Lewis County

Sheriff's Office Organizational and Operational Analysis

May 10, 2017

Bonadio & Co., LLP
Certified Public Accountants

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Introduction

In December 2016, The Bonadio Group initiated an analysis of the Lewis County (the County) Sheriff's Office (the Department) and its public safety responsibilities and functions. The purpose of the analysis is to assist the County to deliver high quality, resident oriented public safety services, at an efficient cost consistent with the County's needs, current budget and budget projections. The study included analysis and recommendations primarily concerning the following:

a) The Department's current organization
b) The Department's current staffing, work load, and responsibilities to the County
c) The Department's current rules, regulations and standard operating procedures
d) The Department's historical, current and projected overtime costs
e) Identification of options for efficiency improvements

To meet the objectives of the study, the Bonadio Group performed consulting procedures including, but not limited to, the following:

- Conducted one-on-one interviews with the Sheriff and Undersheriff in order to understand the organization and operations, staff roles and responsibilities, workload and service levels, and any specific challenges they face in the delivery of public safety services.
- Conducted on-on-one interviews with a cross section of deputies, supervisors, administrators, dispatchers, and support staff. These interviews were purposed specifically to gain information on how the Department functions and the role-specific responsibilities of the members of the Department.
- Analyzed workflow, management, and departmental organization for redundancies or inefficiencies in operations.
- Analyzed the Department's staffing needs, including the effect of current staffing levels on overtime cost and operational efficiency.
- Examined the systems and software applications that the Department uses to manage, document, and accomplish its mission.
- Examined the Department's evidence storage procedures and records management system.

Summary of Roles and Responsibilities

We were not engaged to, and did not; conduct an audit, the objective of which would be the expression of an opinion on the policies and procedures in place surrounding the functions within the Lewis County Sheriff's Office operations. Accordingly, we do not express such an opinion. Had we performed additional procedures, other matters might have come to our attention that would have been reported to you.

This consulting engagement report is intended solely for the information and use of Lewis County and is not intended to be and should not be used by anyone other than those specified parties.

We are independent within the meaning of, and comply with the applicable requirements of, Rule 101, "Independence", and related Interpretations and Rulings of the Code of Professional Conduct promulgated by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants.

We have provided these recommendations based on our observations during the work requested by you. You are responsible for making all management decisions and for performing management functions in association with our recommendations.

Background

The Lewis County Sheriff's Office (the Department) provides law enforcement services for all of Lewis County. Lewis County consists of approximately 1,290 square miles, with an approximate population of 21,000. The Lewis County Sheriff's Office currently consists of:

- The Sheriff and Undersheriff
- 14 deputies and supervisors in road patrol (12 full-time, two part-time)
- One full-time investigator
- 21 corrections officers (14 full-time, seven part-time) and one jail supervisor
- 11 dispatchers (eight full-time and three part-time) and one dispatch supervisor
- One civilian administrative clerk

Throughout our engagement, we noted that the Department faces certain obstacles to providing the desired level of service to the community, the largest being the Department's low staffing level. Several units within the Department have minimum mandatory staffing levels, which are common in law enforcement agencies of all sizes. These minimum staffing levels dictate the fewest number of individuals that must be working on a particular shift to provide a level of service that the Department has deemed adequate. These standards have been developed through the experience of the Department's leadership, alongside input from governing bodies such as the New York State Department of Corrections (NYS DOC). The specific minimum staffing levels of each unit are as follows:

- Road Patrol- At least two deputies, in separate vehicles, during each shift.
- Corrections- Three or four corrections officers (CO's) per shift, depending on time of day, plus additional coverage for visitations, supervision of high risk inmates, supervision of inmates receiving medical care, and transportation of inmates.
- Dispatch- At least two dispatchers must work each shift.
- Park and Recreation Patrol- No minimum staffing level. Part-time patrol coverage is scheduled as needed.
- Investigations- No minimum staffing level.

The Department currently employs 12 full-time deputies in road patrol. The road patrol unit uses a 12-hour shift schedule utilizing two platoons, each with a day shift team and a night shift team. Both of the platoons' day shift teams are staffed with two road deputies and one supervising sergeant. One of the night shift teams is also comprised of two deputies and one supervisor, while the other night shift team has only two deputies with no supervisor. Although we would never recommend operation with the lack of this supervisor, the Department is currently doing what they can to provide adequate coverage during this shift by ensuring there are always at least two deputies available to answer calls for service. The Department also assigns one supervisor to a "swing shift" that overlaps the day and night shifts to provide constant coverage throughout the shift change. Under the current staffing model, one of the road patrol shift teams is always operating at the mandatory minimum staffing level, while the other three shift teams have only one additional deputy above the mandatory minimum to cover gaps in coverage caused by vacation, sick days, or other Department needs.

We noted that the Department maintains statistics regarding calls for service and other data such as overtime, however, these statistics are not regularly used in the active management of the Department. At the time of our fieldwork, the service call data could not be effectively organized by geographic location or time of day. Periodically analyzing calls for service by location and timing would help the Department evaluate its staffing needs in the road patrol unit.

