

CONCERNING MY BRIDGE CREEK SCHOOL DECISION

I inherited a department in need of major changes. I have been constantly evaluating, organizing, and implementing major changes within this department since taking over. I knew going in that changes would be resisted and was prepared to immediately begin making the changes necessary to best serve our citizens within the fiscal restraints all elected officials must operate within.

I promised the citizens that drastic changes would be made within the Grady County Sheriff's Office and I am keeping my promise to them. These changes are for the betterment of all and more will be forthcoming.

The latest change involved an agreement (not a contract) about law enforcement service with the Bridge Creek School District. During my campaign in 2008 I promised the citizens I would put more Deputies in the Northern part of Grady County, I have done this. In fact prior to my election as Sheriff there was only one Deputy working the Northern District of Grady County. We now have six full time Deputies and two part time Deputies with two more part time Deputies starting in January 2012.

I promised that I would open a Sheriff's Office Sub-station in the Tuttle and Bridge Creek area to shorten the Deputies response times for calls for service. This too has been completed.

I found that many communities employ law enforcement officers as School Security Officers. Because of limited fiscal resources available to this department, I have determined that it is not feasible to allocate a full time deputy; solely to the Bridge Creek School. Other schools in the county (Friend, Middleburg, Pioneer and Pocasset) have not been provided a county deputy for fulltime service.

Under the old contract the Bridge Creek School was paying a supplementing part of the deputy's salary. Grady County was paying the deputy's insurance, social security and retirement. Grady County was also paying the costs of the marked Sheriff's Office vehicle, the fuel for the vehicle, the maintenance of the vehicle, equipping the vehicle with emergency communications and law enforcement gear and a county pager.

Initially there was a misunderstanding by the Bridge Creek School Superintendent. The Superintendent believed the school was helping out by paying 85% of one of the (full time) 6 North District Deputies. We explained to him that the old contract paid for just the campus deputy, not a Deputy for working off the school campus. Therefore, the School Deputy was not a field Deputy.

I now have eliminated the full time School Deputy's position and suggested a possible solution of using off duty deputies for security. During the Commissioner meeting on Jan 4th, 2012, Mr. Davenport and myself discussed, in entirety, the reasons for my decisions in this matter. This will eliminate taxpayers paying insurance, social security and retirement. It will save the school and county money. Another option was considered: Bridge Creek could provide private security on their campus; this allows them the opportunity of selecting their personnel. The old contract had cost Bridge Creek \$36,000 per year. I have no doubt these suggestions would be a cost saving decision for the school district.

Since the full time position has been eliminated, we do not have to provide equipment designated for school use only. The cost for supplying all this equipment was around \$23,000 by the Sheriff's Dept. Bridge Creek and Grady County will save hundreds and thousands of dollars by this decision.

My intention is non-political or personal, but came about due to accountability to the Grady County citizens. This decision was a difficult one; but, demonstrates my promise to be fair with all entities (school districts). I have stated my reasons and decision for you, the citizens of Grady County, to form your own conclusions in this matter. I will continue to provide the best services to all within the county without fear or favor of anyone or group.
