

Introduced by: Councilmember Jones
Date: March 14, 1994
Public Hearing: March 22, 1994
Action: Failed
Vote: 2-yes; 3-no

ORDINANCE # 94-08

AN AMENDMENT TO THE CITY OF BETHEL, ALASKA, BUDGET ORDINANCE FOR FISCAL YEAR 1994.

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BETHEL, ALASKA, THAT THE FISCAL YEAR 1994 CITY BUDGET BE AMENDED AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1: That the following sums of money as may be needed or deemed necessary to defray expenses and liabilities of the City of Bethel are hereby appropriated for the corporate purpose and objects of the City hereinafter specified for Fiscal Year 1994, July 1, 1993 to June 30, 1994.

Section 2: The following is a summary of the changes by fund:

(A) GENERAL FUND

EXPENDITURES:

Police Salaries	-0-
Police Benefits	-0-

FINANCIAL IMPACT STATEMENT

This amendment is submitted for the approval to add a Police Officer to the Police Force effective on or about April 1, 1994. Due to vacancies in the department this year (FY 94), sufficient funds are available in the current budget to cover the cost, and no additional appropriations are necessary. The addition of this position will reduce overtime and slow the turnover of officers.

The projected cost of the position for Fiscal Year 1995 is \$45,750 (salary, shift differential, benefits). To offset this increase the following adjustments are proposed: 1) Return to the General Fund the Fish Tax now allocated to the Port (\$35,000); 2) reduce Police overtime (\$9,000) and; 3) for the additional \$1,750 in funds needed, make a small reduction in the Police Department non-personnel budget request.

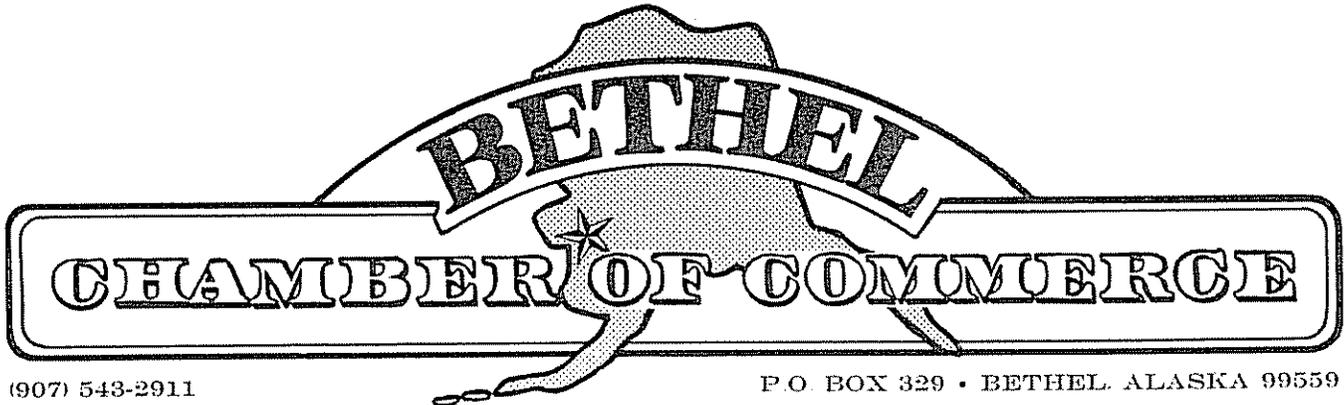
Section 3. This ordinance becomes effective upon passage.

PASSED AND APPROVED THIS _____ DAY OF _____, 1994.

Donna J. Chris, Mayor

ATTEST:

Jane Elam, City Clerk



On February 10, 1994, during the regular Chamber luncheon, those members present passed the following motion unanimously and asked that it be passed on to the city council.

Motion:

The Bethel Chamber of Commerce supports Chief Liu in his request for 3 additional officers and recommends that the City Council accept the proposed additional police officer positions.

Some items of concern discussed by Chamber members were; response time by officers to calls at a business due to case loads; cost associated with turn over of officers; and quality of service provided due to stress levels of officers.

FOR THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Eric Shrum", is written over the typed name.

C. ERIC SHRUM

Adding two Police Officer positions

Police Officer starts at \$32,658, and after six months at \$36,005. Adding 33% for fringe benefit and other costs such as insurance, overtime, shift differential, a rounded figure for two additional positions is \$100,000.

If we advertise immediately, and the recruiting process go smoothly, the soonest we can get them on board would be April 1, 1994. This would require funding at \$25,000 for the remaining fiscal year. According to Chief Liu's report to City Manager dated February 2, 1994, there was a salary surplus in the mid-year in an amount of \$58,581. This figure continues to grow since there are still some vacancies in the police department.

To insure adequate funding for FY 95, we can eliminate a community service officer position. The cost for a C.S.O. position including the benefit and other costs is about \$32,000. Further, we can appropriate one half of the fish tax at a conservative figure \$35,000. These two figures add up to \$67,000. The remaining \$33,000 can be appropriate through the budget surplus of the police department in FY 94. We have a minimum surplus \$49,581 counting the \$9,000 transfer request by the police department.

