

Safety & Justice Roundtable Final Report

Presented to
Springfield City Council
and
Greene County Commission
July 22, 2009

Safety & Justice Roundtable Final Report

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April 6, 2009 Agenda and Minutes

Additional Documents Published Separately (available upon request)

Criminal Justice System Assessment, May 6, 2003 — "Kalmanoff Report"
Greene County Budget
City of Springfield Budget

Safety & Justice Roundtable

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Safety & Justice Roundtable Executive Summary of Final Report

The Safety & Justice Roundtable is a citizens' task force formed by the Greene County Commission and the Springfield City Council to study our community's criminal justice and law enforcement system. The Roundtable is co-chaired by Dr. Robert Spence and Mrs. Jean Twitty. Membership includes 18 City and County residents who represent a wide array of professional backgrounds and interests. The Roundtable was formed in December 2007 with the following charge:

The Safety & Justice Roundtable is charged with developing a comprehensive understanding of the community's criminal justice system through studying the interconnectivity of all departments and offices within that system, identifying and prioritizing needs within the system and recommending solutions to address those needs. The Roundtable will coordinate with the public information offices of the City of Springfield and Greene County in posting meeting schedules and agendas, fulfilling requests for documents and speakers, keeping minutes and preparing the final report to be presented to the Greene County Commission and mayors of Springfield and Greene County municipalities.

The Roundtable met regularly for 18 months, studying agencies within the law enforcement and criminal justice system and coordination between those agencies. While the group studied one agency at a time, the true focus of its work was a gaining a comprehensive understanding of how the system functions as a whole.

The members asked critical questions, spoke with agency directors, toured facilities, examined budgets and staffing, studied inter-agency communication, and compared the Greene County system to other communities. Throughout this process, the group sought to identify obstacles within the system and their causes, effects, and possible solutions. The Roundtable appreciates with the level of access provided by agency directors and their various departments during this process.

Funding and Collaboration

When public funding is short, taxpayers tend to believe government agencies should simply cut costs by "trimming the fat." However, the Roundtable has concluded there is little to no "fat" to trim among the agencies it studied. There are few, if any, areas where resources can be re-appropriated to provide more funding for another area. Cutting costs, in this situation, would mean cutting services, ultimately eroding our community's level of public safety and quality of life.

When the Roundtable commenced its study, it was clear that nearly all agencies within the system were functioning with budget constraints — some more than others. The recent economic downturn has exacerbated existing funding shortfalls. All agencies,

however, are accomplishing a great deal with the amount of funding available, and the Roundtable specifically commends several of them in this report.

Several of the Roundtable's recommendations will necessitate increased funding for personnel, equipment and facilities. However, the Roundtable believes many of its recommendations may be adequately addressed with increased communication and willingness to work across agency lines. Cooperation is key to confronting the bottlenecks within the system.

The Roundtable is keenly aware that funding for some of these recommendations will be difficult to obtain at the local level. The group strongly believes these changes are vital to sustaining and improving the law enforcement and criminal justice system.

Our public safety and criminal justice system is overburdened and underfunded. Current economic conditions are contributing to the erosion of services. While it is easy for the community to quantify services like fire protection or police patrol, it is harder to grasp how jail overcrowding and delays within the courts affect public safety.

Our community must decide which is more important: low taxes or adequate public safety. The Roundtable is not specifically proposing a tax; at the same time, the group acknowledges there are few other future funding options.

In addition to local funding and participation, several recommendations will require the Missouri General Assembly's support to implement. Two integral components of the criminal justice process — the 31st Judicial Circuit and the Public Defender's Office — are funded and operated by the State of Missouri, not Springfield or Greene County. Several other local agencies within the system depend upon significant state funding to operate. This community must appeal to our local legislators and their colleagues for increased awareness of and support for these vital entities and funding streams.

The Roundtable is pleased to report several issues which emerged during the course of its study have since been addressed or are undergoing review. Simply facilitating discussion has helped identify key issues, which, once recognized, may more easily be addressed. It is evident that our community's law enforcement and criminal justice system is composed of many inter-dependent agencies, which cannot function by themselves. The Roundtable encourages continued discussion and collaboration among these agencies.

Top Seven Priorities

The following report contains a detailed analysis of the Roundtable's conclusions and recommendations, for both specific entities and system-wide issues. Among these recommendations, the Roundtable has identified the following seven top public safety priorities for the City, the County, and ultimately, the community:

1. Solving Police-Fire Pension Fund Shortfall

While there are needs and priorities throughout the criminal justice system, the Safety & Justice Roundtable feels strongly that solving the Springfield Police and Fire Pension issue should be our community's first and highest priority. All other major advances within the system — many of which require additional funding — will be difficult to achieve before the pension issue has been resolved.

As of June 2009, the Police-Fire Pension Fund Citizens' Task Force is reviewing this issue and possible solutions. The Roundtable urges the community to become educated on the pension issue and to pay close attention to the Task Force's work and recommendations.

2. Reducing jail population

The Greene County Justice Center (Jail) is chronically overcrowded, creating a potentially dangerous situation for both inmates and staff. Jail overpopulation may be attributed to two main factors: too many people being booked into the jail, and the amount of time inmates must wait before their cases come to trial.

The Roundtable recommends a variety of options be explored to reduce the number of inmates booked and held in the jail, including implementing a Bond Schedule while retaining the current Book & Release program and expanding Pre-Trial Services programs for those who cannot afford to post bond.

The overwhelming majority of inmates in the jail are awaiting a trial, not serving sentences. Delays within the court system are due in large part to a shortage of judges, public defenders and courtroom space. The overuse of continuances and the lack of a fast track for felony guilty pleas also bog down the system. The Roundtable recommends these issues be addressed at both the local and state level.

