

**Report and recommendations from the Public Safety Committee on the use of off-duty
Montgomery County Police officers to enhance Village safety**

Public Safety Committee members

Cheryl Tyler, Chair

Melanie White

Bobby Pestronk

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Introduction

At the May 2024 meeting of the Village of Friendship Heights Council the Public Safety Committee was asked to consider and make a recommendation to the Village Council about the use of, and costs for, off-duty Montgomery County Police Officers (OMCPO). If continued, an optimum number of officers and the cost for those officers could be less than, equal to, or more than the present number deployed.

This report responds to that request.

Among other issues, this analysis explores how best to determine an optimum number of officers, how they might be deployed, and a basis for the costs associated with the continued use of those officers.

The Village Council has already adopted a FY 2025 budget which included \$175,000 for the officers and their supervision. The Committee appreciates the continuing interest of Council members in methods to determine the optimum budget for, and deployment of, officers.

After another year's experience and the data from it, and assuming the full budget for the officers is not utilized in FY 25 and that Council still wishes to employ an outside consultant to assist the Village, the Council may wish to "roll over" unspent funds in this line item to employ a consultant to assist the Council with efforts to determine optimum cost and deployment.

Background and summary

The Village Council established a Public Safety Committee in May 2023. Mayor White recommended, and the Council appointed, Council member Tyler as Chair along with Council Chair Pestronk and Mayor White.

To assess public safety within the Village and starting in the Fall of 2023, Chair Tyler initiated a series of workshops and public meetings to learn more about how those who live and/or work in the Village perceived their security, the value of officers, and what thoughts they might share. Separate gatherings were held with Village business owners, Village building managers, and residents of the Village.

Much was learned at these meetings which influenced the deployment of officers.

The Village Council's adopted budget for FY 25, the current fiscal year which began July 1, 2024 and ends June 30, 2025, includes a line item of \$175,000 for the officers and their supervision as well as a budget surplus.

The FY 2025 line item was recommended to the Village Council by the Village's Finance Committee after considerable discussion at several earlier meetings. The line item was adopted unanimously by the Village Council in May. Funds are therefore available to support the deployment of officers in the current fiscal years.

Some Council members, uncertain about the current police agreement, believe it was begun precipitously by the previous Council in response to several incidents: repeated break-ins to contractor vehicles parked on Village streets and thefts of equipment; a mugging of a senior female resident in front of 4620 North Park; an armed robbery of a postal worker outside The Willoughby; an assault of concierge staff inside The Elizabeth; and an ATM theft at a Village business. These Council members consider the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Montgomery Police Captain Jason Cokinos an expensive reaction, which according to them has now become a recurring line item in the Village budget without basis.

The Public Safety Committee finds that with its oversight the officers provide an important service to the Village. Officers have been responsive, improve the quality of life for many residents, and are deeply valued by many business owners and managers within the Village. There is more to learn about how these officers can be used even more effectively. Contrasts and comparisons with neighboring jurisdictions are not relevant. The Village's needs and circumstances differ, and our community is unique in many respects.

This report from the Public Safety Committee examines the following questions:

- Why have an off-duty police presence in the Village of Friendship Heights?
- What is the current arrangement for OMCPD?
- Is there an optimum number of officers to be deployed by the Village?
- What can the Village afford?
- Would a contract with a private security company provide the same type of security as OMCPD?
- Should the Village Manager recruit and supervise officers?
- Is it helpful to compare our experience with off-duty officers with the Town of Somerset's experience?
- Can the Montgomery County Police Department provide adequate "presence"?
- What traffic violations can continue to be prevented and corrected by our off-duty officers?
- Do we need more speed humps on other Village streets?

- Can off-duty police use their cars to patrol the Village?

Why have a police presence in the Village of Friendship Heights?

