

Sheriff Spreen wants money for crime, accident prevention

By JOE MARTUCCI

Armed with a letter of support from Birmingham Police Chief Rollin Tobin, Oakland County Sheriff Johannes Spreen asked the county board of commissioners last Thursday to pay for a new 28-member crime and accident prevention unit.

That unit would be available to reinforce local police departments in the event of a major crime, as well as work in crime prevention.

In addressing the county board for only the second time since 1972, Spreen asked the board to immediately consider his proposal.

That request was turned down, 12-12. Now, the public services and finance committees will study the proposal before it is voted on by the full board.

Ten Democrats and two Republicans—Henry Hoot of Troy and Ralph Moxley of Birmingham—voted in favor of immediate consideration.

Spreen described the proposed crime and accident prevention unit as, "a flexible team effort that is possible only at the county level."

"Let me assure you that it is not something that was conjured up as a last-minute effort in connection with the recent crimes which have shaken every law-abiding citizen in this county."

Spreen later revealed that sheriff's deputies were patrolling the area where Timothy King was kidnapped 30 minutes before he disappeared.

FOR THE past several weeks, sheriff's deputies have been patrolling the south part of the county as an experiment.

"We would like to create three teams," Spreen said. Each team would consist of one sergeant and six patrol officers plus seven support personnel.

"These teams would be deployed around the entire county—acting as a deterrent to crime by their very presence and also concentrating on accident prevention."

Spreen estimated cost of the unit at \$600,000.

"These teams would also be able to provide trained, mobile immediate response to any situation—and God forbid that it should happen again—also any situation involving children."

Spreen referred to the special units as a "fluid" or "split force" concept.

This unit will be an extremely pliable and fluid patrol force that will function countywide. The unit will act in a back-up or assisting capacity, not only in our own contracted areas, but also to departments requesting assistance."

In urging support of the proposal, Spreen said that there never was a victim.

Chief Tobin wrote, "The fluid deputy concept is needed in our community. As you are aware, we do not have the ability to immediately multiply our manpower to deal with instant crisis."

Spreen said that officers assigned to the special units would not be dispatched to routine calls, but would respond only to emergency calls.

"Their purpose is primarily the prevention and control of crime and accidents. . . . We would hope to create a challenge within our officers to evaluate, pinpoint and attack crime through preventing it from occurring."

"In these chaotic times, we have a fire brigade-type of policing. We arrive after the fact and after the crime. We respond to calls from the victim. Better that there never was a victim."

"It would serve as an indication to all evildoers that this county stands ready to commit whatever resources it has to rid itself, not only of these heinous crimes we have recently witnessed, but also of burglary, arson, rape and robbery."

"Further, it would serve to tell the parents of Oakland County that their youngsters can lead a full and happy existence, free from fear."

Spreen wants quick action because children will soon be starting summer vacations.



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