3. Improving the Family and Juvenile Justice System

Though the Greene County Juvenile Justice Office manages to accomplish a great deal with limited resources, this important component of the criminal justice system needs greater support in terms of staffing and space. Children entering the juvenile justice system are often at a considerable socio-economic disadvantage. It is the opinion of the Roundtable that these kids, if left unserved or underserved, will become our community's future criminals, which will greatly increase the financial burden the community must bear to provide adequate public safety.

The Roundtable recommends more staffing, courtroom space and office space for Juvenile and Family Court functions. At the same time, the Roundtable acknowledges that the County Juvenile system cannot address all issues involving troubled youth. The group proposes a community-wide advocacy effort to raise awareness of and address juvenile issues.

4. Combining emergency response agency facilities

Emergency 911 and community emergency management operations are often taken for granted. Yet in our time of need, citizens assume someone will be there to answer the phone when they call for help. The Springfield-Greene County E-911 Center and the Springfield-Greene County Office of Emergency Management are providing these emergency response services in separate and largely outdated facilities.

The Roundtable supports a current plan for a Public Safety Collaborative Center, which will house these operations and allow them to work more closely together with the latest technology.

5. Enhancing data sharing and interagency communications

The Springfield Police Department is in dire need of a new records management system. The Roundtable feels this provides an opportunity to address a larger need for enhancing data sharing and greater communication between the two primary law enforcement agencies in our community: Springfield Police and the Greene County Sheriff's Office.

The Roundtable also believes both agencies should take full advantage of the statewide Missouri Data Exchange (MoDEX) system for information sharing.

6. Increasing staffing throughout system

Nearly every agency the Roundtable studied is in need of increased staffing, including those funded by the state. Personnel costs are typically the single largest expense for local government and Springfield and Greene County are no different. Funding within these entities, as well as at the state level, is currently very tight, and the Roundtable acknowledges that increasing personnel is difficult at this time.

However, the Roundtable recommends increased staffing for several offices, including the 31st Judicial Circuit, Greene County Jail, Dist. 31 Public Defender's Office, Greene County Juvenile Office, Springfield Police Department, Springfield Fire Department and Greene County Pre-Trial Services. Funding for increased staff will require cooperation and creative solutions within the state, the County, the City and the communities these entities serve.

7. Expanding facilities

Our community's criminal justice system has largely outgrown the facilities in which operations are housed. Additional courtroom and office space is critical for the 31st Judicial Circuit, the Juvenile Office and the Springfield Municipal Court. Emergency response operations are also in need of a modern, secure facility (as noted above). Finally, the Springfield Police and Fire departments are in dire need of a new, larger training facility.

Bricks and mortar are often difficult to fund, although the City of Springfield and Greene County have identified possible funding streams for the Public Safety Collaborative Center. The County is currently reviewing funding options for a courthouse expansion.

The Roundtable supports plans to build these structures and recommends the City and County continue to collaborate on solutions for capital improvement projects.

Report Findings by Topic

Police and Firefighter Pension Fund Shortfall

SUMMARY:

City Manager Greg Burris gave a PowerPoint presentation about the approximately \$200 million shortfall in the Police and Fire Pension Fund. The fund is at about a 33-percent funded level, while a 70-percent funded level is considered adequate. A new state law requires cities to make the full, actuary-recommended payment to their pension funds at least once in a five-year period, or the state can withhold up to 25 percent of sales taxes collected on behalf of that municipality. Springfield made the full contribution in 2008 and the City Manager is recommending making the full payment again in 2009 because the shortfall is so severe. Many factors led to the shortfall, including market conditions, changing actuarial assumptions, benefit increases in lieu of pay raises and the City not fully contributing the recommended annual payments. The pension problem has created a personnel issue, because many police officers and firefighters are now retiring as soon as they are eligible. At the same time, the issue has made it difficult to recruit replacements.

The Springfield Police Department is currently understaffed by about 34 sworn officers, out of a budgeted total of 326, or about ten percent of its workforce. The City is in a hiring freeze at this time, though City Council has recently authorized the hiring of 10 new officers.

A proposed 1-cent sales tax to fund the pension plan was put before voters on Feb. 3, 2009, and failed by a 48-52 margin. Following the vote, the City Council convened a 15-member Police-Fire Pension Fund Citizen's Task Force to study the issue, with recommendations due in summer 2009.

CONCLUSIONS:

The Roundtable believes the Police-Fire pension fund shortfall is a significant roadblock facing not just the City or its Police and Fire departments, but the entire local law enforcement and the criminal justice system, for a variety of reasons.

The group believes any solution to the bottlenecks in local law enforcement involves the hiring of more Springfield Police Officers. Yet the unresolved pension issue makes it difficult for the City to effectively recruit and train new officers to patrol the streets, make arrests and book inmates.

The Springfield Police Department is also in need of new capital equipment such as vehicles, in-vehicle computers and a completely new records management system. The Springfield Fire Department has been forced to implement rotating closures of fire stations due to staffing shortages. The pension issue hampers the availability of funding for these needs as well.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **The pension fund shortfall should be resolved as quickly and decisively as possible. This is a quality of life issue for Springfield and Greene County, and resolving it should be our community's highest priority.**

The Roundtable believes an external funding source will be necessary to effectively resolve the pension fund shortfall, which is too large to be addressed with budget cuts that will continue to hurt departments already under duress. The pension shortfall is more almost three times the size of the City's annual General Fund operating budget.

Until the pension issues is resolved, the Roundtable believes it will be difficult to make any progress on possible new funding mechanisms for other law enforcement and criminal justice needs.

31st Circuit Judicial Courts

SUMMARY:

Judge Don Burrell, formerly of 31st Circuit, Div. 1 and Greene County Presiding Judge, now of Missouri Southern Court of Appeals, outlined challenges facing Greene County's court system. Issues Burrell addressed included: Judges' caseload, courtroom space, ongoing implementation of Justice Information System (which has since been completed), judge notification of jail bookings, court security and the need for a courts administrator (a position which has since been filled.) When asked to prioritize needs within the court, Burrell listed 1- Courts Administrator, 2- additional judges, and 3- additional courtrooms.