It is reasonable to consider a police presence in the Village of Friendship Heights for many reasons¹. Among them:

1. Enhanced public safety: Having dedicated police officers can improve the overall safety and security of the Village. Officers can respond more quickly to emergencies and actively deter crime through regular patrols.
2. Community policing: Police officers assigned to the Village can build stronger relationships with residents, fostering trust and cooperation. This can lead to better community engagement and more effective crime prevention.
3. Crime deterrence: A visible police presence serves as a deterrent to criminal activities such as mugging, theft, assaults, and vandalism. It also helps reduce incidents of traffic violations and improves pedestrian and road safety.
4. Emergency response: On-site police officers provide faster and more tailored responses to emergencies, whether they involve crimes, accidents, or natural disasters. This prompt response is crucial in saving lives and minimizing damage.
5. Local knowledge: Officers familiar with the Village better understand its specific needs and challenges. They address community issues more effectively than the typical County officer who has not spent as much time working in the Village.
6. Peace of mind: The presence of police officers enhances everyone's sense of security and well-being and makes the Village a more attractive place to live, work, and visit.
7. Specialized services: On-site officers offer specialized services, including community outreach initiatives tailored to the Village's unique population. They also provide an entrée to other County departments and agencies and to the OMCPD itself.
8. Reduced reliance on County Police: By having its own off-duty police, the Village is less reliant on the single County Police officer assigned to the very large geographic area of which the Village is a small and outlying section.
9. Property values: Enhanced safety and security can contribute to maintaining and potentially increasing property values within the Village.

¹ List sourced from Chat GPT on June 7, 2024, in response to the question "Why should the Village of Friendship Heights hire police officers?"

10. Quality of life: Overall, a consistent off-duty police presence contributes to a higher quality of life for residents by ensuring a safer, more orderly community.

These 10 reasons highlight the benefits of hiring off-duty police presence to enhance the safety, security, and well-being of those who live and/or work in the Village of Friendship Heights.

Characteristics of the Village of Friendship Heights

The Village of Friendship Heights is a special taxing district located in [Montgomery County Maryland](#). According to the [United States Census Bureau](#), the Village has a total area of 0.05503 square miles² or 34 acres. The 2020 Census recorded a population of 4,577 residents. This represents a 14.1% increase from the 2010 Census count.

The average household income in the Village is \$156,663 with a poverty rate of 11.52%. The median age in the Village is 47.9 years: 47.2 years for males, and 49.8 years for females.

The most recent American Community Survey, reports the racial composition in the Village as:

- White: 71.66%
- Asian: 13.63%
- Two or more races: 8.16%
- Black or African American: 3.99%
- Other races: 1.41%
- Native American: 1.16%
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander: 0%³

Crime in the Village of Friendship Heights

Crimes may be characterized by category: all crimes, violent, assault, robbery, homicide, rape, property, larceny, burglary, and motor crime. Based on the levels available for the Village from the FBI National Incident-Based Reporting System from 2012 through 2021, property, larceny, burglary, and motor crimes are the ones most reported.⁴

Friendship Heights has a lower rate of violent crime compared to the US average, at 19.8 versus 22.7 respectively. However, property crime is higher than the US average in the Village with a rate of 38.8 compared to 35.4 nationally. Despite the higher rate of property crime, the Village is still considered a safe place to live as both types of crime are lower than the national averages.⁵

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friendship_Heights_Village,_Maryland#cite_note-5

³ <https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/friendship-heights-village-md-population>

⁴ https://crimedata.io/maryland/friendship_heights_village, accessed 6/10/24

⁵ https://www.bestplaces.net/crime/city/maryland/friendship_heights_village

The Village borders the District of Columbia. Residents and non-residents have easy access to the Village using Metro bus and train service as well as motor vehicles traveling along busy roads, in particular River Road, Wisconsin Avenue, and Willard Avenue. The District experiences considerably more crime than the Village. Proximity to the transportation noted above enables crime in the Village and those perpetrating it to easily and quickly exit the Village.

Police activity in the Village for March 2023 through March 2024

Off-duty police officers have been active in the Village for just over one year. Detailed reporting on police activity was made available to the Council and public at the May 2024 Council meeting. The annual report from Captain Jason Cokinos, the supervisor for the Village's off-duty officers, and drawn from Montgomery County Police records for the period noted, records the following activities in the Village:

