



The Kansas City Missouri Police Department

Budget funds additional officers, cars

The department's budget for Fiscal Year 2019-2020 starts May 1 and will provide 12 additional officer positions, raises and other increases, but some big-ticket items still remain on the table awaiting future funding.

"This is a very good, sound budget for the Department," Deputy Chief Roger Lewis told the Board of Police Commissioners before they voted to adopt the budget at their April 9 meeting. "... This is the second year in a row the City has graciously provided us a budget increase."

He credited Budget Manager Kristine Reiter and her staff with the department's solid finances and budget planning.

The overall KCPD budget will go up by 2.8%, or \$7 million. Part of that increase will fund 12 new officer positions. Another big portion will go to pay step increases for all staff on their anniversary dates, and a 2.5%

increase in October for those at the top step. Those at the top step did not receive a raise in the previous fiscal year. The City also will fully fund the Department's pension plan for the 6th year in a row, according to their budget document.

The 12 new officer spots are the only new positions budgeted for FY 2019-2020. In FY 2018-2019, a combination of City and grant funds added 24 new officer positions. The City also funded 15 new dispatchers and 10 new Parking Control officers in that budget.

Chief Richard Smith told the Board that he was pleased to present the tangible results of those budget increases to the City Council when presenting this year's requested budget.

"We could show how much the staffing increase made a difference in the Communications Unit," he said, citing a substantial

reduction in 911 hold times. "It was the number one complaint in public budget forums last year."

According to the City budget document, City revenues were projected to increase 4.1 percent this year. In addition to the 12 new officer positions, the City also funded a \$300,000 increase for police vehicles, bringing that account up to \$1.3 million. Another \$200,000 was added to upgrade security at police buildings, primarily key card access systems.

Several large expenditures lay ahead for the department, however, according to KCPD's budget transmittal letter. The in-car camera and mobile data systems are at end of life. The in-car camera systems were installed in 2006, and the manufacturer is no longer supporting them. The mobile data systems were installed in 2008. The cost to replace both systems is estimated at \$5.5 million. That cost includes the infrastructure to support body-worn cameras, which would work in conjunction with the in-car cameras and mobile data

systems. The purchase of the cameras themselves would be about \$650,000.

The department also needs to replace its E-ticketing system and is currently testing different devices. That's an estimated \$1,225,000 expense. The department's portable radios have reached the end of their lives, as well, and will need replacing by 2022 at the latest. That could cost \$9 million.



Pg. 2 Supervisor crafts KCPD guitar for CARE Team

Pg. 3 School partnership brings hires

Pg. 4 New web site Officially Speaking Upcoming Events

Supervisor crafts KCPD guitar for CARE Team

Being incapacitated was the catalyst for Fleet Operations Supervisor Greg Sowers to create an impressive work of art.

On June 11, 2011, Sowers was working as the on-site mechanic during a sobriety checkpoint at 76th and Troost. He also assisted by driving cars off the street as officers administered standard field sobriety tests to persons suspected of driving under the influence. While walking across the street to retrieve a car, Sowers was hit and taken for a "ride" on the hood of a car driven by someone fleeing the checkpoint. Officers discovered an injured Sowers lying in the street several blocks away at 82nd and Forest. Sowers suffered a broken leg, among other injuries. The driver was eventually captured several weeks later.

Prior to this accident, Sowers was a distance and track runner in high school and college. He had been training his then-girlfriend, now wife Sabriya, for her first 5K that they planned to run together. Unfortunately, due to this incident he was not able to participate, but his wife completed it for the both of them.

Running one more 5K was his initial recovery goal, but it wasn't meant to be. Every time he felt his leg was almost ready, his knee wasn't quite right, and he would have to have another surgery. Doctors finally replaced his knee, and he still wears a leg brace. The accident ended his running career, so he decided to channel his efforts into what he *could* do.

While mending from one of his many surgeries, Sowers received a call from the CARE Team offering their assistance. He had never heard of them before and didn't need help at the time.

"I did some research and found out who they were and what they do and really liked it," he said. "I ... wanted to be able to do something to help raise some money for the CARE Team."

While tinkering with, repairing and building guitars to pass the time, he received a metal plate that was removed after one of his surgeries, initially planning to have a wedding ring made from it. He ended up instead attaching it to the



The custom KCPD guitar Fleet Supervisor Greg Sowers built will be auctioned off to benefit the CARE Team at their May 6 golf tournament.

curved side of a guitar. That gesture sparked an idea on what to do with an old, beat-up guitar body and the seven KCPD challenge coins he owned.

"I was sitting at home and couldn't do anything," Sowers said. "I had to do something to pass the time and give me something to do to keep me from going insane."

Sowers called around to several KCPD units to see if they would donate challenge coins. His idea was to create a 'challenge coin guitar' to be raffled off as a CARE Team fundraiser.

His collection soon grew from 7 to 33 coins and lapel pins, including a DARE graduation medal, St. Michael the Archangel coin, a Mayoral Security Detail lapel pin and Mounted Patrol pin.

Collecting the spare parts he had lying around, he began by sanding down the body, laying out the coins, tracing them onto the guitar and hand routing the spots where they would be glued.

