

City of Buckhannon Revenue Review Committee

Police Department Remarks

The City of Buckhannon Police Department is a progressive law enforcement agency that offers protection 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year to the citizens of Buckhannon and all who work in and visit the city. The police department currently has 11 full-time police officers, 1 part-time police officer and 1 administrative assistant. We are responsible for delivering law enforcement services within the jurisdictional boundaries of the City of Buckhannon, which encompasses approximately 2.5 square miles.

Over the past several years, the City of Buckhannon has seen a good amount of growth, which in turn has translated to the need for increased law enforcement services. For instance, within the above-stated 2.5 square miles that now encompasses the city limits, there are approximately 5 miles of four-lane highway and numerous large businesses have been established that attracts hundreds if not thousands of visitors each day. Traffic studies conducted by the DOH have shown that on the roads that traverse the city of Buckhannon, there are approximately 14,000 vehicles that pass the city on Rt. 33 each day and approximately 19,000 vehicles that pass the courthouse in downtown Buckhannon on Rt. 20 each day.

The Buckhannon police department responds to approximately 1,800 911 calls each year, where an approximate average of 650 offense reports and 160 accident reports are taken and investigated each year. Beyond this, the city of Buckhannon is in a unique position in that it is the only incorporated municipality within Upshur County. When one considers this, along with the above-mentioned growth that the city has enjoyed in the past several years, one must also consider that the police department serves many more people than the 2017 U.S. census population estimate of 5,529. A closer inspection of the data reveals that for the period of Jan. 1, 2018 – Aug. 28, 2018, 396 offense reports had been filed with the police department. Of those reports filed, 55 of the victims were from outside city limits. Also, of the 244 people arrested by the Buckhannon Police Department so far in 2018, 171 of those people were

from outside city limits. Additionally, during the same time period, the police department filed 120 accident reports involving 209 drivers. Of the 209 drivers, 175 drivers were from outside city limits.

A specific problem that has unfortunately constituted a growing percentage of the issues that the Buckhannon police department deals with is the issues with drugs and the residual issues that often accompany these types of problems, such as thefts, overdoses, etc. This has prompted the police department to step up our efforts in addressing these issues by specifically assigning one of our officers to a regional drug task force. Beyond these investigative efforts, though, many of the responses to these issues can be quite time-consuming for all of our staff.

The key to ensuring the high degree of protection and services offered by the police department is to maintain this quality level of service. To do so, the following budgetary realities must be considered:

- The general cost of business has increased over the years. This includes everything from the cost of emergency response equipment to general office items such as paper, folders, compact discs, etc.
- We must constantly strive to ensure that police department salaries remain competitive in the ever-challenging law enforcement job market. To ignore this reality is to create nothing more than a revolving door within the Buckhannon Police Department where we do nothing more than train officers for higher paying jobs elsewhere. Beyond this, we strive to recruit top quality candidates who will make Buckhannon their home while establishing their career here.
- The police department is currently transitioning our fleet to a vehicle lease program through a partnership with Enterprise. While this will eventually greatly reduce the maintenance costs of our current fleet, by 2021 this will be an annual fixed cost of approximately \$90,000. To ensure the most adequate protection for our citizens, it is imperative to maintain our fleet in good working order. This reasoning is what led to the current transition to the lease program.
- As the police department has progressed, so too has our technical capabilities. In that regard, much of what we do is electronic – from daily

logs, offense reports, and accident reports to body cameras, digital photography, and surveillance. This all encompasses IT expenses including not only acquisition, but also very much including ongoing maintenance of all of our electronic capabilities (servers, networks, etc.)

- **The police department has recently entered into self-assessment in preparation for CALEA accreditation. So far, this self-assessment period has proven invaluable in that it has allowed us to identify various areas within the police department for professional development. The success from this process that will benefit all those whom we serve includes ongoing expenses with the CALEA program itself, as well as ancillary costs for the acquisition of new systems such as training components and human resource management programs. Another by-product of this professional development is the realization of an All-Hazard plan and annual training on said plan that will greatly enhance the capabilities of all of our first responders and city personnel, which will in turn make for a much safer environment for all of Buckhannon.**

Why is all of this important or even necessary? The City of Buckhannon, as the 24th largest city in the State of West Virginia, enjoys a very strong quality of life. To ensure that this quality of life remains high, the police department, along with all of our public safety agencies, must remain operationally ready to respond to any incident that may arise. The safety and security of our residents and all who work and visit the City of Buckhannon is of paramount importance. Working toward this on a daily basis requires resources and effort, but the end result is the strong quality of life that has long been the distinction of Buckhannon.