- Enforced attention to stop signs
- Monitored and enforced school bus stops.
- Calmed vehicle speed at fixed locations, such as on Willard Avenue.
- Initiated more than 800 traffic violation stops
- Assisted with parking enforcement 63 times by providing registration information.
- Handled 13 parking disputes, towed 17 vehicles.
- Handled 15 car accidents.
- Engaged with the community by providing crime prevention tips and other information to residents during foot patrol interactions and community events.
- Engaged with businesses by providing guidance and advice on problems and security concerns.
- Helped change flat tires; jump started resident vehicles (4 times).
- Took 21 police reports for businesses and residents, including 11 thefts from businesses (shoplifting), 7 thefts from auto (work vans), 1 fraud, 1 lost property, and 1 assault
- Towed 6 vehicles specifically for keeping construction crane areas clear (special circumstance).
- Patrolled and cleared the park under construction on North Park Avenue.
- Assisted Village staff when the crosswalk signs get damaged at intersections.
- Responded rapidly and arrested a carjacking suspect within the Village
- **Quick response to 142 police emergency calls within the Village:**
 - 14 911 disconnects
 - 11 thefts
 - 7 thefts from auto
 - 4 commercial alarms
 - 1 carjacking
 - 1 robbery
 - 3 assaults
 - 16 trespassing complaints
 - 9 assists with the fire department
 - 2 gas leaks
 - 1 lost property
 - 1 fraud
 - 4 assists to motorists
 - 2 threats
 - 1 suicide
 - 13 parking disputes
 - 1 burglary

- 9 welfare checks
- 4 mental health checks
- 1 vandalism incident
- 4 suspicious situations
- 4 missing persons
- 3 disorderly conduct incidents
- 9 interpersonal disputes
- 4 car collisions with injuries
- 11 car collisions without injury
- 2 assist another agency (crisis center for mental health evaluation; Metro Police chasing a suspect on foot towards the Village)

What is the current arrangement for OMCPD?

The present memorandum of understanding (MOU)

As authorized by the previous Council, the Village Manager signed a MOU with Captain Jason Cokinos of the Montgomery County Police Department which lists the scope of work for Captain Cokinos, a list of his responsibilities, and a monthly payment to Captain Cokinos of \$800 per month.

The cost for off-duty officers recruited for shift work within the Village is billed separately at the hourly rate for these officers. The Village pays those officers directly and provides a 1099 tax form to each officer for tax reporting purposes.

Time associated with “(A)ttendance at community events or meetings outside of council meetings...” is billed at the hourly rate” (assumed to be that of the officer attending). Any “specialty requests” are also billed separately at the hourly rate.

The current agreement provides only the Village Manager’s signature, a general scope of work, general billing information, and no other specifications.

The past use of off-duty officers

1. Initially, Off-duty officers were deployed 40 hours each week with eight-hour shifts, Monday through Friday, during the hours of 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.
2. Officers were free to determine how and where they would deploy during each shift.

What has been learned since oversight of the officers was assumed by the Public Safety Committee?

1. The relationship between the Village of Friendship Heights and the Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD) has been strengthened. Awareness of the safety needs within, and opportunities for, the Village has become increasingly visible to the MCPD.
 - a. An impression of the Village, held by some officers as an enclave of wealthy privileged people where no consistent police presence is necessary is eroding.

- b. As the MCPD considered expansion of its novel and pilot drone program to make more efficient use of its own patrol presence and deployment to other communities in Montgomery County, it became apparent that deployment of the drones within Bethesda would enable coverage of the Village of Friendship Heights.
 - c. MCPD conducted a vehicle speed study along Willard Avenue from Friendship Boulevard to the West entrance of Willard Avenue Neighborhood Park.
 - d. An evening walk-through safety study was conducted by MCPD to identify ways in which building managers in the Village might enhance the safety of their properties.
2. Response times to 911 calls originating in the Village or prompted by calls to the Village have been reduced during times of deployment because an officer is present in the Village.
3. The Village Quality of Life survey revealed the following:
 - a. Overwhelming support (Extremely Important + Very Important + Moderately Important) for the police patrol.
 - b. Open-ended comments relating to police presence or the need for it included: “Advocate for traffic calming services and enforcement of full stops at stop signs, non (sic) local traffic endangering pedestrians. I am sick and tired of people speeding through the neighborhood and running stop signs.”
 - c. In addition, of Policy Issue Interests expressed by respondents to the survey, “Perceived danger of pedestrian safety,” Speed bumps/traffic control” received overwhelming support.
 - d. Village residents report feeling safe residing in the Village. However, that feeling of safety diminishes when asked about “walking alone at night”.
4. The annual report prepared by Captain Cokinos and shared at the May 2024 Council meeting revealed the extent of work performed by off-duty officers working in the Village. It listed in detail the ways during the past year in which off-duty police officers have enhanced public safety in the Village through their interaction with Village residents and businesses, responses to calls, and protection of property.
5. Further, officers from the police forces of Montgomery County, Metro, and D.C. have attended meetings of both the Friendship Heights Business Alliance and the Village. From these meetings we know that business owners, Village building managers, and residents value the presence of Montgomery County Police officers. The Village’s easy access to the District of Columbia and Metro station along Wisconsin Avenue makes it possible to easily cross municipal jurisdictions and evade apprehension. As a semi-urban environment, the Village presents an attractive target for those who wish to break the law. Visible police presence may shift their attention elsewhere.
6. More recently some Village residents have begun to express their support for the police presence (and in a small number of cases, their reservations about it) in written correspondence and public comments to the Council.
7. As reflected in the minutes of the June 4, 2024, Village Community Advisory Committee meeting, conversations with and probes and surveys of residents in Village buildings revealed the following:

