

After Abele says hold the line, Clarke asks for 100 more deputies

Milwaukee County sheriff seeking 137 new positions in 2014 budget request

By Steve Schultze of the Journal Sentinel
July 4, 2013

Milwaukee County Sheriff David A. Clarke Jr. wants to add 137 positions to his staff next year, which would more than make up for a two-year trend of reductions imposed by County Executive Chris Abele and the County Board.

About 100 of the extra positions would be deputies, who would be used for new drunken-driving and drug interdiction units in the sheriff's freeway patrol division, as well as to enhance the rosters for criminal investigations, courtroom security, airport protection, community relations and other areas.

Clarke also is seeking 35 more correctional officers for the county jail and three jobs he says are needed because of this year's separation of the House of Correction from the sheriff's oversight. Clarke objected to that change but lost a challenge in court.

The expansions are detailed in Clarke's 2014 budget request and would mean a 17% increase, or \$15 million, in tax levy support over his existing budget. That would bring his budget to \$99.6 million for next year.

The office's budget guideline for next year, issued by an Abele staffer, called for no levy increase — in line with the guidance given to most county departments.

Abele declined to comment on the sheriff's budget request, which is likely to undergo significant revision by the county executive and County Board.

Clarke did not respond to a request for comment.

Efficiency measures pushed by Abele since 2012 have led to deep disagreement between the sheriff and the county executive. In February, Clarke even accused Abele of "penis envy" in an interview.

Abele has said he'll reintroduce his plan next year to turn over patrol of lakefront and other county parks in the city to the Milwaukee Police Department. Abele has said the job could be done better and cheaper through a service agreement with city police, saving taxpayers money.

The board sided with Clarke on the issue during deliberations for the 2013 budget last fall, which resulted in restoration of 27 deputy jobs that Abele had wanted to cut. For 2012, 48 deputies lost their jobs to budget cuts.

Clarke's budget plan for next year details a proposed hiring binge.

Among the expansions: He'd add seven staffers in his "analytics division" to review crime data, at a cost of \$556,000; 35 more deputies for freeway alcohol and drug enforcement, for an extra \$4 million; add four staffers to beef up dispatching — for an increase of \$327,000 — even though cellphone 911 calls are now rerouted to the Milwaukee Police Department, and add 16 positions for investigations, for an extra \$1.5 million.

Splitting the jail and House of Correction will necessitate hiring 41 staffers, mainly correctional officers, at a cost of nearly \$2.1 million, the sheriff's request says. Part of the explanation for the extra officers: an anticipated uptick in the inmate population and the reopening of two mothballed jail housing units.

The hiring plans were hailed by Roy Felber, president of the deputies union, who said no new deputies have been hired in a decade. The department now has 274 deputies, fewer than half the number from a decade ago, when Clarke began replacing deputies with less costly correctional officers as a cost-saving measure.

Staff shortages have led to large overtime costs in the last two years, Felber said. Overtime for 2011 and 2012 totaled almost \$12 million — about double what was budgeted, county records show.

Supervisor Theo Lipscomb Jr., chairman of the County Board Judiciary, Public Safety and General Service Committee, said there was "no way" Clarke would get all the positions he's seeking. Clarke's request must be considered in conjunction with other departmental requests, Lipscomb said.

Supervisor Mark Borkowski, who describes himself as a Clarke backer, said he expected Clarke and Abele to continue their feud over the sheriff's budget.

"It's going to come down to the board" to settle things, Borkowski said.

The County Board was the only unit of county government to fail to submit a budget request to Abele for next year.

County Board Chairwoman Marina Dimitrijevic sent a letter saying it was impossible to figure out a board budget until full ramifications of Act 14 are known. That law cuts the board's budget through a complicated formula aimed at forcing cuts to staff and other areas.

"Since it is not possible right now to determine next year's tax levy, I am requesting the maximum amount of budgeted expenditures allowable under the state limitation," Dimitrijevic says in her letter to the county budget director.

The board also has voted to hire an outside legal firm to possibly mount a legal challenge to Act 14. The law also requires a binding referendum next spring on cutting supervisor pay in half to about \$24,000.

Facebook: [fb.com/steve.schultze3](https://www.facebook.com/steve.schultze3)

Twitter: twitter.com/SteveSchultzeJS

Find this article at:

<http://www.printthis.clickability.com/pt/cpt?expire=&title=After+Abele+says+hold+the+li...> 3/20/2014