This project turned out to be a joint effort. Sowers said many people were instrumental in seeing this project through to completion. Chief Rick Smith donated five coins and suggested the guitar be kept all KCPD inspired. Sowers agreed. Captain Joe Crayon and Assistant Fleet Manager Mark Crawford offered the use of the facilities on off-duty time for painting the guitar. They also donated the paint and a previously used red and blue working light bar from the front of a Taurus that was collecting dust in the parts bin. Fleet Operations Technician Brandon Manthei painted it for him. Initially, the colors were to be blue and white, but they decided instead to use the same Jazz Blue paint found on the department's Dodge Chargers, partnering that with the Metallic Silver found on the Chief's SUV. Officer Jake Barlow's wife, Sierra, created the vinyl lettering that wraps around the sides which reads, "To Protect and Serve with Professionalism, Honor and Integrity KCPD est. 1874." Sowers also had a metal plate laser engraved with the KCPD badge and "CARE TEAM Backs the Badge," which he affixed to the backside of the guitar neck.

Sowers' generosity didn't end there. He is including a soft-side guitar case covered with 22 KCPD patches and a thin blue line flag patch. Two additional coins received after the paint job was completed will be inside the case.

Ensuring it was in working order, had perfect sound and for memories' sake, Sowers was able to get a recording of him playing the guitar before some lucky winner takes it home. Both items will be raffled off at the May 6 CARE Team Golf Tournament.

Now that he has completed this project, he has been commissioned to build a guitar as a fundraiser for Genesis Charter School. He also is rebuilding and refinishing several others. He doesn't plan on being bored any time soon.

"I hope it does well for the CARE Team and I'm just proud to be able to help an organization that does so much to help our officers and civilians," Sowers said. "That kind of support can't be bought."

School partnership brings hires

A recruiting partnership with the Kansas City Public Schools' Manual Career and Technical Center is starting to pay dividends, with the first hire through the program joining KCPD on March 4.

Pedro Garcia said he has always been interested in a law enforcement career, but he wasn't sure with which agency. Then he saw the booth KCPD's recruiter, Officer Damon Harrell, set up at Manual Tech, which is at 1215 E. Truman Rd. Thanks to an agreement Deputy Chief Karl Oakman brokered with Kansas City Public Schools, Officer Harrell has been spending nearly every Tuesday and Thursday from 7:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. for the past year at Manual Tech.

"It helped me being able to ask someone questions about the job," Garcia said.

Manual Tech serves high school juniors and seniors. It features programs in auto technology, construction, culinary arts, emergency medical services and more. Officer Harrell said he's promoting the civilian jobs that students can start when they graduate from high school at 18 years old, such as Parking Control, mechanics, building maintenance, desk clerks, dispatchers and more.

Officer Harrell said students have been very receptive to his presence at the school.

"Right now, interest has really picked up," he said. "A lot of students are graduating soon. They're saying, 'I've got a month, and I've got to make a life decision here.'"

Officer Harrell answers their questions and even walks them through the online application process. If they start the hiring process a few months before they graduate, they can be ready to join the Department upon graduation. Harrell also said he notifies the Employment Unit to look for those students' applications and ensure they're handled in

a timely manner. Several other Manual Tech students are in the hiring process right now.



Recruiter Officer Damon Harrell has been at Kansas City Public Schools' Manual Career Technical Center twice a week for the last year extolling KCPD careers. Fleet Ops Tech. Pedro Garcia, below, is the first hire to come from that partnership. He plans to enter the Police Academy as soon as he's old enough.



Officer Harrell said he stresses to students that joining the KCPD is a career, not a job. "A job gives you a paycheck," he said. "A career gives you everything you need: health and dental insurance, a retirement plan, mobility, promotion, opportunities for movement."

Some come into the civilian jobs with goals of becoming an officer when they get old enough. That is what Garcia is doing. He earned auto mechanic certification through Manual Tech and joined the Fleet Operations Unit. He is working at the 1245 Prospect Service Station. He is now 20 years old and wants to enter the Police Academy when he's old enough (20.5 years old). He said if Officer Harrell hadn't come to his school, he wouldn't be as far along as he is now.

"I probably would have waited too long and just now started filling out the application," he said.

Garcia is from the Historic Northeast area of Kansas City. Most of the students who attend Manual Tech are from urban core neighborhoods, from which the Department would like to recruit more members, Officer Harrell said.

Even for those who don't want a law enforcement career, having Officer Harrell at the school has changed many students' perception of police, especially for those whose only interaction with officers has been when they arrested a family member or friend.

"They'll tell me, 'We never liked police, but now we've met you, and we see you do a lot more than arrest people,'" he said.

Officer Harrell said the partnership has been going so well that the Employment Unit and school administrators are discussing possibilities for a law enforcement class or program at the school.

Officially Speaking

Award

Medal of Valor
Officer Jared Tipton

Retirements

Detective Laurie Borkowski
Detective Patricia Marnett
Officer Mark Fugate
Officer Dwight Parker
Officer Curtis Penyweit
Supervisor Ted E. Smith
Forensic Spec. Dennis Doms

Obituaries

Retired Detective James Patrick Sola

Upcoming Events

May 14
Board of Police Commissioners Meeting

May 23
KCPD Memorial Service

New kcpd.org web site launches



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UPCOMING EVENTS

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The new kcpd.org launched March 19. It is now separate from the City web site and easily adapts to fit on all mobile devices. It features easy access to the most popular pages and services, breaking news, as well as unsolved homicide cases and the large cash reward for tips.

The Informant is a publication of KCPD's Media Unit
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www.kcpd.org

The mission of the Kansas City Missouri Police Department is to protect and serve with professionalism, honor and integrity.

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