

Several Auburn city officials met with the Nemaha County Commissioners and Sheriff Brent Lottman Wednesday, Nov. 14, to discuss possibly combining city and county law enforcement. The city spokespeople requested that county officials present a proposal for contracting law enforcement services. Commissioners indicated they believe the Auburn City Council needs to consider the issue first.

Mayor Scott Kudrna; City Council members Frank Critser and Mary Kruger and councilman-elect Rick Janssen met with the county officials.

The Auburn City Council will discuss law enforcement options Monday, Nov. 26, at 7 p.m. at City Hall in special session. All interested persons are urged to attend.

The council discussed the issue because of the recent resignation of Police Chief Kris Baker. Baker resigned citing personal reasons.

"I respect his decision. I understand his situation. He has family priorities. He's been nothing but a great police chief. I wish him the best," Kudrna said of Baker.

"Now is the time to look at all of our options, whether hiring a new police chief or contracting with the county," the mayor said.

Lottman presented an option costing about \$283,000 for combining city and county law enforcement. The Auburn city budget for law enforcement is currently \$401,885.

Kudrna said the criteria which Auburn city officials are looking at regarding law enforcement is:

- maintaining coverage 24 hours a day, seven days a week and that an officer is out patrolling;
- the three current Auburn police officers would be employed by the county at their current pay or better;

- city ordinances would be enforced by county officials and

- animal control would be enforced by county officials.

If city officials agreed to contract with county officials for law enforcement, county officials would have to hire an additional officer. The sheriff's department currently has six officers. Combining the law enforcement staffs would create a 10-officer force.

All police vehicles and equipment would also transfer to the ownership of Nemaha County, Kudrna said.

"We would no longer have a dispatching contract. We would only have a law enforcement contract," he said of the proposal.

"We would rely on the sheriff's department for law enforcement. The sheriff would be responsible for law enforcement for the whole county, including Auburn. It has helped the county by having our own law enforcement in Auburn," Kudrna said.

"We have a good sheriff. I have complete confidence in (Sheriff) Brent (Lottman). I wouldn't consider this if it were not the case," the mayor said.

Kudrna told the commissions that the city officials would like at least a three-year contract. City officials would also like credit for the items whose ownership would be transferred to the sheriff's department. The insurance issue needed to be reconsidered, he said.

Critser said his major concerns were public safety and officer safety. Those were more important than city officials saving money, he said. Critser said the first year of a contract would be an adjustment and it would be good to start with a three-year contract.

Lottman said there would be good and bad issues in combining law enforcement. He said it is tough for city officials to return to a police department once it was eliminated. Lottman said he did not know details of similar arrangements in other counties. A number of other cities have

Written by www.anewspaper.net
Friday, 23 November 2012 18:48 -

contracted law enforcement services with sheriff's departments, including Syracuse and Tecumseh.

Commissioner Marvin Bohling said county officials need to get the most for their dollar. He said the sheriff's department was capable of providing law enforcement in Auburn. Bohling said he was concerned because both entities start their budget years at different times. The county budget year begins in July, while the city's starts in October.

Commissioner Dennis Wittmann said he hoped to have a good workable relationship. County officials will do the best they can for the city, but needed to consider objectivity and the needs of the rest of the county, he said.