four others that do offer on-call pay average $469 per deputy per year.

The Board of Supervisors has also been very supportive of the Sheriff’s Department. In just the last year, two new aircrafts were purchased along with surveillance equipment costing approximately $8.2 million and we have authorized construction on a new hangar for the Sheriff costing approximately $7.5 million of which at least $3 million will be covered by the General Fund. Included in the Fiscal Year 2021/22 budget are body worn cameras and TASERS costing $23 million over 10 years.

In addition, the County just refinanced the Public Safety Personnel Retirement System and Correction Officer Retirement Plan unfunded liability for $300 million.

To provide a 10 percent raise as requested by the Sheriff for the department would cost a total of $13.6 million per year of which $11 million is for deputies and corrections officers, substantially more than other County employee agencies because of the significantly higher retirement contribution rates for deputies and correction officers.

It is essential that any changes to Deputy Sheriff salaries, or salaries of any other County employees, must be determined on sound principles: market rates; turn-over; and, days to hire.

In summary, I do not recommend any pay adjustment for any Sheriff Department employee.

CHH/anc

Attachment

c:  The Honorable Chris Nanos, Pima County Sheriff
    Richard Kastigar, Jr., Chief Deputy, Pima County Sheriff’s Department
    Jan Lesher, Chief Deputy County Administrator
    Carmine DeBonis, Jr., Deputy County Administrator for Public Works
    Francisco García, MD, MPH, Deputy County Administrator & Chief Medical Officer, Health and Community Services
    Julie Castañeda, Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
    Michelle Campagne, Director, Finance and Risk Management
    Patrick McGee, Budget Manager, Finance and Risk Management
June 18, 2021

Via electronic mail to the Clerk of the Pima County Board of Supervisors

Honorable Chair Sharon Bronson and
Members of the Pima County Board of Supervisors
33 N. Stone Ave., 11th Floor
Tucson, AZ 85701

Honorable Chair and Members of the Pima County Board of Supervisors:

Recently, the Pima County Sheriff’s Department’s (PCSD) labor unions and associations authored a letter requesting consideration from the Pima County Board of Supervisors (BOS) for fair and competitive pay for its members. This was a collaborative effort by all PCSD employee groups. As you know, this comes on the heels of the City of Tucson’s (COT) massive pay plan for all its employees. If left unchecked, the pay disparity between the COT’s employees and the County’s employees will most assuredly result in those capable and qualified candidates seeking employment with the city. More troubling, those currently trained and established county employees will likely leave for better pay. The potential staffing challenges will impact not just the Sheriff’s Department, but departments county wide. A large majority of governmental job-seeking prospects exist right here in the metropolitan Tucson area. I cannot emphasize this more emphatically; the critical issue the Board must consider is not related to comparators, but to the competition. The city of Tucson and Pima County compete for the same candidate and largely from the same, Tucson-entrenched resident.

I told the PCSD labor representatives that they must approach the BOS with a unified front. They did. That is unprecedented. Furthermore, I stated I would support their efforts provided they remained unified. I am.

During my forty-year tenure as a Pima County employee, supervisor, manager, and now the elected sheriff, I have never seen the pay inequality in Pima County this substantial. Aggravating this problem even more is a county-wide pay compression challenge. I have watched as numerous county department directors and elected officials struggle and piece together pay increase for small, but deserving, classifications so as to retain that talent. That has resulted in atrocious compression pay problems where subordinates are paid more than supervisors.

It’s my opinion an expensive and duplicative compensation study is not necessary. It already exists with the City of Tucson’s recent efforts. In their proposal the COT simplified the classifications arrays and resolved many of the compression problems by establishing tenure-based starting, mid-level, and topped-out pay ranges.
Honorable Chair Sharon Bronson and
Members of the Pima County Board of Supervisors
June 18, 2021
Page 2

My employee associations and unions put politics aside, and I am asking this Board to do the same. An unprecedented opportunity to fix compression, provide competitive wages and retain talented staff is at your doorstep. Serendipitously, this wage chasm with our competitor and the county’s massive compression issues present themselves juxtaposed to the clearly portended Pima County financial windfall provided by the Federal American Rescue Plan. The money exists, the reasons are clear, and a first-time opportunity has presented itself. I ask you to act - not just for the Pima County Sheriff’s Department employees, but for all county employees.

Thank you for your careful consideration.

Respectfully,

[Signature]

Chris Nanos
Sheriff of Pima County

CN/RK:cgv

c: Chuck Huckelberry, Pima County Administrator