Background (Continued)

In 2015, the Department made a significant financial and technology investment by implementing the Spillman software system, a powerful system with many sophisticated reporting capabilities. While the system is still relatively new to the Department, they have not yet taken full advantage of its tracking and reporting capabilities. The Department should work with their Spillman customer representative to create a series of "canned" reports that can be run periodically to assist the Department leadership in their day-to-day supervision of the Department. Reports should be created to display incident details such as the type of incident, the location of the incident, and the time it occurred. The Department should also perform a periodic analysis of their overtime data, similar to what is presented in Observation #2 of this report. This type of reoccurring analysis will help the leadership control costs and more accurately manage the staffing needs of the Department.

The corrections unit uses a similar 12-hour shift schedule. However, unlike the road patrol, the corrections unit only employs enough full-time CO's to cover the absolute minimum mandatory staffing levels for each shift. Operating at strictly the minimum staffing level requires the corrections unit to rely on overtime and calling in part-time CO's to cover vacations, sick days, and additional Department needs.

The dispatch unit operates within the jail facility and consists of eight full-time dispatchers, the minimum required to meet the mandatory coverage of two dispatchers per shift. We noted the Department's full-time dispatchers are unique to other law enforcement agencies in that they are all also licensed CO's, a stipulation that is actually required by the current collective bargaining agreement. Per our discussion with members of the Department, the decision to make all dispatchers CO's was made for a few reasons. First, the NYS DOC requires that any individual that controls the entrance and exit locking mechanism to the jail must be a licensed CO. As the dispatchers currently work within the jail facility with access to the entrance and exit doors, the Department is able to utilize the dispatchers to operate the doors without having to hire additional CO's. Additionally, the NYS DOC also requires that female inmates have the right to request a female CO to perform relevant search and supervision duties. Utilizing the Department's existing, predominately female dispatchers as CO's prevents the Department from needing to hire additional full-time female CO's. Should the Department ever remove the requirement that dispatchers are CO's, additional CO's would need to be hired to adequately staff the jail and comply with the requirements mentioned above. As such, we believe the current practice is most appropriate for the Department current staffing and facilities arrangement.

Collectively, the fact that the Department is operating at or near the minimum mandatory staffing level in so many areas has various effects on the Department and its members. First, the operating expenses of the Department are impacted, as they must rely on calling in individuals on overtime to provide coverage for vacations, sick days, or other Department needs. Additionally, operating at such lean staffing levels can be detrimental to Department morale and operational efficiency. For example, when operating at or near minimum staffing, individual requests for vacation are often denied. Also, low staffing levels reduce the overall quality of service that can be provided by the Department, as there is often not enough time to thoroughly investigate complaints or follow up on previous incidents. These issues are amplified when combined with other unique challenges of the Department, such as the large geographic coverage area, the demand for patrol of outdoor spaces and recreational vehicle use, and the limited opportunity to share services with surrounding agencies (the only other law enforcement agencies located within the Department's jurisdiction are the Village of Lowville Police Department and limited coverage from the New York State Police).

Background (Continued)

The Bonadio Group (Bonadio) was engaged by the County to perform consulting services, with the purpose of evaluating the current operating policies and procedures of the Department and to make recommendations for the Department to maximize efficiency where appropriate. Throughout our engagement, we attempted to analyze the Department's operation while giving significant consideration to its limitations and obstacles. Like any engagement of this type, we relied on the cooperation of members of the Department and their willingness to share information and insights into how they accomplish their law enforcement objectives while operating within budgetary constraints. Throughout the engagement we experienced a high level of cooperation from all levels within the Department. We would like to thank the deputies and civilian personnel of the Department for their cooperation and assistance in completing this study.

OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. EVALUATION OF CURRENT ROAD PATROL SHIFT MODEL

Observation

The Department currently has 12 full-time deputies and supervisors and two part-time deputies assigned to road patrol. Road patrol deputies in the Department are assigned to specific platoons and their work schedule is based on two 12-hour shifts per day. This type of schedule allows patrol deputies and supervisors to work together on the same "team" each day. The part-time deputies are used on a strictly call-in basis to cover vacations and sick time in order to maintain the Department's minimum mandatory coverage. The following table summarized the Department's typical road patrol shift coverage schedule:

Shift	Platoon 1	Platoon 2
Day Shift (6:00AM – 6:00PM)	2 Deputies, 1 Supervisor	2 Deputies, 1 Supervisor
Night Shift (6:00PM – 6:00AM)	2 Deputies, 1 Supervisor	2 Deputies, No Supervisor
Note: The Department has one Supervisor position on a "swing shift," which can provide general coverage through shift changes. There is no swing shift coverage on this particular supervisor's days off.		

The Department has jurisdiction over the entire county, which they have divided into four geographic zones, with two in the most northern territory and two zones in the southern territory. In road patrol, deputies are assigned to a geographic zones each shift, with each deputy operating their own service vehicle. To ensure sufficient coverage of deputies on the road during each shift, the patrol unit must meet certain mandatory minimum staffing requirements. The Department operates with a minimum mandatory coverage of two deputies on road patrol at all times. Typically, one of the two deputies working each shift is assigned to cover the two northern zones while the other deputy covers the two southern zones. The supervising sergeant on duty will spend their time floating between the different zones, assisting the deputies as needed and performing other supervisory and administrative duties. In theory, we agree with the Department's decision to break the patrol coverage area into distinct zones. However, without any geographic specific service call data, we are unable to determine if the current sizes and locations of the zones are appropriate.