The October 2007 Judicial Weighted Workload Study, conducted by the National Center for State Courts, in conjunction with the Clerk of the Missouri Supreme Court, determined the Greene County 31st Circuit is short seven judges for the amount of court cases it handles. Lack of judges slows processing of cases (95 percent of which will eventually conclude with a guilty plea,) and impacts the jail inmate population, as inmates await trial. For the last few years, the Greene County Commission has listed additional judges among its top legislative priorities for the Missouri General Assembly.

In response to the study, the Missouri Supreme Court approved a visiting judge position for Greene County through its Judicial Partnership Program. In March, 2009, Judge Dan Conklin, 31st Circuit, Div. 3 and Greene County Presiding Judge, established the Div. 25 court to accommodate a rotating roster of Missouri judges who hear associate civil cases. Missouri Governor Jay Nixon has also approved an additional Family Court Commissioner for Greene County, a position expected to be filled in coming months. The addition of these two positions now leaves Greene County five judges short of the 2007 recommendation.

During a walking tour of the Juvenile Courts Facility, Judge Mark Powell guided Roundtable members through several courtrooms and pointed out the Circuit Clerk's Office, Prosecutor's Office and Child Support Enforcement Office. Courtroom space is tight throughout the facility. The Family Court courtroom, in particular, is a small room, and emotions run especially high during these cases. Most courtrooms become crowded and noisy when court is in session, with motions for several cases being heard on the same day. In Associate Circuit Court, Powell sees 90 to 125 cases a day, currently has 4,000 active cases on his docket. Powell said a workload study has shown the Circuit Clerk's office is short 23 employees. Additional employees would have to be granted by the state.

Greene County would like to construct a Family Court Facility, which would connect the existing Judicial Courts Facility with the existing Juvenile Office, adding courtrooms and office space for juvenile and family court functions. Estimated cost is \$9.25 million.

Judge Conklin has proposed doing away with Book & Release, a system used in the Jail to keep the inmate population down. Book & Release, instituted by a recommendation in the Kalmanoff Report, allows non-violent offenders to be booked, processed and then released, rather than held in jail. Conklin would like to replace Book & Release with a bond schedule and 24-hour Booking Judges, who would issue warrants within hours of a booking, similar to the system used in Knox County, Tenn. Courts Administrator Jerry Moyer compiled a report on Knox County's system. Judge Conklin later announced he had rearranged 31st Circuit judges' dockets to expedite criminal court cases, nicknamed the "Rocket Docket." This places more felony trials in Associate Court divisions, which previously focused on civil cases.

CONCLUSIONS:

The 31st Circuit Court is the central component of this community's criminal justice system. The Roundtable acknowledges that Greene County's timely administration of justice is impeded by judges' caseload, limited courtroom space and other external issues, which, combined, lead to delays.

Bottlenecks within the courts affect every other facet of the system and, likewise, the courts are directly impacted when complications arise within the jail, Public Defender's Office, Prosecutor's Office, etc.

The Roundtable's concerns regarding the 31st Circuit Judicial Courts are rooted in the large volume of cases filed in this circuit and the length of time it takes for cases to be resolved.

Justice delayed is justice denied. When trials are delayed, chances for successful prosecution are diminished. Witnesses die or disappear and memories fade while victims wait and wait for resolution.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Additional judges and court commissioners are needed within the 31st Circuit.**

The Weighted Workload Study clearly illustrated the problem by recommending seven additional judges, which would represent a 50-percent increase in the number of judges currently assigned to the 31st Circuit. Judges are employees of the State of Missouri, and additional judges would require approval by the Missouri General Assembly. Though two additional positions have been authorized since the study, this must continue to be a top legislative priority for Springfield and Greene County.

- **Additional courtroom space is needed to house additional judges.**

The Roundtable acknowledged the need for the proposed Family Court Facility, and urged the Greene County Commission to make the project a capital priority.

Two new courtrooms are currently under construction within the Judicial Courts Facility, expected to be complete by July, 2009. One courtroom is designated for the newly-created Division 25. The second courtroom will house the new Family Court Commissioner.

- **Explore use of Grand Juries for cases, when useful or appropriate.**

Grand Juries could be particularly helpful in expediting arraignments, eliminating the need for judges to preside over preliminary hearings.

- **Identify likely guilty pleas to be placed at the top of the court docket and expedited.**

Some Greene County Jail inmates are ready to plea guilty to charges against them and begin serving their sentences, but must wait several months for their case to come to trial. If these cases could be moved through the courts more quickly, these inmates could be sentenced and moved out of County jail into the Department of Corrections.

- **Document, review and consider limiting of the number and type of continuances allowed before cases can move to trial.**

Many inmates in the Greene County Jail intentionally delay their trial by requesting continuances until key witnesses disappear, or details of testimony are forgotten. These continuances concurrently contribute to jail overpopulation and case backlogs in the courts. This project could possibly be assigned to a graduate student or college class.

- **Explore additional use of video conferencing technology for preliminary hearings and other court procedures.**

This may reduce the need for corrections staff to escort inmates to court and, on occasion, reduce the need for additional courtroom space.

- **Consider instituting night court or weekend court, to utilize existing courtroom facilities during hours these courtrooms currently stand empty.**

Concerns over limited courtroom space were voiced multiple times to the Roundtable. Using existing space could help address these concerns without investing in capital improvements.

Greene County Jail and Jail Booking

SUMMARY:

The Roundtable discussed the Greene County Jail with Sheriff Jack Merritt, and later, Sheriff Jim Arnott, numerous times. The County is responsible for running the jail, which has a budget of about \$8 million. About \$3 million comes from the shared Law Enforcement Sales Tax with the City.