In reviewing the 1993 activity report issued by the police department, we should face the reality and rationalize why we need to have two additional positions.

1. The number of calls for service had reached a record high at 11,210 which is a 39% increase from 91, and a 14.6% increase from 92. These numbers will continue to grow.
2. The number of police officer has been decreasing since 1985 (16) and the population of Bethel is steadily increasing. The national average of police officer/inhabitant ratio is 2.3 to 1,000. This means that we should have 12 police officer in Bethel assuming the case load is average. But the case load of the police department is very high in comparison with our neighboring communities.
3. We must acknowledge that the public safety is our number one priority and to provide sufficient police coverage to our residents. The police department staff has done an outstanding job last year in many critical incidents including the handling of several gun calls. We also realize that at times, police were unable to respond to calls or it took a long time for them to respond because of priority calls. It is time that we provide enough staffing and show supports for our police department before we reach to a degree that some police services will be eliminated.

TO: William Hunter, City Manager
FROM: Chris Liu, Police Chief *J*
DATE: February 10, 1994
SUBJECT: 1993 Activity Report

The Bethel Police Department had a record setting year in 1993, with 11,210 calls for service. Officers conducted 839 arrests, and 812 protective custodies. These figures reflect that the community is increasingly reliant on the police for service, hence, police officers are facing increasingly difficult workloads.

In order to achieve the level of service this community demands, police department management adapts schedules to fit peak activity periods, as best possible. These efforts are hampered by various factors. The number of police officer positions currently allocated would come close to covering crucial time periods, were it not for inevitable employee leave for emergencies, vacation, sickness, and training. Also, the level of personnel turnover has created a situation in which the FTO training program limits the ability to schedule strictly on a peak activity basis.

According to data collected from neighboring agencies for the year 1992, the Bethel Police Department is coping with a lower level of resources per capita, per crime, per call for service. Understanding the City of Bethel's financial limitations, the police department continues to strive for the maximum possible efficiency with the available resources. This is accomplished through tactical scheduling, and efforts to reduce employee turnover.

1993 STATISTICS

As mentioned above, the police department received a record number of requests for service in 1993. These figures have increased each year since 1988 (see graph "BPD Trends in Service Calls"), and are expected to continue to rise. This increase may reflect the community's increased acceptance of the police, and willingness to request help.

Unfortunately, protective custodies are also on the rise (see graph "BPD Trends in Protective Custody). After sharp

declines in 1990 and 1991, there has been a significant increasing trend in 1992 and 1993. Last year, the police department attended to 812 incidents of protective custody.

Arrests of both felonies and misdemeanors have been decreasing since 1991 (see graph "BPD Trends in Arrests"), with 49 felony arrests and 790 misdemeanor arrests in 1993. This is an encouraging trend, as it may indicate the police department's effectiveness in deterring crime.

Even with the decreasing number of arrests, Bethel faces damaging levels of crimes in the following areas:

Crime	# arrests in 1993.
Sexual Assault	9
Felony Assault	20
DWI	124
Misdemeanor Assault	211
Minor Consuming Alcohol	101
Criminal Trespass	114
Disorderly Conduct	90

The vast majority of incidents reported to the police involve alcohol consumption. There has recently been an increase in inter-agency communication on how to reduce alcohol related problems in the community. Hopefully, coordinated efforts of various social agencies in Bethel will be able to attack this problem, which could be expected to reduce crime in our community.

* Various attached graphs provide additional information on crime and police activity level statistics for 1993.

SHIFT ALLOCATION

Peak activity periods have been analyzed by studying computer generated reports that tally the number of incidents occurring by day and by hour. (A copy of this report is attached.) This data is used to project the times of highest patrol activity. The resulting trends are taken into consideration when officer schedules are assigned.

Following is a summary of patrol peak activity trends:

Daily: It is no surprise that the highest percentages of incidents occur on Fridays and Saturdays, with approximately 16-20% of weekly calls received occurring on each of those days. Sundays are somewhat less busy, receiving approximately 14-16% of the weeks calls. Fewer incidents occur on Mondays through Thursdays, with a fairly constant percentage of 11-13% of the total weekly calls received on each of those days.

Weekly: Peak hours are between 4:00 p.m. and 3:00 a.m. The hours with least activity tend to be from 5:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m.

A relatively low activity period occurs between 4:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. The number of service calls begins to increase shortly after 10:00 a.m., and gains momentum as the high activity period approaches. This highest period occurs from 3:00 p.m. to 3:00 a.m., and begins to taper off shortly after 3:00 a.m.