- a. Among residents aware of the off-duty officers in the Village, a majority of those surveyed are in favor of having a visible police presence in the Village while some others did not see a benefit. Reasons offered in support were street safety, monitoring of the crosswalks, speeding cars, and the sense that the Village has become less safe.
 - b. Increased patrols at night, especially in dark areas of the Village, and foot patrols replacing officers in their cars parked at the North Park Avenue sub-station in front of 5550 Friendship Boulevard were suggested.
 - c. Residents also suggested a missed opportunity to promote a program with positive impact and that the budget allocation for the program is a relatively small piece of the overall budget.
8. Village businesses along Wisconsin Avenue, particularly those at the north and south end of Wisconsin Avenue, experience shoplifting and other crimes of opportunity. GAP, Banana Republic, and the Marriott hotel are frequently struck during the hours when the retail stores are open and during the night.
 9. Managing unarmed private security company personnel presents its own set of problems, particularly with coverage and training.
 10. Village businesses are aware and supportive of the presence of off-duty officers. The relationship between officers and Village building and business managers has improved.
 11. Through the presence of off-duty officers in the Village and the attention of the Public Safety Committee, relationships with surrounding law enforcement agencies (Metro and the District of Columbia) have improved.

Current use of officers

As it has gained additional information, the Public Safety Committee has begun to better direct the deployment of off-duty police officers and police department resources.

1. Officers have new hours. They now work two days a week from noon to 8 p.m. and three days a week from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. These hours provide coverage for part of the afternoon and evening, as well as morning hours when pedestrians, commuters and shoppers are on the streets of the Village.
2. Officers are scheduled to patrol at times when County school buses pick up and drop off children on Friendship Boulevard.
3. Officers more frequently station themselves along Willard Avenue with lights flashing between the 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. period. These are the hours when drivers have been found most frequently to exceed the speed limit. Traffic noticeably slows with the officer's presence, improving pedestrian safety, particularly on either side of the intersection of North Park Avenue and Willard Avenue.
4. Officers stop occasionally at Village businesses to assess safety conditions and familiarize business managers and staff with their presence and how to reach them.
5. Officers attend regular meetings of the Public Safety Committee and with the Village Manager to evaluate deployment and performance.

6. Speed indicators and radar were deployed along Willard Avenue to monitor and slow traffic.
7. Drone response for the Village has been incorporated into that being designed for Bethesda.

Is there an optimum number of officers to be deployed by the Village?⁶

No “perfect” methodology exists to answer this question.⁷ Ultimately, the optimum number is a value-based informed decision by Council members about whether the deployment is desired, useful, and affordable. If so, the optimum number of officers deployed depends upon what the Council, residents, and other taxpayers wish the officers to do and how much the Council believes should be spent for the service.

However, different methodologies have been used to answer this question by others over time, typically by communities with from a dozen to thousands of officers.

Five are common.

1. Employ an officer-to-population ratio based on surveys of officers deployed by municipalities.
2. Consider the number of officers deployed by comparable municipalities
3. Examine workload, typically 911 calls
4. Use predetermined minimums based on existing contracts
5. Conduct a calls and context study, or performance-based approach⁸, to model the “right” supply for the prospective “demand”
6. Determine what one wants the officers to do, determine how many officers will be needed for this deployment, and prioritize desired activity.

Each of these methodologies is examined next.