The jail opened in 2001 with a capacity of 480, but frequently operates with close to 600 inmates. The vast majority of inmates are awaiting trial, not serving sentences. Some inmates are federal prisoners, held through a contract with the U.S. Marshall Service. The federal inmates help offset the cost of operating the jail, as the federal government's daily reimbursement rate (\$53) is significantly higher than the state's (\$22.50). The jail is staffed for about 400 to 450 inmates. Sheriff Merritt said the jail doesn't always have the ability to staff two guards in each pod, which typically houses more than 100 inmates. Staffing shortages create a potentially dangerous situation for both corrections offices and inmates.

Jail booking procedures were frequently discussed. The Sheriff's Office reports it takes an average of 20 minutes for an officer to book an offender and be to return to patrol duty. Springfield Police say it takes longer, sometimes more than an hour — due, in part, to the fact that Springfield Police do not have jail booking software in their vehicles.

A Book & Release program, addressed in detail above, is currently used to reduce inmate population, although the program has not been without controversy. Regardless of the program, law enforcement officers have the option of requesting a 24-hour hold on any offender booked at the jail.

Sheriff Jim Arnott, Prosecutor Darrell Moore and Greene County Courts Administrator Jerry Moyer have studied jail operations, bond schedules and 24-hour judge programs utilized by Knox County, Tenn., and Jackson County, Mo., and determined that portions of these programs could be implemented in Greene County. Both counties are operating their jails under a federal court-ordered population cap. If the jail exceeds the maximum number of inmates allowed, the county is fined \$5,000 per day, per inmate. Greene County could find itself in the same situation, according to Arnott.

CONCLUSIONS:

The Greene County Jail is a central element in the community's law enforcement and criminal justice system. The jail struggles with chronic overcrowding and insufficient staffing. While staffing is a funding issue, overpopulation is due to a variety of external factors affecting the number of inmates booked in the jail and the amount of time it takes for inmates cases to be processed in the courts.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Additional corrections officers are needed within the jail.**

The Greene County Sheriff has requested approximately 20 additional corrections officers for several years, but the County does not have the funds to provide more than one or two at a time. The Roundtable recommends additional corrections officers, but acknowledges that these new positions would require a new or additional source of revenue.

- **The jail is chronically overcrowded. While Book & Release and Pre-Trial Services help alleviate this problem, additional measures must be implemented to keep jail population at a manageable level.**

The Roundtable recommends implementing a combination of the proposed bond schedule system and retention of the Pre-Trial Services and the Book & Release system to manage the number of inmates housed in the jail. Both Book & Release and Pre-Trial Services were implemented at the behest of the 2003 Kalmanoff Report, to address jail overcrowding. Greene County Judge Dan Conklin has proposed replacing these programs with a Bond Schedule and 24-hour judges. The Roundtable support implementation of Conklin's proposal while retaining Pre-Trial Services as well as Book & Release for inmates who can't afford to post bond.

The Roundtable considered a proposed minimum-security jail, a recommendation made to Greene County in the 2003 Kalmanoff Report. However, the group concluded that more research is needed on this proposal, particularly the estimated cost, before a recommendation could be made. Roundtable members agreed that such a construction project should only be considered after the proposed Family Court Facility is completed.

- **Greene County and agencies booking inmates at the jail must work together to explore and address causes for delays in the booking process.**

Law enforcement agencies follow various policies for filing criminal reports and related paperwork needed by the prosecutor to file charges. After a 24-hour hold in the jail, state law requires inmates to be released unless they have been charged. If a criminal report has not been completed immediately following an arrest, charges are often filed after the inmate has been released, and a warrant for arrest must be served, further adding to the Sheriff's Office workload and ultimately delaying the justice process.

The Sheriff's Office and other municipal police departments have the ability to pre-book inmates using laptops in their vehicle, saving time the officers spend inside the jail. Springfield Police vehicle laptops do not have the same software, and therefore, Springfield Police officers must spend more time inside the jail during booking. This software issue is related to a larger Records Management System issue addressed separately in this report.

Missouri State Public Defender's Office, District 31

SUMMARY:

Public Defender Rod Hackathorn presented an overview of his office, which is staffed and funded by the State of Missouri, not the City or County. Changes in funding must come from the Missouri General Assembly. The office provides defense attorneys for indigent defendants who cannot afford their own representation. The office handles cases from Greene, Christian and Taney counties, as well as some cases from Stone, Dallas, Dade, Webster and Polk counties. The office has 19 attorneys, who handle about 150 open cases at any one time. Hackathorn said this caseload is overwhelming. The office handled 5,339 cases in the 2007-08 fiscal year. Hackathorn said there has not been an increase in the Public Defender budget in at least seven years, despite rapid population growth in the area and corresponding caseload growth. In late 2008, the office announced it would begin limiting the number of cases it could accept. A group of local private attorneys are working through the Springfield Metropolitan Bar Association to provide pro bono help for lower-level cases. While this helps expedite traffic fines and other minor cases, criminal cases remain backlogged.

CONCLUSIONS:

The Roundtable found the Public Defender's office to be significantly understaffed and overworked. The caseload per Public Defender presents at least two major problems. First, the lack of public defenders is a significant contributor to Greene County's overall court case backlog and related jail overcrowding. Second, each attorney has less time to prepare for cases and meet with clients, which often leads to a decreased level of service and opens the door for further litigation by those claiming they were denied qualified representation.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

• The Roundtable believes the State of Missouri should increase funding for staff in the District 31 Public Defender's Office. Roundtable believes this issue should be a top legislative priority for both the City and the County.

Additionally, when new attorneys are hired, they will need space in which to work. More space to house increased staff must also be identified and funded.

• The Roundtable recognizes that the Springfield Metropolitan Bar Association is coordinating with the Public Defender's Office to reduce the caseload backlog.

The Roundtable commends area attorneys who are volunteering to represent indigent defendants in court.

Greene County Juvenile Office

SUMMARY:

Perry Epperly, Chief Juvenile Officer and Juvenile Office Director, provided the Roundtable an overview of the Greene County Juvenile Office and a tour of the Juvenile Justice Center. At any one time, more than 800 children in Greene County are under the supervision of the courts, through issues related to either behavior of the caretaker or behavior of the child.

