

Jared Blanton

From: Jared Blanton
Sent: Friday, October 1, 2021 7:31 PM
To: Levy County Commission District 1; Levy County Commission District 5; Levy County Commission District 4; Levy County Commission District 2
Cc: Danny J. Shipp; Chief Mitch Harrell; Wilbur Dean
Subject: Fwd: EMS OT Questions
Attachments: Wage Surveys 9-18-21.xlsx; Wage Surveys 3-25-21.xlsx

Just an FYI - Terry threw a match down an oil well to look around. Ignition. We'll see if anything coherent gets out, but at least if it's offensive or scary I'm the bad guy with bad ideas. I really wish I just had more hours in the day to deal with getting the hours data and so forth, but I have some things in our office at a standstill until I review and ok them. I also intend to start a Budget Transparency social media page so we can get out in front of proper transparent financial information rather than rely on it to be filtered through people that have an agenda, but I've had to put that on the back burner while we deal with software issues and also trying to find the right Investment advisor, and of course finishing up the budget year and some year-end accounting here and there.

Anyway: If the Board is really interested in restructuring this operation, one of the things needed are true hours of coverage required, in total. Just hours. Account for some absences. Divide these total hours by straight time schedules to get the real FTE counts needed. This would be the beginning of a true position control model I've been mentioning to HR over the last few years. But it would allow us to start considering how many employees at straight time it would take to cover, to start estimating how high we could jack wages at straight time in order to start attacking Overtime from the inside out. I've got \$1M of Overtime to redistribute - concentrated in your highest-paid employees, at time and a half this means it's often ranging between \$25-\$38 per hour. We are looking for equilibrium in this equation. Maybe we don't get rid of all of it, but we could get rid of a lot if we open up the FTE counts in a way that's more commensurate with other functions like Law Enforcement.

BUT - and this is key (and Mitch also brought this up) - with shorter shifts than 24-hours you should be able to reduce total hours of coverage by staggering schedules according to busier call load times. So we should be talking about less total hours of coverage required than we have now. May not be less at every station (or zone, if we eliminate the need for them to be at some stations), but surely I'd think 7-8 trucks wouldn't be required 24/7. Going shorter shifts than 12 hours would give even more flexibility. There are some trade-offs. But we need to recalibrate to address the NEEDS. Separate from those hours any "gopher" time for duties that a lower-paid technician or "runner" could accomplish.

Minimum wage law changes are going to make some things painful for us in every single department and every Constitutional Officer. If we don't do something about DPS to shift more of the workload back into regular hours, it's going to hurt there 150% as much because it's all going to be at OT time and a half. Supply and demand says figure out what supply of hours you really NEED, and reapportion your schedule to just get that (with some absence allowance). Then, pay high enough for those hours to make sure you can buy all you want without having to force time and a half, at least not much. This sounds a little kooky, but significantly higher wages is part of the answer. But it alone is most certainly not THE answer, not if

we care about taxpayers as well as employees. We just have to attack these other things to cut out the fluff, including time at stations running few calls.

Begin forwarded message:

From: Jared Blanton <blanton-jared@levyclerk.com>

Subject: Re: EMS OT Questions

Date: October 1, 2021 at 5:35:28 PM EDT

To: Terry Witt <tuu105@yahoo.com>

I'm officially off but I'm working from home, as is too common. I'm supposed to be on vacation starting today...but I am pushing it off indefinitely. Hoping to get out for a week or two this month or next. You've hit the jackpot, though, since this has been on my mind lately I'm going to give you 10 times what you asked for but only 1/3 of what I'm thinking.

Total EMS OT for FY 2021 I cannot get until 2 weeks from now when the next payroll runs, because what they worked this past Saturday through yesterday will get accrued back to FY 2021 and won't get paid out until two weeks from now.

But as of now, total EMS OT for 2021 is \$847,409.69. Fire OT is \$113,885.92. Total DPS is \$961,295.61. Again, both numbers are incomplete because we'll have almost another half a pay period charged to FY 2021. I would expect it to go another \$25K-\$30K higher.

FY 2020 OT for EMS was \$760,260.21. FY 2020 OT for Fire was \$103,500.53. Total DPS was \$863,761.66. So it's gonna be up more than \$100K from last year, easily. It's up 11% from last year before we include this last week.

FY 2019 DPS Total was \$809,913.49.

FY 2018 DPS Total was \$802,052.32.

FY 2017 DPS Total was \$732,007.81

FY 2016 DPS Total was \$709,587.10

FY 2015 DPS Total was \$620,833.56

Overtime at DPS is up over 50% in the last 6 years. Meanwhile Regular Wages have gone from \$1.718M to \$2.014M in that same time period, an increase of just 17%.

Part-Time Wages at straight time have dropped off a cliff. They were \$295,000 in 2015. This year they are at \$84,000. A 71% reduction. Interesting.

