

Response to Questions on the FY 2007 Advertised Budget Plan

Request By: Supervisor Kauffman

Question: Who currently provides security for the courthouse? Can it be contracted out?

Response:

The Office of the Sheriff provides security for the courthouse. Currently, the security of the facility, which includes the physical security of the courthouse building, such as the outside parameter, halls, and lobby are provided throughout the work-week and on evenings, weekends and holidays by Sheriff deputies to ensure the overall safety of the courthouse building. In addition, the Office of the Sheriff provides deputies to staff the Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court, General District Court, and Circuit Court courtrooms.

Virginia law places responsibility for courthouse security on the Sheriff. Sections 53.1-119-120 of the Virginia Code outline the duties and responsibilities of the Sheriff in providing security for the courthouse. Section 53.1-119 states that it is the Sheriff's responsibility to provide deputies to attend the courts while they are in session and to provide for the necessary number of deputies per judge. In addition, Section 53.1-120 maintains that it is the responsibility of the Sheriff to ensure that the courthouses and courtrooms within his/her jurisdiction are secure from violence and disruption; the Sheriff has the sole responsibility for selecting the deputies that are designated for courtroom security. It is the responsibility of the Chief Circuit Court Judge, the Chief General District Court Judge and the Chief Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court Judge to be in agreement with the Sheriff on the number, type and working schedules of the courtroom security deputies. Contract decisions for courthouse security are under the discretion of the Sheriff.

MVM Security provides contracted personnel to screen property and visitors entering the Jennings Building and the Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court at three magnetometer (metal detector) sites in each building. MVM Security is not, however, providing security for the courthouse, but rather a screening process for visitors and their property. If there is a security concern that arises from these screenings, the Office of the Sheriff is called upon to handle the situation.