Due to the fact that mandatory minimum coverage requires two deputies and a fully staffed shift has only three deputies, the road patrol unit is at or below the mandatory minimum coverage level any time a deputy takes vacation or sick time. When one of the two deputies takes the shift off, the supervisor will generally fill in and cover the patrol duties of the deputy that is out. If the supervisor takes the shift off, the platoon will operate without a road patrol supervisor. The Department generally only allows one deputy per shift to schedule vacation ahead of time; however, should a deputy call in sick while another deputy on that shift is on vacation or has already called in sick, the Department would call in another deputy to cover the shift. The Department will first attempt to call in one of the full-time deputies on the off-duty platoon on overtime. If no one on the other platoon is available to cover the shift, the Department will attempt to call in one of the part-time deputies.

1. EVALUATION OF CURRENT ROAD PATROL SHIFT MODEL (Continued)

Observation (continued)

As part of our analysis, we evaluated the impact that a potential change in the current shift schedule would have on the number of deputies needed to provide targeted service levels. The shift structure has a major impact on staffing needs, as demonstrated by the table, below:

Shift Schedule	8 Hour	10 Hour	12 Hour
Hours of Coverage per Shift (shift length x 365)	2,920	3,650	4,380
Number of Shifts	3	3	2
Total Hours of Coverage per Year (# of shifts x coverage per shift)	8,760	10,950	8,760
Scheduled Hrs (40 hours/wk x 52 weeks)	2,080	2,080	2,080
Vacation Hrs (estimated @ 3 weeks annually)	160	160	160
Other Leave Hrs (estimated @ 2 weeks annually for personal & sick days)	80	80	80
Training Hrs (estimated @ 15 hours annually)	15	15	15
Hours Available to Work	1,825	1,825	1,825
Deputies Needed to Provide 1 Deputy On Duty at All Times	4.8	6.0	4.8
Minimum Staffing Requirements per shift:	2	2	2
Number of Deputies needed to meet min. staffing requirements	9.6	12.0	9.6

The table shows the number of deputies needed to provide one deputy on duty at all times under different shift configurations. As shown above, under the 8-hour and 12-hour shift models, approximately 10 deputy positions are needed to maintain absolute minimum mandatory coverage. Under a 10-hour shift plan, approximately 12 deputy positions are needed to provide the same coverage. It should be noted that these figures only represent how many deputies would be needed to maintain minimum coverage of two deputies per shift. Using the same methodology, for two deputies and one supervisor to be available on every shift, approximately 15 full-time positions would be needed under the 8 and 12-hour shift models, and approximately 18 full-time positions would be required under the 10-hour shift model. The Department currently employs 12 full-time positions in the road patrol unit, including both deputies and supervisors.

Recommendation

As noted in the table above, the Department would require approximately 10 road patrol Deputies (not including supervising Sergeants and Lieutenants) to meet the current mandatory minimum staffing levels under the 8-hour and 12-hour shift schedules. Under the 10-hour shift model, approximately 12 patrol deputies would be needed to meet the same minimum requirements.

10 and 12 hour shift schedules have become common in law enforcement agencies in the United States over the last 20 years. A 10-hour schedule still requires 3 shifts to provide coverage for a 24-hour day, resulting in 6 overlap hours each day (25% overlap) when two shifts of deputies are on duty. As a result, additional deputy hours (i.e. additional deputy positions) are required to provide the same coverage as an 8 or 12-hour schedule. The overlaps in a 10-hour work schedule are not necessarily needed for workload requirements and frequently there are more deputies on duty, during the overlapping hours, than are needed for the call for service demands.

1. EVALUATION OF CURRENT ROAD PATROL SHIFT MODEL (Continued)

Recommendation (continued)

It should also be noted in the interviews we conducted, we received nearly universal positive feedback regarding the current 12-hour shift schedule. In the interest of keeping the same number of full-time positions required to meet the minimum coverage level, as well as to promote consistency and positive morale within the Department, we recommend that the Department continue using their current 12-hour shift model and coverage zones.

Additionally, we believe that for an area the size of Lewis County, the Department's current mandatory minimum coverage level of two deputies per shift is the absolute lowest coverage possible that would allow the Department to provide an acceptable level of service to the community. The ability to respond to at least two simultaneous calls for service is crucial to the function of the road patrol unit, and the Department is using all available resources to ensure an adequate level of public safety is maintained.

2. ANALYSIS OF OVERTIME AND STAFFING LEVELS

Observation

As part of our analysis, we obtained overtime data from the Department for the 2015 and 2016 calendar years, which we used to help determine the current staffing needs of the Department. We organized and evaluated the data based on the overtime categories and causes, which are detailed in the following tables:

Overtime Hours by Category

	2015	2016
Road Patrol	1,222	1,202
DWI Enforcement	344	170
Park and Recreation	22	17
Dispatch	853	2,063
Jail	1,731	1,984
Youth Program	46	70
Total	**4,218**	**5,506**

2. ANALYSIS OF OVERTIME AND STAFFING LEVELS (Continued)

Observation (Continued)

