

**REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION  
OF THE JOINT TASK FORCE  
PROPERTY AND EVIDENCE INTEGRATION IN FRESNO COUNTY  
January 31, 2007**

**Background**

The Fresno Police Chief and former Fresno County Sheriff are to be commended for raising the issue and encouraging the discussion of integration. They came to the Greater Fresno Area Chamber of Commerce (The Chamber) in late 2004 and suggested that we take a lead in determining what our public safety services should be in 10 years. Given the projected population growth, loss of Sheriff Officers' lives due to different communication systems, financial challenges, homeland security issues and so on, they suggested it was time to address the issue of integrated services.

In mid 2005, The Chamber convened a Public Safety Integration Task Force to explore approaches and opportunities. Seeing the complexity of the issue, in early 2006 The Chamber engaged a consultant, Management Partners Incorporated (the "consultant") to gather data and determine what possibilities existed for integration. The Consultant was selected based on prior experience working with municipalities and specifically integration efforts. The Consultant's report covering law enforcement was issued on May 10, 2006,

On July 20, 2006, a joint meeting of the City and County was convened, facilitated by Al Smith, CEO of The Chamber. That meeting resulted in the organization of five separate task forces, one of which was Property and Evidence. This Task Force was comprised of a representative from:

- The Fresno City Council – Councilmember Brian Calhoun
- The Fresno County Board of Supervisors – Supervisor Judy Case
- The Fresno Police Department – Deputy Chief Roger Enmark
- The Sheriff's Office – Assistant Sheriff Tom Gattie
- The County of Fresno – Elena Flores, Principal Administrative Analyst
- The City of Fresno – Bob Koury, Principal Internal Auditor
- A representative from the East side of the County – Sanger Police Chief Tom Klose
- A representative from the West side of the County – Mendota Mayor Joseph Riofrio
- The Chamber – Facilitator Judge Steve Henry
- The Chamber – Chairman Ruth Evans

The Task Force was supported by Amy Huerta, Manager of Governmental Affairs for The Chamber, as well as representatives from Fresno PD and the Sheriff's Office. Meetings were held on Mondays at 3 p.m. at the Chamber office and were open to the public; and all cities within the County were regularly notified of

meeting dates and times and provided with minutes of meetings. Our first meeting was held August 28, 2006, and our last meeting was Wednesday, January 17.

In gathering background information for our discussions, representatives from other entities were invited to attend and provide information, feedback and recommendations, i.e. Clovis PD, the Courts and the DA's office.

A special recognition and thank you goes to Tim Hahn from Fresno PD who did research and reported his findings regarding other cities with integrated public safety, especially property and evidence.

### **The Mission**

During the first meeting of the task force, we agreed that the mission was to "determine the feasibility of a joint facility; and if feasible, reach a consensus on an implementation plan for a common facility for property and evidence storage."

### **Consultant's Recommendation**

The consultant's recommendation was to "Develop an implementation plan for a common facility for property and evidence storage," with the recognition that the City's plan for a new headquarters facility offered an opportunity to evaluate integration of property and evidence storage.

### **Data Gathering**

To facilitate meaningful discussions, task force members were given the opportunity to visit P&E facilities at the City and County. In addition, FSO and FPD completed a questionnaire, providing basic information regarding their respective operations. A questionnaire was sent to all cities to determine their interest in using one common facility. We received responses from two cities. We reviewed information provided from Spokane, Indianapolis, and Jacksonville regarding their property and evidence integration.

### **Existing Property & Evidence Storage**

Property and Evidence consists of cash, DNA, bio-hazard materials, weapons, narcotics, furniture, computers, bicycles, vehicles and so on.