The Juvenile Justice Center was built in 1991. Increased rates of child abuse, neglect and juvenile delinquency have contributed to the Juvenile Office largely outgrowing the facility, especially courtroom space, administrative space and client interview space. Privacy is often compromised. The Juvenile Facility has one courtroom in which to process Juvenile Court cases. The courtroom is very small, designed before Dominic James legislation, which allows members of the public, as well as extended family, to attend Juvenile court proceedings. Emotions run high within this small, cramped room, which was not large enough even to contain the Safety & Justice Roundtable members. Though the building is cramped, there is room to spare within secure Juvenile Detention, due to implementation of Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative. Out of 24 beds within detention, usually fewer than 12 are occupied. Minor offenders are usually not sentenced to detention.

Some male juvenile offenders cannot, for various reasons, return home after an offence, and instead move into the Challenge Treatment Center at the former Mary E. Wilson Home. This facility is also home to the Evening Reporting Center, a supervised highly structured program for minor offenders.

CONCLUSIONS:

The Roundtable acknowledges the Juvenile Justice System is an important element of the public safety system in Springfield and Greene County. In addition, Greene County's consistently elevated rates of child abuse and neglect have been identified as a Red Flag in the Community Foundations of the Ozarks' Community Report Card since 2004. Child abuse and neglect is a shameful problem in our community.

Despite staffing and facility constraints, the Juvenile Office is to be commended for its innovative work with juvenile offenders, particularly with the successful implementation of the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative. The result of Juvenile's work is evident in that secured Juvenile Detention regularly operates at half capacity.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

• **The Juvenile Office's most pressing needs are additional staffing and space.** Courtroom space is especially concerning. The Roundtable believes construction of the proposed Greene County Family Courts Facility should remain a top capital priority for

the County. The Roundtable also believes adding more staff should be a top priority for Greene County.

- **The group proposes a community-wide advocacy effort to raise awareness of and address juvenile issues, including delinquency, abuse, neglect, drug use, high school drop-outs, mental health issues, etc.**

The Roundtable heard repeatedly from people working at all levels of the local justice system that crime begins at a young age, often as a result of unstable home lives and socio-economic disadvantages. Many current jail inmates were, as children, clients of the Juvenile Justice system. The Roundtable believes addressing this cycle should be a priority for the community as a whole.

Since the failure of the Community Safety Initiative in 2005, the community has rallied around the cause of early childhood issues with programs such as Isabel's House, the Mayor's Commission on Children, and the Red Wagon Kids program. Similar efforts should now be made to reach adolescents and teens so that they do not fall into a cycle of crime and punishment. The Roundtable recommends the formation of a citizen/volunteer commission that can focus on this issue. Such an effort should present a unified message to youth, parents, teachers, mentors and the community at large about the dangers of juvenile crime and the consequences of bad choices. The City and County should consider some form of ongoing support and/or funding for such efforts.

- **The Roundtable recognizes that the Juvenile Office accomplishes a great deal of work with very limited resources. The Roundtable wishes to publicly commend Chief Juvenile Officer and Juvenile Office Director Perry Epperly and his staff for their dedication to serving the youth of our community.**

Greene County Sheriff's Office & Springfield Police Department
Records Management Systems

SUMMARY:

Currently, the Sheriff's Office and Police Department utilize two different and separate records management systems — software used to maintain internal records such as criminal reports, case follow-up, etc. The Sheriff's system is relatively new and has been custom-built for the County's needs, including interoperability with jail records, with the ultimate goal of a fully electronic, paperless system that sends reports to the prosecutor's office. Meanwhile, the Springfield Police Department's records management system is so old, it is no longer supported by the vendor. The Police Department says the system is on the verge of failure, which would reduce the City to using pen and paper to file reports.

The City and County conducted a demonstration to show whether the Sheriff's system could be adopted by the Police Department as well. The conclusion of this demonstration was that while the County system works well for its needs, it is lacking some features necessary for City police work and it would be cost- and time-prohibitive for the City to customize the system to meet its needs, such as mechanisms for reporting or diagramming vehicle accidents, false alarms or case management for investigations. There was also concern that some information may be lost because the County's system doesn't capture ticket and warrant numbers. The narrative portion of the reports do not have spell check, so officers would have to default to Microsoft Word for that, which could cost up to \$130,000 for license fees.

There was some discussion as to whether the statewide Missouri Data Exchange (MoDEX) system could meet the need for data sharing between the two agencies. Sheriff Jim Arnott expressed doubts about whether using MoDEX alone would suffice. He said the system is only as good as the information it receives, and there are no real-time updates. There are no state requirements as to what kind of information must be submitted to MoDEX, or how often. The Springfield Police Department is currently utilizing MoDEX, and updating information to this system on a daily basis.

CONCLUSIONS:

The working relationship between the Sheriff's Office and Police Department is crucial to a properly functioning public safety and criminal justice system in Springfield and Greene County. The closer these two entities can work together, the better.

Because the Police System is aging and in dire need of replacement, the Roundtable believes the any future upgrades create an opportunity to integrate jail booking software into Springfield Police vehicle computers.

The Roundtable heard unanimous praise from local law enforcement officials for the 800 MHz trunked radio system, which has greatly aided in interagency communications and, by all accounts, has streamlined working relationships. The Roundtable finds it logical

that interoperable records management systems would also aid in streamlining communication, investigations, etc., as well as booking.

The main solution mentioned by the Sheriff's Office and Police Department for sharing data was MoDEX. The Roundtable believes MoDEX is a useful tool, however the group acknowledges the program is not a replacement for a local records management system.

Despite the results of the Records Management System demonstration, the Roundtable urges the Sheriff's Department, the Police Department and their respective IT staff to cooperate as much as possible to implement systems that increase communication and data sharing.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **The Springfield Police Department is in dire need of a new records management system, and must be replaced.**

The Springfield Police Department's current records management system is in danger of failing. A system failure would force the Springfield Police Department back to using paper reports, further backing up the entire system.