2015 Overtime Hours by Cause

	Road Patrol	DWI	Parks & Rec	Dispatch	Jail	Youth Program	Total
Constant Watch	4	-	-	-	104	-	108
Court/Hearings	42	-	-	-	2	-	44
Coverage	373	-	-	684	1,137	-	2,194
DWI Crackdown	-	317	-	-	-	-	317
Drug Buys	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fair Detail	137	-	-	-	-	16	153
Hospital Detail	-	-	-	-	244	-	244
Parks & Rec	-	-	22	-	-	-	22
Stayover/Additional Work Needed	301	-	-	52	7	8	368
Training	345	27	-	72	62	22	528
Transport	2	-	-	-	175	-	177
Other	1	-	-	3	-	-	4
Unknown	17	-	-	42	-	-	59
Total	**1,222**	**344**	**22**	**853**	**1,731**	**46**	**4,218**

2016 Overtime Hours by Cause

	Road Patrol	DWI	Parks & Rec	Dispatch	Jail	Youth Program	Total
Constant Watch	-	-	-	-	176	-	176
Court/Hearings	31	3	-	-	19	7	60
Coverage	416	-	-	1,785	1,073	24	3,298
DWI Crackdown	-	167	-	-	-	-	167
Drug Buys	49	-	-	-	-	-	49
Fair Detail	87	-	-	-	-	18	105
Hospital Detail	-	-	-	8	176	-	184
K-9	315	-	-	-	-	-	315
Parks & Rec	-	-	17	-	-	-	17
Stayover/Additional Work Needed	159	-	-	56	15	8	213
Training	134	-	-	159	241	12	546
Transport	2	-	-	1	268	1	272
Other	4	-	-	18	8	-	30
Unknown	5	-	-	36	8	-	49
Total	**1,202**	**170**	**22**	**2,063**	**1,984**	**70**	**5,606**

2. ANALYSIS OF OVERTIME AND STAFFING LEVELS (Continued)

Observation (Continued)

In any law enforcement agency, a certain amount of overtime is inevitable and caused by several different scenarios, including when a deputy makes an arrest or has to answer a call for service near the end of their shift, requiring them to stay past their scheduled shift end-time. Other similar causes for overtime include training, court/hearing appearances, prisoner transports, monitoring prisoners in care at a hospital, and irregular details such as special event coverage, drug busts, additional DWI patrol, and coverage at the annual county fair.

The most significant cause of overtime for the Department is calling in off-duty deputies to maintain minimum mandatory coverage levels. This type of overtime is classified as "Coverage" in the tables on the previous page. We noted the three areas that contributed the most to this type of overtime were road patrol, the jail, and dispatch. Road patrol coverage overtime remained relatively consistent between 2015 and 2016, with overtime hours of 373 and 416 in 2015 and 2016, respectively. Jail coverage overtime also remained relatively consistent, with 1,137 and 1,073 hours in 2015 and 2016 respectively. However, dispatch coverage overtime increased significantly from 684 hours in 2015 to 1,785 hours in 2016. The Department is particularly susceptible to this type of overtime due to the fact that the current staffing levels of all three of these units are at or near the mandatory minimum coverage requirements.

The following table details the minimum coverage requirements vs. a typical full-strength schedule in road patrol, the jail, and dispatch:

	Minimum Per Shift	Scheduled Per Shift*
Road Patrol	2	3
Jail	4	4
Dispatch	2	2

**Assuming no vacation, sick time, or other leave.*

As evidenced in the table above, a full-strength schedule only provides the mandatory minimum coverage in both the jail and dispatch units. Based on the current staffing levels, any time a dispatcher or corrections officer (CO) does not work their scheduled shift, an off-duty or part-time individual must be called in. In the instance that an off-duty individual covers the shift, overtime will be incurred. In the road patrol unit, one individual per shift can take vacation or call in sick without the Department incurring overtime. In the instance that a deputy calls in sick on a shift that already has one road patrol deputy out on vacation, an off-duty or part-time deputy would have to be called in. Use of part-time deputies in road patrol present a unique challenge, as nearly all the part-time deputies currently hold full-time positions with other law enforcement agencies. This means that there is very little incentive for these individuals to pick up a shift with the Department, because they are already getting full-time work elsewhere, and picking up shifts for the Department would typically result in them working greater than a 40-hour week without earning an elevated overtime rate. Through our interviews with Department personnel, we noted that several individuals did not find the use of part-time deputies in road patrol to be an effective practice.

During our fieldwork, we learned that the Department recently received approval to fill a series of positions in the Department, including a night shift road patrol supervisor on the platoon currently without a night supervisor, a School Resource Deputy (SRO) for the South Lewis School District (*Note: The school district specifically requested this position and has arranged a cost-sharing agreement with the County for this position.*), a new investigator to replace the current investigator nearing retirement, and two more full-time positions yet to be allocated.