#### **FPD:**

- Approximately 100,000 pieces of P&E in storage
- A policy of taking in and purging items at a 1:1 ratio
- A formal policy for the destruction of property
- Compliance with standards established by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies
- 8 employees
- 11,150 sq. ft. of floor space for the processing and storage of P&E; plus
- A converted firehouse at the Central District dressing station
- 6 off-site storage rooms located at a commercial storage

- Off-site cold storage trailer refrigeration unit located at the City corporation yard
- The freezer is the only temperature controlled facility
- Items are booked by Officers, Community Service Officers, Cadets and Identification Bureau Techs.
- Property is packaged and entered into Primus, a barcode program; then received by property technicians and placed in specific locations
- Vehicles are stored at commercial towing yards, on a contracted basis

#### FSO:

- Approximately 500,000 pieces of P&E in storage
- 2 employees
- 16,600 sq. ft. of floor space total in County Building #348(5,000 sq. ft), Sea trains (2,600 Sq. ft.) 7700 sq. ft. of mini storage units (commercial), 1,000 sq. ft. at SO headquarters, and 300 sq. ft. of freezer space at the Hamilton Yard.
- The freezer is the only temperature controlled facility
- An 8x10' room at SO Administrative Headquarters Building in the basement – for officers booking evidence
- An 8x10' space utilized by 2 ID Technicians for processing their duties and responsibilities
- FSO has a procedure for destruction of property
- Items are booked by Field Deputies, Investigators, Detectives, Crime Scene Technicians, Probation Officers, District Attorney Investigators, and on occasion, other law enforcement agencies.
- Vehicles are stored at commercial towing yards on a contracted basis.

In both FSO and FPD, items are booked in one area and generally stored in a locker until the next business day when they are processed by P&E Technicians and stored. FSO enters items into a Records Management System which provides for automated tracking and auditing. FPD uses a barcode system for tracking and auditing. Items are barcoded and then transported to a specific location for storage.

#### In addition:

- Each agency has its own numbering system
- DNA storage is becoming a greater factor and more difficult to purge due to preservation timeframes

#### Other Cities:

- Most have their own storage facilities, i.e. mostly outside facilities of secured storage trailers or containers
- Need to keep evidence for pending cases on site for easy access to court
- Some store P&E at FSO facilities

- They use Department of Justice lab in Fresno or FSO lab for analysis of DNA/biological evidence

### **Where Integration Has Worked**

#### **Spokane**

The population of the City is 200,000; County-wide, the population is 600,000. There are four agencies combined, including Sheriff and Police. Property room and records have been combined for over 20 years. There is a joint agreement for sharing of the property room that splits all expenses based on the number of items booked into the property room. All employees work for the City of Spokane under the direction of a Lieutenant in the Investigation Bureau. Personnel are all non-sworn with a civilian manager. Currently the County pays 40% of the expenses and the City pays 60%. This percentage is based on number of items taken in. They take in approximately 40,000 items annually. The Agency rents the building from the County which is 18,000 sq. ft. They have used a barcode system for the past three years. The agency does not separate property based on PD or SO. Both agencies share records, dispatch and property evidence. They all use the same series of case numbers. All agencies have access via computer system to look at what evidence is booked in on cases. The annual budget is about \$3.1 million.

#### **Jacksonville**

Jacksonville recently combined six facilities into one 46,000 sq. ft. warehouse. They store 150,000 "events" which can include several pieces of property. Jacksonville is a municipal government, and there is not a City or County. The population is about 1.1 million. They do not have an established ratio for intake and disposal of evidence. They do store vehicles in a separate yard.

#### **Indianapolis**

The City has a population of 800,000 and the combined City and County about 1.5 million. They currently occupy about 24,000 sq. ft. but studies show the need for about 30,000 sq. ft. in the future. They did not provide a number of items currently stored. They do have 23,000 "events" per year which can include several pieces of property related to one event. The property room is shared by the Indianapolis Police Department and Marion County Sheriff's Department, and has been combined for 12 years. The City and County were scheduled to merge into one agency on January 1 of this year. They do not have an established ratio for intake and disposal of evidence. Vehicles are stored at three different contracted facilities.

### **Current Costs**

Personnel costs for FSO currently run at about \$150,000 per year for two technicians to cover the Property and Evidence Room. FPD's costs are approximately \$450,000 per year to run its property room with 8 employees. These costs do not include O&M, vehicles, space that is rented and other miscellaneous expenses.

### **Assumptions**

There is an immediate need for expanded facilities to handle property and evidence storage for the Fresno Police Department.

