

RCPD Consolidation + International Accreditation

Law enforcement services are expensive everywhere and excellent services can cost more, but it doesn't in Riley County because of consolidation and accreditation. I often refer to the late Donn Everett as the founding father of the Riley County Police Department (RCPD). He was the former Riley County Attorney, State Representative, House Majority Floor Leader and State Senator. His broad experience as a city commissioner, county attorney and legislative leader provided the unique perspective to create such a model.

Just like the founding fathers of this great nation, Mr. Everett's vision and brilliance over 45 years ago led to a radical transformation by consolidating local law enforcement that remains unconventional and incredibly brilliant today. The RCPD may be the only model like it in the country and I'm not sure if Mr. Everett could have accomplished this in today's political climate. Donn Everett was concerned about disparate levels of competence, training and professionalism among the sheriff's office and the other two local police departments. He convinced the voter's not once, but twice that there was a better way. He was right, and it was made even better in 1991 when the RCPD became the first Kansas law enforcement to earn international accreditation. This means that your police department is accountable for adhering to the best practices in law enforcement. Accreditation is voluntary and only 5% of all law enforcement agencies in this country have embraced this standard. All three Departments I served in are accredited.

As I conclude my law enforcement career that began in 1979, with the last three years at the RCPD, it is fair to say that I have no sacred cows to protect here. But I do have a deep commitment and appreciation for professional policing designed to withstand political interference, fads like "defunding", unwarranted attacks based upon events elsewhere in our country, and other claims and assumptions predicated on misinformation. Predictable and stable funding, mutually respectful relationships based on trust and competence among the various entities served by the RCPD, are critically important ingredients that have led to a top-notch police department serving Riley County. The Law Board serves as a de-facto citizens' oversight group of people appointed by your local elected officials to ensure that the aforementioned benefits to you are protected. They have the responsibility of setting the budget, appointing the Director and approving policy. Some Law Board members are also the same officials elected by you.

In my 42 years of police experience, when approved police budget streams are suddenly interrupted or permanently reduced without properly weighing the consequences, it creates a scenario where the training standards demanded by concerned citizens decline over time leading to the kind of service they condemn elsewhere. Also, it makes it harder to attract and retain the kind of police officers that these same citizens demand. If police officers feel unsupported they will go somewhere else to find it. Citizens may not notice the degradation right away, but I guarantee that you will notice it over time and once it reaches a certain point it can take years to recover. When compared with other Kansas counties who have similar demographics and services provided by multiple law enforcement agencies I have found that the cost of operating the RCPD is 5-10 percent less. Based upon KBI data, Riley County enjoys the

added benefit of crime rates that have remained lower than the state average every year since 2003, maybe longer. This lower cost of policing translates into millions of dollars in annual savings and doesn't even factor in the drastically lower number of RCPD police officers needed per capita which is 1.5 per 1,000 residents instead of the national average of 2.0 per 1,000. That would equate to another 40 police officers on the payroll and a few more million dollars in annual funding. The ratio of law enforcement officers in Kansas per thousand residents is much higher.

I ask you to take me at my word that you are served by one of the most genius creations I have ever seen in U.S. local law enforcement. Maintaining this model is a no-brainer and will preserve the safety of Riley County citizens for many years to come. It has truly been my privilege and an honor to serve as your Director.

Sincerely,
RCPD Director Dennis P. Butler