2. ANALYSIS OF OVERTIME AND STAFFING LEVELS (Continued)

Recommendation

When considering how much coverage overtime is appropriate for any law enforcement agency, the size and staffing level of that agency must be considered. For the Department, which is currently running very lean in terms of staffing, coverage overtime is necessary to meet mandatory minimum coverage levels. In 2016, coverage overtime totaled 3,298 hours, with totals for each unit as follows:

- Road Patrol - 416
- Corrections – 1,073
- Dispatch – 1,785

Overall, the amount of coverage overtime is well within a range that we would consider typical of a law enforcement agency of similar size and staffing level. In our analysis in Observation #1, we noted that an average full-time deputy/CO/dispatcher is generally available to work approximately 1,825 hours per year. We were impressed with the Department's ability to keep overtime hours below what would be provided by an additional full-time-equivalent (FTE) in each unit. While the Department will never eliminate all coverage overtime, as there will always be unexpected call-ins or special details, hiring additional staff would likely reduce the amount of coverage overtime. The Department must also consider the total cost of hiring more full-time employees vs. utilizing overtime. Although overtime hours are paid at a premium rate, there are also additional costs incurred when hiring full-time other than their salaries, including health and retirement benefits, training, and equipment costs.

We recommend the County evaluate the current needs of the Department vs. the current staffing levels, and consider whether or not it is necessary to hire more full-time positions in addition to those already approved. Staffing levels that are at or near minimum mandatory levels can have several negative impacts on a law enforcement agency, including limiting when individuals can take vacation, limiting the amount of training that individuals can take part in, decreasing general employee morale, which in turn can detract from the level of service provided to the citizens of the County, and eventually can lead to high turnover. Specifically in the road patrol unit, the low staffing level makes it difficult for deputies to perform their jobs to the fullest ability due to the fact they cannot commit significant time to following up on investigations and other duties, as they always need to be available to respond to calls for service. Additionally, the supervisors in road patrol are rarely able to actually perform supervisory duties, as they are often filling in on the road patrol to meet the mandatory minimum coverage requirements.

If the County decides that road patrol coverage should be expanded to increase public safety, this expansion will rely solely on overtime hours to provide the additional service, unless the mandatory minimum coverage levels are raised, effectively increasing the road patrol staffing levels.

Of the two approved and unassigned full-time positions to be hired, we will recommend that one positon be dedicated to Parks and Recreation patrol (see Recommendation #3 for more details), which leaves one remaining position to be allocated. While we believe the road patrol unit would benefit greatly from additional staffing to that unit, the County must also consider the needs of the jail and dispatch units, especially considering those units are currently at their absolute minimum full-time staffing level.

3. PARKS AND RECREATION PATROL

Observation

We noted that the Department operates a patrol of the County's various lakes and snowmobile/ATV trails. As a year-round destination for outdoor activities and use of recreational vehicles including boats, snowmobiles, and ATV's, the need for a special patrol of these areas should be a significant priority of the Department. We noted that the Parks and Recreation patrol is currently managed by a part-time deputy, with three other part-time deputies assisting him as needed. This part-time deputy prepares the schedule and determines when and where the County's lakes and trails will be patrolled. Per our conversations with Department personnel, many expressed that there often did not appear to be a strong correlation between when and where patrols took place vs. periods of high activity. For example, several individuals mentioned that in the past, there has been no boat patrol on busy holiday weekends and/or no snowmobile patrol during peak-season weekends. The lack of coverage results in traditional road deputies responding to calls for service on local trails and waterways. We were unable to substantiate this information with data, as geographic service call data was not available at the time of our review. We also noted that several road deputies have not been trained on use of the Department's snowmobiles, ATV's, and boats, requiring the deputies to take rides with civilians at the scene.

Recommendation

We recommend the Department utilize one of the approved and unassigned positions to be a full-time Parks and Recreation patrol supervisor. Due to the activity level of outdoor motorsports throughout the year in Lewis County, we believe there is enough of a need for a specialized patrol to justify this as a full-time position. This supervisor could continue to utilize the part-time staff already currently working in this area on an as-needed basis. We also recommend that this supervisor work with other local agencies, including the NYS Department of Conservation, to utilize trail counters and other activity trackers to more effectively schedule patrol coverage.

4. INVESTIGATIONS

Observation

We noted that the Department currently employs one full-time investigator. The investigator's main responsibilities are to handle cases involving unattended deaths, fatal accidents, drug overdoses, cases involving minors, drug buys, and other collaborative efforts with the local District Attorney's Office. The Department's investigator is also in charge of managing the Department's evidence storage room.

Per our interviews with Department personnel, we noted that there is a concern that at times, the workload demands of the position are greater than what the current investigator can keep up with. Deputies must often perform interviews and gather other relevant information related to cases they refer to the investigator. However, due to their responsibilities to cover calls for service on road patrol, they are not able to allocate an adequate amount of their time to these investigative duties, resulting in some investigations not being performed to the Department's satisfaction. We also noted that the investigator does not currently keep statistics on the number of complaints received, cases opened, and cases closed. Without accurate statistics of the amount and type of cases reviewed by the investigator, it is nearly impossible to determine whether or not one full-time position is sufficient to perform these duties.

We noted that the current investigator has already announced his plan to retire, and the Department has received approval to hire a new candidate to fill this future vacancy.

4. INVESTIGATIONS (Continued)

Recommendation

We recommend that the Department hire a candidate to take over the role of investigator prior to the current investigator's retirement, allowing ample time for the new investigator to receive training and get acclimated with the Department's operating procedures. We also recommend that the new investigator keep up-to-date statistics, including the number of complaints received, cases opened, cases closed, and types of investigations. Going forward, the Department's leadership should review these statistics with the investigator periodically to gain a better understanding of the investigator's workload. Once the new investigator has acclimated to the Department's operating procedures, and adequate case activity records have been established, the Department should perform an analysis to determine if one full-time investigator is enough to meet the demands of the position.