The Fresno Sheriff's Office lacks sufficient staff to intake, release and purge P&E, thus the high volume currently in storage.

FPD does have a purging policy and has invested in personnel to ensure that they are able to contain the volume of P&E.

Both agencies house property and evidence at several different locations. This is costly and requires leasing space to accommodate future growth needs. The cost goes beyond any rent/lease expense and includes the time for technicians and officers to deliver/retrieve P&E from different locations.

FSO currently warehouses a substantial amount of P&E and does not use a barcode system for tracking purposes. FPD does use a bar code system.

Timely purging of P&E is vital to maintaining up-to-date records and reducing the amount of storage space needed.

One centralized location would reduce moving and processing time. It would also allow for increased security.

A centralized location would reduce movement of property and evidence, reducing exposure to loss which could result in major liability issues.

### **Recommendation**

The City and County to negotiate a contract for FPD to handle all property and evidence (critical and non-critical) for FSO. Money and DNA would not be included.

- FPD would handle all new P&E, based on an agreed-upon date, and may initially include long-term FSO P&E that will not be purged within an agreed upon period of time because of a pending case or type of case.
- SO will initially retain its P&E room and work toward purging items to an agreed-upon level, at which time, the remaining items will be phased into FPD's P&E room and system.
- This joint facility will be available to other law enforcement agencies to use; an annual, formal outreach will be conducted.

## **Background**

- Cost for contracting can be based on either a percentage of overall operations or on a per-item basis. Estimates are:
  - On a percentage basis, FSO would be billed 33% and FPD 67% of costs. Costs are estimated at \$450,000 plus \$90,000 (potentially) for two additional employees. Overall, estimated cost to FSO would be \$178,200.
  - On a booking cost, per item basis, the approximate cost would be \$6.00. With FSO booking between 20,000 and 22,000 per year, the estimated annual cost would be \$120,000 to \$132,000. An additional \$1 - \$2 may be charged on a per item basis for items not purged due to severity of the crime.

While the initial cost to the County will be higher (they will continue operating their P&E room until the complete transition is made), it is believed that the income the County receives from the City for performing all prisoner processing will more than offset the increased costs. It is important to remember that at an agreed upon point in time, the SO's P&E room will be eliminated.

## **Mutual Concerns to be Considered:**

We agree that both parties have some areas of concerns that need to be addressed during the negotiation process.

- Operations and Maintenance costs along with additional cost for improvement and expansion of the building would need to be included in the Agreement.
- Both Agency heads will need to be comfortable with annual cost estimates.
- An estimated purging process, agreed to by both parties, will need to be in place prior to implementation.
- Issues surrounding long-term storage of evidence and applicable costs will need to be addressed.
- Property booking locations must consider and include maintenance and pick up of evidence.
- Convenience of evidence pickup must be considered for court proceedings.
- Data pertaining to property and evidence booked through a common data base shall be available to all members utilizing the system.

## **Benefits**

- A significant step toward integration of public safety services resulting in increased security of property and evidence and a more user-friendly system;
- Single, centralized storage facility for all property and evidence with room to accommodate the needs of all Fresno County law enforcement agencies for booking of long-term evidence;

- An improved facility with a loading dock to accommodate the delivery and removal of large items;
- Pass-through evidence locker area with data-entry computers to expedite the booking and handling of evidence by field and investigative personnel;
- Area for officer/deputy to pick up evidence for court.
- Viewing area for public and/or attorneys to view evidence.
- Bicycle cage allowing for easy release of bicycles;
- Storage for flammable and hazardous items
- Area to purge and destroy property and evidence;
- A formalized purging process for all agencies;
- Narcotics processing area for identification and testing of controlled substances;
- Parking for the public and secure parking for building personnel;
- Close proximity to Crime Scene Processing Units to allow easy access for processing and booking of evidence.
- Weapons processing area for securing of firearms.
- A facility that complies with state and federal statutes as well as the standards set forth by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, currently held by the Fresno Police Department.
- Participating agencies should have access to all evidentiary items booked and held as evidence.
- Overall cost savings as P&E is maintained at an agreed-upon purge rate and through elimination of duplicated services, increased efficiencies in checking in and checking out P&E by officers.