

Office of the Sheriff



Beaufort County
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SHERIFF

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Frankie Waters
Chairman, Board of County Commissioners
482 Pike Rd.
Pantego NC 27865

Chairman Waters:

I would like to congratulate you on being elected as Chairman. You bring a level of professionalism and experience that will be a breath of fresh air. I feel your demeanor will be a calming influence for the Board and will benefit the Citizens of Beaufort County.

I would also like to take the opportunity to offer some information that hopefully will shed some light on a topic that has been a source of contention between the Office of the Sheriff, the Board of Commissioners, and the Board of Education. The five full time positions that were defunded in this year's budget have caused a substantial amount of strain on our ability to maintain the level of services that we have been providing for the last several years. I really would prefer not to get into what caused the defunding of the positions again, but the reality is that we have been dealing with the aftermath of that decision for over a year now, even as more information on individual stakeholders' agendas and motivations are just recently making its way to the surface.

We have been using School Resource Officers for other law enforcement tasks for as long as I can remember, we just have been using these deputies at times when school is not in session (nights, weekends, and holidays, etc.). When it became clear that we would be held to 102 positions instead of 107 positions we had to formulate a plan to take care of transports, and other law enforcement tasks, that have dramatically increased over the last few years. We decided that the only plan that made sense was to occasionally use a School Resource Officer during times when school would be in session to complete a task. To do so, we would need to amend or withdraw from the Memorandum of Understanding between the Sheriff's Office and the School Board.

Beaufort County Sheriff's Office
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The letter that I sent to the Superintendent was simple and accurate. Since the letter was sent, I have had one face-to-face meeting with the Superintendent, and for whatever reason the information has been interpreted several different ways by many different people. While the interpretation that the Superintendent passed onto the School Board was literally acceptable, based on what was written and said, it was certainly not accurate. I never told the Superintendent that I wanted to remove all our School Resource Officers from the Schools. I did tell him that they needed to investigate alternative options for school security. That statement should have been clear and obvious to understand because I have absolutely no say and no vote on how many full time personnel I have each year. That number is set by the Board of Commissioners.

There has been some discussion about the positions that were defunded. Questions have been asked and opinions have been stated. I have been asked if the defunded positions were re-instated if we would re-negotiate another Memorandum of Understanding with Beaufort County Schools. The honest answer to that question is that we can negotiate another MOU once we know the level of funding and positions that we will have going into next year's budget. We need a minimum of 107 positions to maintain the level of services that we had in last year's budget. We have additional needs that can be negotiated during the regular budget process, but the question at hand can be answered by funding us to the level that we had been for two years leading up to 2020-2021.

The County Manager and at least one Commissioner has suggested that we (BCSO, BCS, and BOC) meet to discuss this issue and attempt to come to a solution that works for each entity. My Office is willing to participate in this endeavor. I feel that my Deputies and my Office are the best option available for Beaufort County Schools, and I want my Deputies in our schools. Unfortunately, my opinion is just an opinion without the support by way of funding from the School Board through the Board of Commissioners.

Once again, congratulations on being elected to Chairman of the Board and I look forward to working with you!

Respectfully,



Sheriff Ernie Coleman