This OT is skewed mostly toward the top of the ladder, it would appear. They have 1 employee who is going over \$120K this year, it appears (and it's not Chief Harrell, by any stretch), and 2 employees on track to exceed \$100K in wages this year. 5 employees will go over \$90K. About 10 of them will be over \$80K. Right now, in 2021 so far, of the BOCC's Top-25 highest-paid employees, 19 of them are at Department of Public Safety. 20 employees are on track to exceed \$65K this year, so far, including Union Rep Katy Graves. She actually has made \$68K this current fiscal year. That's more than every single BOCC Department head except the Attorney, Wilbur, Mitch, and the Building Director. That's about \$15K more than she made in 2020. And she's only like number 13 or 14 in her own Department, but outshines nearly every Dept Head the Board has? The rest of the BOCC would be livid if they only knew. I've attached a survey of BOCC employees paid so far this year (doesn't include this week's payday). I've also attached one from 2018-2020 data I did a few months back. DPS dominates the top, always. Interesting to hear complaints about pay. But there is some legitimacy to it - it's just that the story is a half-truth. Bottom is poor, top half or so is very rich thanks to massive OT. Bottom gets discouraged, finds greener pastures, top gets more OT, at much higher rates than what the bottom would have been paid at an improved straight time.

There are easy to identify reasons for these distortions that I can explain, but I'm in a hurry. Entry level wages are too low, but the Department's top is gobbling up OT like crazy, sometimes at stations that aren't busy. Someone may dispute this, but I don't think all of them are terribly distraught over getting this rich. Some, from what I hear, would like to pull back and have less hours on the clock, but there are no easy solutions. **We need to raise starting pay drastically (I actually thought this was already happening as we've planned out these raises, but found out it wasn't - the Union contracts were only shifting existing personnel's pay rather than the actual position pay grade - makes it impossible to recruit), and we can also shift the entire pay scale (even existing) upward to a decent but somewhat lesser degree, but you cannot do this without some structural changes to the schedules and also the way their Overtime is calculated.**

Simply: Our hourly rates are too low in many respects - not just at the bottom of the Department, but even for people that have been here a while they're really not at a rate that I'd say is high. But we have "capped" (I know how much unions hate that word) starting pay at pretty close to what it was 4 years ago and wonder why we can't recruit? Also, our OT benefit accumulation models are wasteful. And 24-hour schedules are bad for employees, and a bad deal for the public (I can say much more about this). Many Departments around the country are waking up to how bad 24-hour shifts really are. The Sheriff doesn't need 24-hour shifts to cover the County, and we shouldn't be doing it for DPS, either. Restructure the latter two issues and we have a ton of resources to deal with the wage issues. Deal with the wage issues and you can recruit the staffing you need to restructure the schedules. It's a chicken with an egg, a horse and a wagon, it's a package. I want to pay these people better than anyone around - to work. Do that, and we'll get employees coming here who want to do a job but still have a life. But let's cut out OT on Sick time and Kitchen and Recliner expenses. If we skyrocket regular hourly wages in a way that's drastic, we crack the supply/demand economics

code, poach employees from other agencies, and revolutionize how this works. The model we, and many agencies utilize, is bad for employees, their families, and many times bad for citizens needing help. But we've got to go for it. We also can draw in Part-Timers again with better wages. I guarantee you can get them here if the hourly rate is high enough. It's still going to be a lower rate of pay than 120 hours of OT for our 15-20 highest-paid employees. Those highest paid employees will no longer get \$40K in OT, but they will get the opportunity to be a normal human with life away from the station.

You cannot do just one or two parts of the needed solution to fix the issue, it will have to be a whole hog approach. Or at least almost-whole-hog. Do one piece or the other and it either won't be enough to really fix the recruitment issues, or it will simply double-down on the things that are costing so much now and we'll be raising Assessments again in no time and you'll still have huge distortions between the top and bottom of the Department. I actually have a number of solutions as a package to recommend, but they are drastic. We need an entire philosophy change when it comes to how we pay these people to serve the public. We need to pay them better to do the job, and cut out the nonsense that has become synonymous with EMS/Fire operations and has much less to do with doing the job and more to do with a lifestyle. If we get rid of destructive and unproductive scheduling, we can afford to properly raise straight-time wages to pay people to have a good life and still serve the public.

Ok, I have many more organized ways I could say all of this, and I am leaving stuff out. I don't normally give you so much on just a pure off-the-cuff rant, but there it is. **These radical ideas are not BOCC-endorsed and should not be attributed to them**, at least not yet, but I have made them aware of some of these issues and recommendations and the decisions will be theirs in the upcoming several months. I strongly advise against the status quo, it is a continual exercise in reactionary management and fighting. Throwing more money at the problem without a restructure will only continue to increase the disparity and recruitment issues we're seeing. We'd be better off letting a private entity manage than continuing to do that. Citrus County's subsidy they balked out was less than half of what we have to subsidize EMS, and they are 3-4 times our size. But I think we can avoid privatization if we take existing resources and rebalance and restructure. I tend to think the ultimate cost of doing so won't be much different than what we're doing now, it will just be a better employment of resources.

Jared

On Oct 1, 2021, at 3:56 PM, Terry Witt <tuu105@yahoo.com> wrote:

How long would it take you to gather the cost of total overtime for the EMS in 2020 and 2021? Total fiscal years of course.

Thanks,
Terry Witt