As part of this analysis, the Department can use industry-accepted benchmarks for the amount of time each type of investigation should generally require. For example, the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), who has conducted efficiency and operation studies of hundreds of law enforcement agencies across the country generally recommends that between 120 to 180 cases be assigned per investigator per year, resulting in about 10 to 15 new cases per month for each investigator[1]. The Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) has also developed standards for the average time required to complete different types of criminal investigations. PERF uses four categories of case solvability to estimate the number of hours required to complete a "thorough" investigation. A "thorough" investigation is one that results in a case that is prepared for prosecution, or one in which all leads have been followed and exhausted. The four categories of solvability used by PERF are "contact only", less complex, typical, and more complex. It should be noted that all complaints that are initially reviewed by the investigator, but not pursued further with an investigation would fall into the "contact only" category. It should be noted that PERF's estimates also allow for time spent on preparing a case for prosecution and court testimony; because not all cases will go to court, this allotment is distributed over all cases. PERF estimates the following number of hours are required for each investigation[2]:

	Contact Only	Less Complex	Typical	More Complex
Assault	1	6	20	54
Robbery	1	10	30	48
Burglary	1	4	16	62
Homicide	2	40	80	220
Financial Crimes	2	12.5	24	66
Theft	1	3.5	8	16
Stolen Vehicle	1	12	16	200
Crimes Against Children	2	16	20	64
Special Victims Crimes	2	12	24	48

When evaluating the workload of the investigator's positions, the Department should also consider the other responsibilities of the position, including management of the evidence storage room and collaborating with the District Attorney's Office.

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[1]"Public Safety Department Analysis: Walterboro, South Carolina." *International City/County Management Association. July* 2013 <http://www.walterborosc.org/data/sites/1/media/police%20dept/walterboro_public -safety-analysis_final-report-27-sep-13.pdf>.

[2]"The Anchorage Police Department Staffing and Deployment Study." *The Police Executive Research Forum. August 2010* <https://www.muni.org/Departments/police/Documents/PERF%20APD%20Deployment%20Study.pdf>.

5. EVIDENCE STORAGE ROOM

Observation

We noted that management of the Department's evidence storage room is currently the responsibility of the Investigator. While on site, we discussed evidence storage procedures with the investigator and observed the physical storage location. We noted the following:

- The Department currently uses a system of lockers for deputies to turn over any evidence collected on their shift to the investigator for processing. The lockers are located in the same space as the evidence storage, however, the evidence storage is behind a separate locked cage, not accessible by the deputies. The deputies enter the storage area and place the evidence in one of a series of lockers, along with a copy of the crime report. The deputy then places a pad lock on the locker, securing the piece of evidence. The Investigator then periodically checks the lockers, looking for any with a pad lock on it. If evidence has been secured in one of the lockers, the Investigator unlocks the locker, removes the evidence for processing, enters the evidence into the Spillman system and assigns a location, and then places the item in the secured storage area.
- There were a few items of evidence, including a firearm, located in the locker area and not secured in any manner. For items not secured in the locked evidence storage cage, a deputy, or other individual with access to the locker area would have the ability to access, remove, or alter the evidence contained in the storage locker area. This type of action would be very difficult to detect, correct, and could result in the compromising of several criminal prosecution cases.
- There were non-evidence items stored alongside actual evidence, including the ammunition used in shooting range instruction. Having undocumented non-evidence property, especially high risk items such as ammunition, stored in the evidence room and comingled with evidence exposes the Department to significant risk. Should an individual gain access to the storage room and take possession of these items, the Department could be unaware of the items status, as there may not be complete records of the chain of custody of the item.
- There is no refrigerator in the evidence storage room, so forensic evidence that needs to remain cold is occasionally stored in the refrigerator in the Department's break room.
- The following individuals had a key to access the locked evidence storage area:
    - The Investigator/Evidence Storage Supervisor
    - The Sheriff
    - The Undersheriff
    - The Range Instructor
    - The Former Range Instructor
    - The Corrections Range Instructor
- There is currently no formal evidence maintenance and purging procedures in place. Instead, the investigator occasionally haphazardly identifies old evidence items and attempts to work with the local District Attorney's Office to confirm if the item can be purged. When property rooms are filled beyond their capacity, agencies lose their ability to properly track, secure, locate, and dispose of property and evidence. The risk of loss or theft of evidence increases as the build-up of unnecessary property grows. Also, overcrowded evidence rooms generally require more staffing to manage simply because the size of their inventory has a tendency to slow down routine operations involving evidence storage and retrieval.

5. EVIDENCE STORAGE ROOM (Continued)

Recommendation

We recommend the following as it relates to evidence storage:

- **Secured Evidence Storage** – All incoming items of evidence should be placed in the temporary storage lockers and secured with a pad lock by the deputy dropping off the evidence. Failure to place items in a designated secure temporary storage location before the end of the shift makes the chain of custody suspect and open to a defense challenge. Departmental policy should prohibit storing evidence in personal lockers, vehicles, desks, offices, or other unauthorized locations for this reason.