- **The Sheriff's Office and Police Department must demonstrate an ability and willingness to share software and data without reservation.**

The Roundtable acknowledges this will require capital investment, but overall, it will increase efficiency and public safety. Increased cooperation would enhance the level of trust between the two agencies.

- **The Police Department and Sheriff's Office should coordinate and commit to a set schedule for what kind of information needs to be shared via MoDEX, and how often.**

Point people should be assigned to and be responsible for inputting the information. While the MoDEX system is not perfect, the Roundtable feels it is not fully utilized by the two local agencies at this point.

Springfield Police Department

SUMMARY:

Springfield Police Chief Lynn Rowe spoke to the Roundtable about the Springfield Police Department's functions, staffing and funding. The department serves some 160,000 permanent residents in a 75-square mile area; and an estimated 350,000 people each weekday as the City's workday population increases. The annual budget for fiscal year 2008-2009 is just over \$34 million. Personnel costs account for 89 percent of the budget.

With the growth in population and crime over the last 10 years, the Department estimates it should have a minimum of 352 sworn officers on staff. The Springfield Police Department has had 325 sworn officers until recent budget cuts. The Springfield Police Department is currently down about 36 positions because of a hiring freeze and budget shortages. (However, the City Council recently approved backfilling 10 vacant sworn officer positions. Those 10 recruits are currently in academy training and are expected to be sworn in by early 2010.) Services cut include the DARE Program, Community Policing Services at Grant Beach, Commercial Street and the Battlefield Mall substations, a full-time public information officer and crime prevention officer positions. Ongoing costs for these positions through 2014, if filled, would be approximately \$6 million.

Recruitment and retention of personnel has been significantly hindered by the underfunded Police-Fire pension system, which is addressed separately in this report.

Capital improvements have also been underfunded recently. Springfield Police Department currently needs about \$3 million to bring its vehicle fleet up to date (about 60 vehicles, plus equipment) and to purchase needed equipment such as bicycles, computer forensic equipment, safety gear and radios. The department's records management system is no longer supported by its vendor and badly needs replaced, at an estimated cost of \$1 million. Issues with the records management system are addressed separately in this report.

CONCLUSIONS:

The Roundtable agrees that staffing is an issue for the Springfield Police Department. With the growth in the local population in recent years, the number of sworn officers on the streets should be increasing, not decreasing. The group acknowledges that at this time budget shortfalls and the unresolved Police-Fire pension issue overshadows other issues within the Department.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **The Roundtable believes work needs to be done in terms of recruiting.**

The Roundtable would like the Springfield Police Department to be fully staffed. While the pension issue currently impedes hiring and retention, the Roundtable believes Springfield Police Department needs to be prepared to aggressively pursue new recruits once the pension issue is resolved and sales taxes return to normal levels. An outside consultant may be of assistance in terms of marketing and outreach.

- **A new Police training facility should be a priority for the City.**

Some of the current training facilities are inadequate or unusable, including classroom space at the same abysmal site as the current fire training facility. A new police training facility, whether at the site of the decommissioned Springfield-Branson National Airport terminal or elsewhere, would be beneficial for recruitment and retention.

- **Resolving the Police-Fire Pension Fund shortfall should be a priority for the City.**

This recommendation is addressed separately in this report.

- **The Police Department is in dire need of a new records management system.**

This recommendation is addressed separately in this report.

Springfield Fire Department

SUMMARY:

Springfield Fire Chief Barry Rowell presented an overview of the Springfield Fire Department. The department has three divisions: Technical Services, Operations and Training. Operations is the backbone of the department, providing the front line EMS and fire service. Two hundred Operations personnel serve in three 24-hour shifts at 12 stations. When the Roundtable met with Chief Rowell, the Department had 10 unfilled positions due to a hiring freeze, and anticipated being down more than 20 positions by June 30, 2009. (However, Springfield City Council has recently approved backfilling five of those vacant positions.) The Technical division includes a law enforcement element in which six fire marshals perform public education, code enforcement and plan reviews and investigations. Specialty teams include the bomb squad, hazardous materials and technical rescue.

A tour of the Fire Department's training facility on the grounds of a former wastewater treatment plant in northwest Springfield showed a flood-damaged space, and reflects the department's biggest unfunded need at the moment, other than staffing. The site's history as a wastewater treatment facility means it is located near a creek, in a floodplain. Recent flooding has all but destroyed a small classroom building used by both fire fighters and police officers for instruction. A paved area that was built over a former water retention tank is in danger of collapsing, preventing the Fire Department from parking any kind of large rescue vehicle next to a tower it had been using for live training exercises.

The Insurance Services Offices (ISO), a risk-information data collection agency, began a scheduled review of the Springfield Fire Department in May 2009. Facilities are included in the ISO's evaluations. Springfield currently holds a very favorable ISO Class 2 rating. A downgraded rating could result in higher real estate insurance rates within the City of Springfield.

CONCLUSIONS:

The Roundtable was taken aback by the state of the training facility, which has become unsafe and largely unusable in recent years due to flooding at the site. Proper training is crucial to public safety, and plays a role in recruitment and the ongoing safety of Fire Department personnel.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **The Roundtable believes a new Fire training facility should be a priority for the City of Springfield.**

The City has set aside about \$2.8 million through a bond issue for construction of the proposed new training center at the recently decommissioned Springfield-Branson National Airport terminal. The training center is estimated to cost between \$7 and \$8

million. The combined police and fire training center also leads the list of projects for which the City has requested federal stimulus funds.

- **Resolving the Police-Fire Pension Fund shortfall should be a priority for the City.**

This recommendation is addressed separately in this report.