⁶ To obtain information and data, members of the Public Safety Committee spoke with a manager of the District of Columbia Office of Audit which had recently conducted a study of their own about the costs, numbers and deployment of officers. In addition, Captain Cokinos was asked to produce a report generated by the MCPD based on data reported from the Village. The Maryland Municipal League, International City Managers Association (ICMA), the Police Executive Research Forum were also contacted. Web searches were conducted, as well. Conversations were held with police and management staff in surrounding municipalities which employ police officers.

⁷ This insight is derived from personal conversations with Maryland law enforcement officers and jurisdictional leaders in Oxford, La Plata, Berlin, Chevy Chase, Gaithersburg, Hampstead, Bowie, Greenbelt, College Park, Rockville and Capitol Heights, a review of the literature, and a conversation with staff in the Office of the Auditor in the District of Columbia.

⁸ See “Essentials for Leaders” A Performance-Based Approach to Police Staffing and Allocation, Wilson, Jeremy M., and Alexander Weiss. 2014, COPS Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice. Or see Wilson, Jeremy M., and Alexander Weiss. 2014. A Performance-Based Approach to Police Staffing and Allocation, Washington, D. C., US Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.

Officer to population ratios

Various ratios have been reported in the literature and in conversation with municipal officials.

As reported in Governing Magazine (www.governing.com, accessed 6-6-24), data in 2003 from a Bureau of Justice Standards study, yielded ratios of between 1.8 to 2.6 full-time officers per 1000 residents. The average was 2.5 officers per 1000 residents.

FBI.gov (<https://ucr.fbi.gov>topic>) arrived at a ratio of 2.4 officers per 1000 residents.

In recent conversation with the Police Chief of the Town of Chevy Chase, 1 officer per 1000 residents was suggested as a minimum.⁹

ICMA reports from a study population of communities from 8000 to 800,000 residents mean, minimum and maximum ratios of 201.2, 35.3 and 465.1 per 100,000 residents.

Defundpolice.org reports average ratios of officers per 1000 population in Maryland of 2.82 and nationally of 2.31

www.quora.com suggests an approximate ratio of 5 officers needed for 24/7/365 coverage using and a ratio of 1 officer per 1000 residents.

The Village presently contracts for less than one full-time officer.

Using the most conservative ratio of 1 officer per 1000 population, one might conclude that the Village of Friendship Heights with a population of 4600 residents should have at least 4.6 officers.

Number deployed in comparable communities

Using the calculator from the website defundpolice.org, the following information was obtained for Maryland communities of “similar” size:

Jurisdiction	Population	Officers	Civilians
Capitol Heights	4551	13	2
Cheverly	6482	10	2
District Heights	6015	7	1
Pokomoke City	4025	17	7
Chevy Chase Village	2073	10	6

⁹ June 17,2024, John Nesky.

Officer numbers reflect full-time equivalents accounting for supervisory and patrol coverage on a 24/7/365 basis with the need for vacation, holiday, and sick leave coverage. Civilian numbers reflect those needed for clerical and other office duties.

The Village of Friendship Heights contracts for approximately 1 officer for 8 hours a day, 5 days a week and a part-time supervisor/recruiter for those officers, far fewer than these other jurisdictions.

Optimization by workload

The Village has only begun to receive information about officer workload and a report of activity for the first “year” of deployment.

The sample size of workload and experience is small and limited at this time. To determine a more typical demand for services and the supply needed to meet that demand requires additional data. It is early in the Village’s experience to optimize officer presence using this methodology.

We do know that since deployment the number of “stop and grabs” at Village businesses closest to the DC boundary has declined.¹⁰

Use predetermined minimums

Predetermined minimums are typically based on contractual requirements negotiated over time between unions representing public safety employees and their employers. These agreements consider salaries, benefits, time off for personal use, and other benefits.

This methodology is inapplicable to the Village.

The Village’s current arrangement has no predetermined minimums based on contractual language or any other standard. No staffing shortages or extra officers due to scheduled or unscheduled time off are needed. No accounting for overtime is necessary. All deployed hours are presently direct-service hours.

Conduct a calls and context study

As noted above, data are presently limited. A larger jurisdiction, the District of Columbia, is presently completing such a study at a cost of \$300,000. With a current Village appropriation of \$175,000, an expenditure in the thousands of dollars for a similar study is imprudent in relation to the cost of the officers. The Public Safety Committee has produced this report instead saving the Village the cost of an outside study.