The department uses this information in the designation of police officer and community service officer schedules, which would ideally be allocated as follows:

Day Shift (8:00am - 4:00pm)	2 officers
Swing Shift (4:00pm - 12:00am)	3 officers
Grave Shift (12:00am - 8:00am)	3 officers
Cover Shift (8:00pm - 4:00am)	1 officer

Various factors prohibit the department's ability to implement the ideal coverage schedule. The allocation listed above is based on the assumption that all positions are filled, and all employees are working the full schedule. This leaves no room for the various types of leave that naturally arise: emergency, sickness, family, vacation, and training. In reality, all of these types of leave are necessary for almost all employees at various times, creating holes in our "ideal" schedule.

The high rate of turnover further hinders proper scheduling in two ways. First, the department is constantly short-handed while in the process of collecting applications, reviewing, testing and interviewing. Second, a period of three months is necessary to bring any new officer on line, regardless of prior law enforcement experience. While an officer is in the Field Training Officer (FTO) program, he cannot respond to calls alone.

Thus, he cannot be scheduled alone, or even divide up response to calls with the other officer on duty. In 1993, six officers were under FTO training status. This has been prohibitive in maximizing the manpower we have.

Samples of recent months' schedules are attached to this report to illustrate that the schedules are created with peak activity periods in mind, although many factors prevent the schedule from being created strictly on that basis.

TURNOVER

In 1993, six police officers resigned from their positions with the Bethel Police Department. Exit interviews indicate a common thread in the high turnover: the combination of uncommonly high stress, excessive case loads, and lack of community support is causing officers to seek employment elsewhere. There are several approaches to reducing turnover, including expanding the community policing program, adding resources/positions to the police department budget, providing increased positive reinforcements to police officers, and continuing to provide training.

Management is steadily promoting the theories of community policing, and they are beginning to take root in our department. This approach will lead to officers becoming more involved with the community, and more importantly, the community becoming more familiar with and involved with the police department. Community policing encourages coordination, teamwork, and mutual respect between the police department and the residents of the community it serves. As this idea grows, police officer stress will decline significantly.

In recent months, police administration has focused on the provision of positive reinforcement for acts of bravery, completion of training, and other positive actions. In this way, police officers receive encouragement, recognition and appreciation they deserve, even in the absence of financial incentives.

Finally, the police department supervisory staff continues to provide as much training as possible, in areas that are perceived to be most beneficial. Police officers have recently been requesting training in areas where increased knowledge can increase officer safety. These requests are being heard, noted, and pursued, in order to equip the police force as best possible with limited resources, and provide training that will empower

the officers, reducing stress and anxiety.

Understanding the financial restraints of the City Budget, police management will continue to take these non-financial approaches to reducing turnover, in order to maximize the resources we do have. However, the most direct way to reduce turnover is to bring the police staff up to levels that are comparable with neighboring communities or the national average. To do this, the department would need two additional police officers, and one felony investigator.

COMPARISON OF RESOURCES IN OTHER COMMUNITIES

The following table compares the Bethel Police Department's 1993 resources and statistics with information obtained from other departments in 1992. It is the understanding of police administration that the agencies listed have not had significant changes in staffing resources or population in the past year.

**WORKLOAD COMPARISON-
 BETHEL AND NEIGHBORING COMMUNITIES**

	Cit/Off	Calls per Off.	Arr/Off.	Entry Pay
Bethel	503/1	907*	90.6	\$15.70
Nome	475/1	625	37.5	\$19.48
Kotzebue	442/1	1000	64.3	\$17.75
Barrow/slope	174/1	276	13.0	\$24.62
Dillingham	429/1	765	62.5	\$16.97
Cordova	429/1	282	25.3	\$19.28
National Ave.	435/1			

* excluding Animal Control, Fire/EMS, AST calls

These figures show that the Bethel Police Department is already "doing more with less." Bethel Police officers attend to more requests for service and make more arrests, with the lowest financial compensation of all the rural Alaskan police departments surveyed. Management and officers strive to improve efficiency in order to provide even better service, and promote better community relations.

Eventually, to meet the growing demands and legal responsibilities imposed on the police department, one of two things will have to occur: Additional police officers added to the staff, or a reduction of non-essential services. Police administration recognizes that with decreasing City revenue, and increasing budget limitations, it must be prepared to accept whichever path becomes necessary.

SUMMARY

Requests for police service are at record high levels, and are expected to increase. The Bethel Police Department operates with fewer resources than neighboring communities, at a level of staffing that is below the national average. While the supervisory staff is pursuing many avenues to maximize the existing resources, there will come a point where it is impossible to provide the level of service the community expects, without additional resources.

In order to maintain the current level of service, and improve relations with the community, the Bethel Police Department needs support from the citizens, and a financial enhancement that will allow for two additional police officers and one felony investigator. Without these added resources, the city will continue to encounter a two- to three-year cycle of police officer turnover, as the existing financial incentives are not adequate to compensate for the uncommonly high stress, workloads, and pressure from the community.

Police department administration understands that the City of Bethel revenues are likely to decline, and financial limitations may become even more restrictive than they are today. If no additional funds are allocated to the police department budget, administration will continue to address these problems with sound management practices and an innovative, community based approach. If it becomes necessary, police administration is also prepared to re-evaluate the priority of different types of calls, and eliminate non-essential services.