Springfield-Greene County Office of Emergency Management

SUMMARY:

Director of Emergency Management Ryan Nicholls discussed the purpose, operations and budget of the Office of Emergency Management. Police, fire, public works and other agencies individually respond to situations every day. However, when large-scale events or emergency circumstances necessitate combined response efforts, Emergency Management functions as the central coordinating agency, prioritizing responses across multiple entities. During such responses, Emergency Management operates within the Emergency Operations Center, located in the lower level of the Office of Emergency Management.

The Roundtable toured the currently the Emergency Operations Center, located in the basement of 100-year-old former candy factory building. The three-story brick building is cramped, prone to flooding, and ill-equipped to house a modern emergency response operation. Emergency Management Director Ryan Nicholls told the Roundtable his department is in desperate need of a new secure facility with more room for operations and technology.

Local response efforts during the massive 2007 ice storm were based out of the Emergency Operations Center for two weeks. Emergency Management works very closely with law enforcement during times of crisis; these units are the primary source for gathering information, which enables Emergency Management to assess situations in real-time. Emergency Management has seven employees, one of whom is part-time. Revenue amounts to about a 50-50 split between the County and the City.

CONCLUSIONS:

The Office of Emergency Management is small, yet essential department. The joint County-City entity works with local and regional first-responder agencies to coordinate operations and communications during large-scale emergencies. These can include severe weather, power outages, fires, public health emergencies and more.

Having toured the building, the Roundtable agrees that Emergency Management's current facilities are inadequate for housing the kind of sophisticated modern response effort often required by Ozarks weather conditions — not to mention other potential disasters.

Congressman Roy Blunt has secured a \$1 million federal grant for a new Emergency Management Facility. Greene County is in the process of finalizing plans to build a new Emergency Operations Center on the Greene County campus near the southwest corner of Campbell Avenue and Nichols Street. The County has authorized issuance of bonds for the estimated \$19 million project. Construction is expected to begin in 2011.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **The Roundtable believes constructing a new Emergency Operations Center should be a priority for the City and County.**

Combining this facility with a 911 call center or other public safety functions, as part of the Public Safety Collaborative Center, would be a wise use of taxpayer money, as these groups often work together during emergencies.

Springfield-Greene County Emergency 911

SUMMARY:

E-911 Director Becky Jungmann presented an overview of the E-911 system to the Roundtable. She described the system as the “first link in the chain of public safety.” The system depends on human operators and obviously cannot rely on recordings. The average call volume is about 600 calls per day. Most of the department’s costs are for personnel and the rest is computer maintenance.

E-911 is now mainly funded by an 1/8-cent 911 Sales Tax approved by voters in April 2007, which has made possible the first increase in staffing since 1994. On the horizon is “next generation 911,” which will make use of Internet connectivity and more advanced technology — though the standards for such systems have not yet been finalized and is likely 10 years off, Jungmann said. Greene County Administrator Tim Smith said about half a million dollars from the 911 Sales Tax is being set aside each year for a future 911 center, tentatively planned to be located in a future Public Safety Collaborative Center.

CONCLUSIONS:

The Emergency 911 system is the first link in the chain of public safety. E-911 now has a stable source of funding after the passage of the 1/8-cent 911 Sales Tax. Now that a new source of funding has allowed E-911 to increase staffing to necessary levels, more space is required. A secure location is also desirable. It makes sense to the Roundtable to locate a new 911 call center under the same roof as the Emergency Operations Center, as these agencies often work hand-in-hand. E-911 does not have any immediate needs as far as personnel.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **The Roundtable endorses the idea of locating a future 911 call center with other law enforcement and public safety entities.**

A proposal to locate the call center in the Public Safety Collaborative Center is addressed separately in this report.

Greene County Pre-Trial Services

SUMMARY:

Greene County Director of Pre-Trial Services Bobby Linton presented an overview of Pre-Trial Services, which aims to relieve jail crowding by releasing low-risk inmates awaiting trial to the supervision of Linton's office, usually by means of an electronic monitor.

Pre-Trial services assesses inmates' backgrounds, risk factors and mitigating factors in order to give judges unbiased reports about each inmate. The judge uses this report in determining who is eligible for pre-trial release. Linton said judges consider two important factors included in his office's reports: whether the person shows up in court, and whether they are a danger to the community. Pre-Trial Services also provides supervision of those released in order to assure community safety and appearances in court.

Pre-Trial Services has two officers who, at any one time, supervise about 170 program participants. Issues the office struggles with include the fact that the Missouri criminal justice system wasn't designed with Pre-Trial Services in mind, and that the Public Defender's Office, which is assigned to represent nearly all participants in Pre-Trial Services, is overloaded with cases. Pre-Trial Services is also short-staffed — a staff of two reviewed the files of some 22,000 people booked into the Greene County jail in 2007.

CONCLUSIONS:

The Roundtable believes the issue of jail overcrowding cannot be truly addressed until time inmates spend awaiting trial is significantly reduced. Until then, only small solutions are available to chip away at the jail problem.

One solution involves expanding Pre-Trial Services, which would expedite the review of inmates eligible for pre-trial release.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

• The Roundtable commends the work of Greene County Pre-Trial Services and the associated cost savings for the County, and urges the County to provide additional staffing needed to expand this program.

Additional staff for this office will help reduce the number of people awaiting trial in jail.

Springfield Municipal Court and Prosecutor

SUMMARY:

Chief Judge Todd Thornhill and City Prosecutor Johnnie Burgess presented information about the Springfield Municipal Court and Prosecutor's Office, and the Roundtable toured the facility, which is currently located in a former cafeteria building away from other court buildings. The Springfield Municipal Court has a heavy caseload — the Court has averaged more than 52,000 cases per year during the last six years. The Court deals with all traffic and red-light violations, as well as cases involving drugs, stealing, dogs, trespassing and assault. The misdemeanor drug cases are a fairly new addition to the court's docket, as the Greene County Prosecutor's Office began sending these cases to the Municipal Court in order to reduce its own caseload.