¹⁰ Personal conversations with Village businesses along Wisconsin Avenue conducted by Chairman Pestronk, June 19, 2024.

One take-away from examining this methodology is the need to pre-schedule only a portion of a deployed police presence for priority assignments. Some of these studies recommend that only 60% of an officer's time be pre-scheduled. The remaining 40% of an officer's time is left unscheduled so he or she is available to respond to the wide range of other activities which occur. One need only look at the activity list provided recently to Village Council to understand the types of calls to which our officers respond. However, presently, only one year's data are available.

Determine what we want the officers to do; determine how many officers will be needed for this deployment; prioritize desired activity within the current FY 2025 budget.

After one year of experience, we have answers to some of these questions.

The Village might consider:

- What have residents, building managers, and businesspeople told us?
- What is affordable?
- At what times of the day do most offenses occur in Friendship Heights?
- On what days of the week do these offenses occur?
- What are the appropriate days and times of the week for foot patrol in the Village?
- What activities or priorities should be established for officer deployment to enhance quality of Village life?
- Do we need more, fewer, or the present number of officers for coverage?

This is the most practical means to determine the optimum coverage and expense at the present time. Some answers are suggested by the recent reports to Council.

What should the off-duty officers be assigned to do?

A year's experience suggests the following scheduled activities:

1. Foot patrol along Village "internal" streets and Willard Avenue
2. Visual and stop-in presence at businesses on North Park Avenue, Willard Avenue, and The Hills Plaza.
3. Foot patrol along Wisconsin Avenue.
4. Visual and stop-in presence at Wisconsin Avenue businesses, including the Marriott hotel.
5. Presence at the Red House, particularly when the business opens.
6. Increased presence of officers in the "darker" times of day and during commute hours
7. Traffic calming along Willard Avenue throughout the day.
8. Deployment of speed indicator along Willard Avenue and monthly reports from it
9. Stop sign enforcement at Village intersections and stop signs.

10. Assistance to the Village's contracted security guard.
11. Presence during pick-up and drop-off times for school children.
12. Coordinating partnerships with and requests for other County agencies.
13. Presence at meetings with Council and Council Committees, when necessary.
14. Liaison with Village residents, businesses and building managers.
15. Liaison with surrounding law enforcement agencies: Metro and District of Columbia.
16. Patrols and response within Village parks.
17. Monitoring police radio frequencies for Village-related activity.
18. Unscheduled time to respond to emergency and non-emergency calls.
19. Recruitment and supervision of officers by a supervising officer including assuring completion of ethics and employment paperwork and training.
20. Assurance of deployment at times and locations specified and completion of Google forms to document activities during shifts.
21. Quarterly and annual reports to the Public Safety Committee and Village Council on deployment, activities, and response times.
22. Education and engagement and on-going training for residents, businesses, building managers and contractors

These activities should occupy 60% of the officers' time between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. The exact assignment of tasks during the three shifts of 8 a.m. to noon, noon to 4 p.m., and 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. should be left to the discretion of the Village Manager in consultation with the Chair of the Public Safety Committee. The remaining 40% of officer time should be left free of programmed activity to accommodate unscheduled response to emergent issues and calls

What can we afford?

The Village Council has presently appropriated \$175,000 in the FY 2025 budget for off-duty police officers. This agreement supports the management and scheduling of officers, officer-sourcing, data collection, and the reporting agreement with Captain Cokinos.

Funding is available for the fiscal year which began on July 1, 2024, based upon a unanimous budget recommendation from the Finance Committee, a motion to adopt that budget by the Chair of the Finance Committee at the May 2024 Council meeting, and unanimous adoption of the FY 25 budget by the Village Council at that meeting.

Future revenue can be increased by the Village Council to support desired services by increasing the tax levied by the Village. New development will also yield additional revenue.

Are there ways to affect our current costs?

Current costs are directly related to the number and hours of officers deployed. Deployment of fewer officers will result in lower costs for officers and their supervision. Maintaining the same number of officers will keep our total costs in line with the budgeted amount for FY 2025,

related to the hourly rates paid by Montgomery County under contract for its officers. Increasing the number of officers may increase our costs.¹¹

Other issues

1. Can a private security agency provide the same level of support as off-duty Montgomery County Police Officers?

Private security company staff have no law enforcement authority. Private security companies ultimately depend on the Montgomery County Police Department to respond to emergency and some non-emergency calls. They call 911 as do residents and businesses for response. As a result, response time increases over the time needed when a Montgomery County officer is present within the Village. Non-sworn officers are typically supplemental or complementary to sworn officers on a force rather than replacing them entirely.

