



Richard Stanek, Hennepin County Sheriff

An Interview with The Civic Caucus

8301 Creekside Circle #920, Bloomington, MN 55437

April 30, 2012

Notes of the Discussion

Present: Verne Johnson (chair), David Broden, Audrey Clay, Janis Clay, Paul Gilje (coordinator), Jim Hetland, Gail Hudson, Sallie Kemper, Ted Kolderie, Dan Loritz (vice-chair), Tim McDonald, Clarence Shallbetter

Summary of discussion - Hennepin County Sheriff Richard Stanek describes how he has realigned his agency to fit a shrinking budget while also reducing crime. The budget shortfalls are here to stay, he says, and public officials should acknowledge that and seek ways to do more with less. He suggests consolidating county and municipal services, if possible, where there is overlap.

A. Introduction of speaker - Sheriff Richard W. Stanek is the 27th Hennepin County Sheriff. Stanek, a lifelong resident of Hennepin County, was born and grew up in Northeast Minneapolis. He graduated from the University of Minnesota with a bachelor's degree in criminal justice, and earned a masters degree in public administration from Hamline University.

Sheriff Stanek is law enforcement veteran who rose through the ranks within the Minneapolis Police Department earning several promotions for his dedication and passion for public safety. Prior to being elected as the Sheriff of Hennepin County, he served the Minneapolis Police Department as Commander of the Criminal Investigations Division.

A five-term legislator in the Minnesota House of Representatives, he chaired the House Crime Policy and Finance Committee. The Sheriff has also managed the largest law enforcement agency in the state when, in 2003, he was appointed Minnesota's Commissioner of Public Safety and Director of Homeland Security.

Stanek lives in Maple Grove with his wife and their two children.

B. Discussion -

THE PROBLEM : Current economic conditions and future outlook is forcing changes in the ways public sector entities do business .

"It goes without saying that current economic conditions are the new normal," Stanek said. "It is what people see every day in the state."

THE GOAL: Consolidate and/or integrate government services where overlap exists.

I would like to see statewide consolidation/integration of localized government services related to counties and municipalities," Stanek said. "I have come to the conclusion that where overlap occurs and is not necessary, it can't be sustained."

THE STRATEGY: Make changes where feasible .

Restructure public safety.

Significant changes in the structure of public safety through consolidation may be necessary.

"The Hennepin County Sheriff's Office has reduced 67 employees over the past three years," Stanek said. Employees find that very hard to accept. They think that staffing will go back at least to how it was, if not increase. "It is incumbent upon us to restructure. I don't see the previous capacity coming back anytime soon. We approach it as an opportunity to realign and restructure."

In terms of police service, Hennepin County covers 45 municipalities and the unorganized territory of Fort Snelling. There are 36 law enforcement agencies in the county. When there is an issue that requires a law enforcement response, Stanek told the group, it can be difficult for citizens to understand who has jurisdiction over what. (He also noted that private security out-numbers local law enforcement staff by a ratio of eight-to-one.)

Meanwhile state statute requires one elected sheriff for each of the 87 counties in Minnesota. Sheriffs are elected locally, but state statute sets forth the statutory obligations for all Sheriffs, i.e., what services they must provide the county.

The sheriff's office is a countywide agency, Stanek said. It provides full-service law enforcement through nine distinct lines of business. These services are funded by residential and business property taxes and user fees. "The sheer strength of the Sheriff's office comes in its scope and reach."

The 36 local police departments in the county duplicate as few as two or as many as four of these nine lines of business that the Sheriff's Office provides.

An example of this duplication might be a western Hennepin County city with a local police force. When a resident in this city calls 911, the call is answered by the office of the County Sheriff and the Sheriff's office dispatches the local police response. If one of the local police officers is not available to respond, then a Sheriff's unit will respond. Depending on the case, a Sheriff's K-9 unit or detective unit may be provided. If an arrest is made, the arrestee will be brought to the Sheriff's Office jail.

Having a local police department or dispatch center is all about local identity for towns, but it's costly. When a 911 call is made in one of the cities that supports its own dispatch the cost in some cities is as much as \$4.00, compared to about \$0.17 if the city were to use the county Sheriff's dispatch center.

The discussion touched on the relation of the sheriff's office with other public agencies and about the role of the Department of Homeland Security. Stanek remarked that prior to 2001, Homeland Security was not a distinct line of business for his office. But in the post 9/11 world, it must be. "At 9/11, I was in the legislature. We had to rethink the entire strategy, because at the same time budgets were decreasing."

A participant asked where firefighters might fit in the consolidation of county services. Stanek replied that while there are over 22,000 fire fighters in the state, outside of the 10 largest cities they are all volunteers. That is a fundamental difference from police where police officers are all full-time, salaried sworn officers to which many limited resources are dedicated.

Target resources to get the greatest effect.

"We run the sheriff's office like a business," Stanek said. "We have a four-year strategic plan and an annual business plan. We meet quarterly as a command staff to review our progress against plan and check in on our established metrics. We use this process to target resources where they can be most effective. The method for managing the office has been like building an orchestra. Target your resources, because the work is labor intensive and you can only afford so much."

"An example would be targeting our resources to the Violent Offender Task Force, which focuses on the apprehension of habitual, predatory offenders. I sought detectives that specialize in tracking these people and building a case." His office chose to target violent and habitual offenders, and leave the other crimes to local police force, he said.

Despite cuts in budgets crime has decreased significantly.

Hennepin County has 22% of the state's population, yet has 42% of the state's violent crime. In the last five years, however, crime has decreased 36% in Hennepin County. Three factors in the crime reduction include:

1. Partnerships with local groups and private sector
2. Leveraging technology
3. Forensics

Even with the encouraging effects of their work, however, Stanek said the best way to fight crime is to prevent people from developing into criminals in the first place.

"I'd much rather pay for early childhood education than pay on the back end after a kid gets himself into trouble. We spend a good portion of our time working with young people."

C. Conclusion

To a final question about structural changes in how the sheriff is selected, Stanek observed that the elected sheriff is a good form of government because the position exists independently, not working for the city council or mayor. He has seen on multiple occasions how this can be important.

To close the session Stanek commented that public leaders have no choice but to accept what is the new norm of funding in the state, and realign to that. That means focusing resources on priorities.

The chair thanked the Sheriff for the visit today .