- **Evidence Inventory** – All items located in the evidence room should be inventoried and their status should be updated on the corresponding crime report and in the Spillman system. Additionally, a listing should be created of all items in the Spillman system that could not be physically located. As part of this process, any items located in the evidence storage area that do not have any evidentiary value should be clearly marked as such and should be stored outside the dedicated evidence location, if possible, not comingled with evidence.

- **Refrigerated storage –**We recommend that a refrigeration unit is installed within the secured main evidence storage room. If a refrigeration unit cannot be installed in the main evidence storage room due to space restraints, we recommend that a locked refrigeration unit be installed in the Department's investigator's office, with access limited to only the investigator and their backup.

- **Limited Access to Evidence Storage** – Entry into restricted storage areas should be closely controlled to prevent accusations of alteration, unauthorized removal, theft, or tampering with property or evidence stored by the Department. Access restriction protects the proper chain of custody. Those permitted access should include the investigator/evidence room supervisor and his qualified back-up. All other persons who enter the property room/storage areas should be documented in an access log and they should be escorted at all times while within the room and/or storage area.

  Other Department personnel including the Sheriff, Undersheriff, and Range Instructors should not have independent, unescorted access into the evidence/storage rooms. If one of those individuals has a key or access, the agency should establish a system that requires another authorized person to escort them in the secure areas at all time, thereby creating a two-person rule.

- **Maintenance and Purging Procedures** – In order to establish an effective on-going purging system, certain criteria must be established to provide guidance in how long property and evidence should be retained before being reviewed.

  Statutes of Limitation: The most common review system used in property rooms utilizes the statutes of limitations as a review date. For example, if the time limit for a misdemeanor is one year, the assigned deputy or the Evidence Supervisor would receive a "Review Notice" after one year. The Department would use the statutory requirements of New York State as criteria.

5. EVIDENCE STORAGE ROOM (Continued)

Recommendation (continued)

- **Maintenance and Purging Procedures (continued)** – In felony cases, the review notice should be sent out to the Evidence Supervisor when the statutes of limitations have expired. An important factor in making a purging system work effectively is to apply the various statutes of limitations to cases where evidence is being retained. The review notice should request approval to release, dispose of or retain the property or evidence.

  Additional considerations related to the disposition process for the Department are as follows:

  - We believe an effective maintenance program will require the utilization of the Spillman system and its automated capabilities. The system has utilities that allow the evidence tech to assign dates and parameters to each piece of evidence that will allow for future queries and notifications to be pushed out to users when the evidence can be disposed of or returned to the owner. These utilities should be investigated and utilized accordingly; monthly or quarterly reports should be generated to notify Evidence Supervisor when a piece of evidence should be reviewed for possible disposal.
  - The Department should attempt to coordinate with the District Attorney's office to receive disposal reports on a regular basis (bi-weekly, monthly, and quarterly) which would allow for research to identify cases where evidence is in custody and should be reviewed for possible release or disposal.
  - We recommend a formal purging process be put into place that uses specific prescribed forms, requires at least two signoffs documenting the gathering of evidence for disposal, and that the information is logged into the Spillman system on a timely basis.

  There are many variations that can be adopted to achieve an efficient maintenance and disposal process. Whatever variation is chosen, it is imperative that maintenance becomes an integral part of the day to day evidence room procedures.

- **Video monitoring system –** Installation of video surveillance equipment should be considered to act as a deterrent to dissuade unauthorized entry without detection.

  All doors into the secure areas should be equipped with cameras, in addition to high risk evidence areas where guns, money and drugs are stored. Including cameras where evidence is deposited, such as counters and lockers, can validate when evidence was submitted as well as confirming that evidence was indeed submitted. New digital technologies now allows the data to be stored on a hard drive when there is movement in front of the camera, thus limiting the amount of data needed to be stored. The recording is initiated based upon the movement, and the digital data is stored on a hard drive.

  The Department should investigate the cost of implementing a video monitoring system, with particular consideration given to the high risk areas such as the gun and drug vaults.

6. USE OF PART-TIME LABOR

Observation

As part of our analysis, we obtained data regarding the Department's use of part time employees in road patrol, the jail, and in dispatch for the 2015 and 2016 calendar years. Part-time employee hours and cost for 2015 and 2016 were as follows:

2015 Part-Time Hours

	Regular	OT
Road Patrol	1,102	-
Corrections	11,521	293
Dispatch	6,426	178

2016 Part-Time Hours

	Regular	OT
Road Patrol	845	-
Corrections	13,131	485
Dispatch	4,376	318

Based on our analysis in Observation #1, using an average level of vacation and sick time, the typical full-time Department employee will be available to work approximately 1,825 hours per year. Based on this estimate, we noted that the Department is currently utilizing part-time employees to cover less than one full-time employee equivalent's hours annually in road patrol. However, in Corrections, the Department is used part-time labor to cover approximately 6.5 and 7.5 full-time employee's worth of hours in 2015 and 2016, respectively. In Dispatch, the Department used part-time labor to cover the equivalent hours of 3.5 and 2.5 full-time employees in 2015 and 2016, respectively.

