

# Police/Court

## **OBJECTIVE**

The Police/Court Task Force has focused on the current and future police services and court operations. The Task Force carefully compared the cost and level of service received from Chatham County. We then addressed what would the City of Skidaway Island have to provide to meet, or exceed, that same level of service. In looking at the cost and service issue we relied upon the Feasibility Study from Andrew Young School and comparable cities, both in and outside of Chatham County. Andrew Young School used FY 2015 figures. The Task Force used FY 2016 and 2017 figures in arriving at our cost of services.

Our goal was not to justify the creation of the City of Skidaway Island, but rather to determine the cost, if the City were created. Andrew Young School determined that police services would cost between \$1,958,611 using the Chatham County average and \$1,695,976 using the DCA average. The court services would cost between \$86,674 using the Chatham County average and \$131,344 using the DCA average. The Task Force used both of these averages to determine if the City of Skidaway Island could operate a court and a police department with no additional cost to the citizens. We also explored the idea of contracting for these services.

Below are the Task Force findings.

### **CONTRACTING POLICE SERVICES**

The Chatham County Sheriff's Office was contacted regarding providing police services to the City of Skidaway Island. The Sheriff has indicated his department may be able to provide those services. However, at this writing the cost of such service is not available. The City of Savannah was also contacted regarding police services. The City Manager indicated they would be willing to discuss the matter. Cost of such service cannot be determined at this time however. The City of Skidaway Island and Chatham County or the City of Savannah would have to enter into an intergovernmental agreement. Which would only happen after representatives of each side negotiate a contract specifying the level of service and cost. Then the city councils of each city would have to approve that contract.

Based upon these two contacts the cost of contracting is impossible to determine at this time.

### **CREATING OUR OWN POLICE DEPARTMENT**

The Task Force then addressed the issue of creating our own police department. In order to determine the cost of a police department we had to decide the level of staffing for a community the size of Skidaway Island using the best practice for a police department. The ultimate decision as to staffing levels would be determined by the city council and or manager of the city.

The Task Force chose a model that would have 2 patrol officers working each shift. It was determined that the department would need 13 employees. A Chief, 1 sergeant, 1 detective/training officer, 1 clerical position and 9 patrol officers. Patrol would work 2- 12 hour shifts. Thus requiring 9 patrol officers to cover shifts, vacations, sick leave, etc. The first shift would have the Chief working and 2 patrol officers. However, if the Chief was used as one officer it would result in less cost. The second shift would have a sergeant and 2 patrol officers. Again, if the sergeant was used as a road patrol officer one less officer would be needed. The detective/training officer would be assigned a split shift between the first and second shift, or rotated as the Chief deems necessary. The clerical position would work the first shift. The clerical position would be an 8 hour, not 12 hour shift. The number of personnel is based upon the best practice for a police department. The final assignment of personnel will be determined by the Chief and/or City Manager.

The City of Skidaway police department would be dispatched through the Savannah Chatham Metro 911. The City will pay a fee for this service. It is also anticipated that all prisoners would be lodged with the Chatham County Sheriff. The City would pay a cost to the County for that service.

Four (4) police vehicles would be needed. The vehicles may be purchased or leased. However, it was anticipated that the city would purchase the vehicles and they would be in service for approximately 3 to 4 years. It was also believed that the City of Skidaway Island and The Landings Association would purchase vehicles together to help lower the bid for the City.

The City would also have costs that would include the cost to supply uniforms, weapons, body armor and all the necessary electronic equipment. The City additionally would pay all of the typical employee costs, i.e. retirement, FICA, health care, training, uniforms, fuel costs, etc. These costs will fall under a category of roll up costs.

The cost for all of the above is estimated on the high side of the prevailing wage for comparable positions in Chatham County. The annual salary and associated costs would breakdown as follows:

Chief	\$65,000
Sergeant	\$ 50,000
Detective	\$ 41,000
Patrol	\$360,000
Clerical	\$ 42,000
Vehicles	\$ 50,000
Roll up costs	\$450,000 (these costs would include, retirement, FICA, health care, training, uniforms, equipment, electronic equipment, fuel costs, etc.)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,058,000</b>

Andrew Young School estimate of police services, using the DCA was \$1,695,976. The task force believes this can be accomplished for less than that amount.

### **MUNICIPAL COURT SERVICES**

The Task Force used the same guidelines and principles in addressing the cost of Court services as we used with the Police Department.

The Andrew Young School estimated the cost of Municipal Court services to the City of Skidaway would be between \$86,674 and \$131,344.

### **CONTRACTING COURT SERVICES**

Andrew Young School assumed that the City of Skidaway would contract court services with the City of Savannah. However, it is the opinion of the Task Force that the enabling legislation would not allow that to occur. Article IV, Judicial Branch, Section 4.10 states: “There shall be a court to be known as the Municipal Court of the City of Skidaway Island” (emphasis added). Additionally in Section 4.11 of the Statute states: “All judges shall be appointed by the city council.”

Additionally contracting with another municipality would create a greater burden on the police services and citizens of the City of Skidaway Island. The citizens would have to travel off island to attend any court proceedings. Police officers would also have to attend court and leave the island.

Therefore, the Task Force did not pursue the issue of contracting court services.

### **CREATING A MUNICIPAL COURT**

The Task Force determined that the Court would need the following personnel to operate and meet its statutory obligations. A judge, solicitor, public defender and a court clerk. To determine the cost of each position the

Task Force compared courts in and around Chatham County and other comparable municipal courts. With the exception of the Court Clerk all positions would be part-time or contracted. The Court Clerk may also have to be a dedicated position and not shared with either the police department or city hall. The rationale for this is a check and balance for money submitted to the City from the Court. The City additionally would pay all of the typical roll up costs, i.e. retirement, FICA, health care, training, etc. The salary for each position is as follows:

Judge	\$15,000	part-time
Solicitor	\$ 5,000	part-time
Public Defender	\$ 4,000	part-time
Translator	\$ 1,000	part-time
Court Clerk	\$40,000	full-time
Roll up costs	\$35,000 (retirement, health care, FICA, training, etc.)	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$100,000</b>	

The Task Force also assumed that many of the Court and City functions would be shared. The Council chambers and Courtroom would be the same. Also, the Court would likely only meet two days per month. A civil docket one week and criminal docket one week. If it is determined that the city and court may share the clerk an additional savings could be realized. The facilities cost is not included in this cost analysis. The estimate to operate the Court is within the parameters of the Andrew Young School Study.

**CONCLUSION**

It is the opinion of the Police/Court Task Force that the City of Skidaway Island can provide both police services and court services and stay at or below the amounts indicated in the Andrew Young School Study.