The City Prosecutor's Office filed some 44,000 criminal offenses in 2008 involving about 31,000 defendants. Recently, the Greene County Prosecutor's Office outlined 27 types of misdemeanors that it would no longer prosecute, and instead sends those cases to the Municipal Court system. Burgess said the court is being handed more cases, but doesn't always have the resources for them. He stressed that the Municipal Court system is part of the overall County system, because all those who live in the City are also residents of the County.

Thornhill and Burgess agreed that the Court's biggest need at the moment is a new building. Burgess told the Roundtable his office has "just enough" attorneys to cover day-to-day assignments, but the office becomes stretched if a special assignment arises, or if an attorney takes vacation or is out sick. Judge Thornhill said the remainder of the municipal court system is sufficiently staffed at this time.

CONCLUSION:

The Roundtable believes the facilities at 625 N. Benton Ave. are too small for the Court's current workload. On days when Court is in session, a line leading out the door and around the building is common. The building has very little space for waiting areas besides the courtroom itself. There are also no private meeting areas, and attorneys meet with clients in the hallways.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **The Roundtable believes a new Municipal Court space should be a priority for the City of Springfield.**

Opportunities for partnership may emerge as the plans for the Greene County Family Court Facility develop.

Greene County Prosecutor's Office

SUMMARY:

Greene County Prosecutor Darrell Moore gave an overview of the office and its duties, which includes criminal prosecution of felonies and misdemeanors as well as appeals. These categories include everything from murder and rape to mandated reporter violations, conservation violations, child support cases, bond hearings, bad checks, untaxed cigarettes and much more.

The office's current budget is \$4.387 million and includes 76 employees. There are 29 full-time assistant prosecuting attorneys, 37 clerical and support staff, seven investigators and one paralegal. Moore said it takes more than two years to fully train an attorney because of the complexities of today's legal system. The system also moves faster today and the office usually has about five employees in court during the week. The workload is very demanding. A number of alternative programs have helped alleviate some of the workload, such as a bad check diversion system and Mothers Choosing Change for moms with chemical dependency issues. Discussion included budget issues and the effect of drug and alcohol abuse on cases referred to the prosecutor.

CONCLUSIONS:

The Roundtable appreciates the work of the Greene County Prosecutor's Office, and acknowledges that this office's efficient operation is a central factor in the timely adjudication of cases.

Moore assured the Roundtable that, while he would like to have more prosecutors, overall, his office is sufficiently staffed to keep up with the current workload. In comparison to staffing and space issues faced by other departments and offices studied, the Roundtable concluded that the Prosecutor's Office is relatively well provided for.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **The Roundtable recommends maintaining the current level of staffing and funding within the Greene County Prosecutor's Office.**

However, if cases begin moving through the courts system at an accelerated rate, the Roundtable acknowledges additional staffing may be needed in the Prosecutor's Office to prevent bottlenecks.

System-wide Recommendations

- **The City and County should further explore the possibility of consolidating functions of the Police Department and Sheriff's Office, and perhaps even the agencies themselves.**

The Roundtable acknowledges that a full-scale consolidation of the two departments would require significant study, political concessions, changes to charter documents and perhaps even the creation of a combined City-County charter. Citizen involvement would also be a key component of any such move.

A recommendation of consolidation through a combined City-County charter is beyond the scope of this committee.

However, the Roundtable does recommend that both entities more fully examine opportunities for shared resources and incremental consolidation. Sharing resources could result in cost savings as well as enhanced communication between agencies. Possible areas of consolidation include training exercises and facilities, equipment, records management and data sharing.

Ultimately, the benefits and drawbacks of full-scale consolidation should be weighed by the City, the County, and the citizens.

- **Several recommendations throughout the system require support from the Missouri General Assembly, including additional judges, expanding juvenile staff and expanding the Public Defender's Office. While the Roundtable has recommended the City and County make these issues top legislative priorities, the Roundtable feels the need to go further and directly appeal to our area legislators for their support.**

Recent cuts at the state level have often come at the expense of local government, which is left to pick up the tab for providing such essential services as law enforcement and the administration of justice. These cuts are on top of prolonged and severe under-funding of agencies such as the Public Defender's Office. Local government cannot continue to be expected to absorb these costs without erosion of service.

The Roundtable requests that legislators consider the local cost burden of state budget cuts and the additional damage of continued rhetoric about further cutting budgets and taxes when the system is already so under-funded.

- **The Roundtable recommends that the Courts, Prosecuting Attorney, Springfield Police, and Sheriff work closely and cooperatively to develop a system whereby Probable Cause Statements are prepared and submitted and a decision made to file charges are made within the minimum amount of time following an arrest.**

This will have a great impact on reducing the number of inmates in the jail, will allow bonds to be set, and will reduce time and expense required to for the Sheriff and Police to

locate and bring accused defendants to court.

- **The Greene County Sheriff's Office has a large backlog of unserved warrants. The Roundtable recommends the City and County explore opportunities to check for unserved warrants when government agencies interact with the public.**

For example, a warrant check while paying taxes, visiting the assessor, applying for permits and licenses, paying fees, are all points at which a simple records check could reveal a possible warrant.

- **The Roundtable recommends continued development of alternative courts.**

Developing alternative courts is a very smart use of public money. Any alternatives to resolve issues that minimize the use of our regular courts and also minimize the need to put people involved in minor problems in jail are important and should get a high priority.

- **Drug and alcohol abuse must not be discounted as primary and compounding factors throughout the criminal justice system.**

Universally, representatives of agencies directly involved in dealing with this community's criminal element report that drug and alcohol abuse impacts crime, the jail population, judicial backlogs, child abuse and neglect, juvenile crime and repeat offenders.

- **The Roundtable recommends increased outreach to minority applicants for jobs within the public safety and criminal justice system.**

The Roundtable believes the makeup of these forces must reflect the community they serve.

- **The Roundtable requests progress updates from the City Council and County Commission on these recommendations after six months and one year.**