6. USE OF PART-TIME LABOR (Continued)

Observation (continued)

To assist in evaluating the appropriateness of the amount of part-time labor used, we performed the following analysis to determine the number of full-time corrections officer needed to staff the jail and dispatch at the mandatory minimum level of coverage:

Full-time employees needed in Corrections:	
Hours of Coverage per Shift (shift length x 365)	4,380
Number of Shifts	2
Total Hours of Coverage per Year (# of shifts x coverage per shift)	8,760
Scheduled Hrs (40 hours/wk x 52 weeks)	2,080
Vacation Hrs (estimated @ 3 weeks annually)	160
Other Leave Hrs (estimated @ 2 weeks annually for personal & sick days)	80
Training Hrs (estimated @ 15 hours annually)	15
Hours Available to Work	1,825
Deputies Needed to Provide 1 CO On Duty at All Times	4.8
Minimum Staffing Requirements per shift:	4
Number of Deputies needed to meet min. staffing requirements	19.2

Per the analysis above, the Department would need to employee approximately 19.2 full-time corrections officers to staff the jail at the mandatory minimum coverage level. The Department currently employs 14 full-time corrections officers in the jail.

Full-time employees needed in Dispatch:	
Hours of Coverage per Shift (shift length x 365)	4,380
Number of Shifts	2
Total Hours of Coverage per Year (# of shifts x coverage per shift)	8,760
Scheduled Hrs (40 hours/wk x 52 weeks)	2,080
Vacation Hrs (estimated @ 3 weeks annually)	160
Other Leave Hrs (estimated @ 2 weeks annually for personal & sick days)	80
Training Hrs (estimated @ 15 hours annually)	15
Hours Available to Work	1,825
Deputies Needed to Provide 1 Dispatcher On Duty at All Times	4.8
Minimum Staffing Requirements per shift:	2
Number of Deputies needed to meet min. staffing requirements	9.6

6. USE OF PART-TIME LABOR (Continued)

Observation (continued)

Per the analysis above, approximately 9.6 full-time dispatchers would be required to maintain mandatory the minimum coverage level. The Department currently employs eight full-time dispatchers.

Recommendation

Based on our analysis, the Department would need approximately 19- 20 full time corrections officers in the jail, but only currently employs 14. The Department has been using part-time labor to supplement the full-time workforce. The total part time labor hours in the jail equated to approximately 6.5 FTE's in 2015 and 7.5 FTE's in 2016. Overall, the level of part-time labor in the jail appears reasonable considering that the Department is at least five full-time corrections officers short to maintain mandatory minimum coverage, as well as the fact that part-time labor is often utilized to cover vacations and call-ins from the full-time staff. In Dispatch, the Department would need approximately 9.6 full-time dispatchers to maintain minimum covers, but only currently employs eight. Part-time labor hours in Dispatch was equal to approximately 3.5 FTE's in 2015 and 2.5 FTE's in 2016. The part-time labor hours in Dispatch appear reasonable considering that the Department would have to hire at least two additional full-time dispatchers to maintain minimum coverage with only full-time employees.

While the number of part-time labor hours appears reasonable, we also examined the cost of the using part-time employees as opposed to hiring full-time employees to staff Road Patrol, Corrections, and Dispatch. We obtained data regarding the cost of the part time wages in 2015 and 2016, as follows:

Part-time Labor Cost per FTE:

	2015	2016
Total Part-time Hours	19,519	19,154
Part-time Hours per FTE	1,825	1,825
Total Part-time FTE's	10.7	10.5
Total Part-time Wages	$437,816	$433,517
Part-time Labor FTE's	10.7	10.5
Avg. Part-time Wages per FTE	$40,917	$41,287
Total Benefits*	$65,282	$70,216
Part-time Labor FTE's	10.7	10.5
Avg. Part-time Wages per FTE	$6,101	$6,687
Avg. Cost per PT FTE	**$47,018**	**$47,974**

6. USE OF PART-TIME LABOR (Continued)

Recommendation (continued)

Full-time Labor Cost per FTE:

New FT Employee Cost:	Road Patrol	Corrections Officer
Wage per Hour	$23.18	$25.17
Regular Hours per Year	2,080	2,080
Regular Annual Wages	$48,214	$52,354
Employer Retirement Contribution	9,209	5,759
Indiv. Health Insurance Coverage	7,024	6,754
Indiv. Dental Insurance Coverage	632	665
Total Benefits	$16,865	$13,178
Total Cost of Full-time Employee	**$65,079**	**$65,532**

Per the analysis above, the Department would have to spend approximately $17,000 more per full-time road patrol deputy or corrections officer to replace an FTE's worth of part time labor. As the Department is currently operating, the use of part-time labor has the lowest cost burden on the County. Considering that the Department currently utilized part-time labor to cover approximately 6.5 – 7.5 FTE's in Corrections and 2.5 – 3.5 FTE's in Dispatch, the cost to use exclusively full-time employees would be significant. In order to determine the appropriate course of action going forward, the Department must weigh the additional cost of a full-time employee vs. the benefits a full-timer has over a part timer, such as lower turnover, ease and consistency in scheduling, and a generally higher level of dedication to the position. It is possible that that the best solution may be a blended approach; hiring a few more full-time employees and using part-time employees to cover the remaining needs.

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The Bonadio Group appreciates this opportunity to work with the Lewis County Sheriff's Office. We found the Sheriff and his staff to be courteous and cooperative from the beginning stages of our project through the issuance of this report. If you have any questions concerning this report, please feel free to contact us at any time.