2. Should the Village Manager recruit and supervise the off-duty officers? Is a MOU with Captain Cokinos beneficial?

No. Civilians should not be supervising sworn law enforcement officers due to liability concerns. Yes. The MOU with Captain Cokinos is beneficial.

Recruitment, training, and supervision are difficult even for communities with their own police staff and supervision. The Village Manager is in no position to take over Captain Cokinos' responsibilities under the MOU. Captain Cokinos enables the Village to deploy screened, community-oriented officers on all shifts with supervision and daily oversight and with excellent coordination with the Village Manager, the Chair of the Public Safety Committee and other Committee members.

3. Is it helpful to compare our experience with off-duty officers with the experience reported by the Town of Somerset?¹²

No.

Each jurisdiction has its own characteristics, needs, priorities, and demands.

Somerset is a small community of approximately 400 private homes with limited road access, limited access to public transportation, no major state or county roads, no businesses, a suburban-like environment and "little opportunity to take police action".¹³ The Town has

¹¹ The Village Manager and the Chair of the Public Safety Committee should discuss the present costs and arrangement for officer recruitment and supervision to determine whether other arrangements and costs are negotiable.

¹² Town of Somerset Public Safety Committee, Memorandum, October 23, 2023, Recommendations Regarding Town Police Program

¹³ Ibid, page 8.

maintained a police program for 16 years with limited goals and, apparently, little oversight from Town officials who are also unable to control the dates and times of deployment.¹⁴ The Village of Friendship Heights only has a little over a year's experience with officers.

Somerset has maintained a presence of one officer on duty for 1.8 hours a day during day and nighttime deployments with apparently little to do. Hours are spent parked at fixed locations, few citations are issued, officers are sometimes present in unmarked cars eliminating any possibility of visual deterrence, and they are of little assistance to other Village officials such as the school crossing guard.¹⁵

Unlike in the Town of Somerset, in their first year in our Village, off-duty officers have had considerable engagement within the Village and plenty to do.¹⁶

Unlike in the Town of Somerset which reports "hundreds" of complaints about their officers¹⁷, this has not been the experience in the Village. In contrast and as an example, one notes the experience of the owners of the Friendship Gourmet Market have experienced a life-changing positive interaction as a result of regular officer presence in the Village. Positive comments have also been received from other Village business owners, building managers, and residents.

Unlike in the Town of Somerset¹⁸, the Public Safety Committee and Chair Tyler receive regular reports about incidents within the Village. Chair Tyler also receives live updates of incidents occurring within the Village and rapid responses to questions directed at Captain Cokinos.

Similarly, and as noted above, the Villages of Chevy Chase with 10 full-time officers is not a useful reference point for comparison at this time for the Village of Friendship Heights.

4. Can the Montgomery County Police Department provide adequate "presence"?

The Village rests within the Montgomery County Police Department's Edward One sector. That sector's boundaries run roughly along Western Avenue from MacArthur Boulevard to Wisconsin Avenue, from Western Avenue up Wisconsin Avenue to Bradley Boulevard, west on Bradley Boulevard to River Road, out River Road to 495 and back out to MacArthur Boulevard. **Only one officer and vehicle are assigned to Edward One sector.** As a result, little time is available for foot or vehicle patrol within the Village. One Council member observed a quick drive through at 11 p.m. one evening as an officer drove up Willard Avenue, turned up Friendship Boulevard to North Park Avenue, and drove back down to Willard Avenue in less than a minute.

The Montgomery County Police Department currently has 200 vacant officer positions. Recent increases in staff budgets have not increased the size of force but only covered negotiated

¹⁴ Ibid, page 11.

¹⁵ Ibid, pages 16 and 21.

¹⁶ Ibid, page 8, and see the first annual report of officer engagement and activity in the Village

¹⁷ Ibid, page 17.

¹⁸ Ibid, page 28.

salaries and benefits for the current force. A cap on the number of employees has not been raised in a decade.

Taxpayers in the Village are NOT paying twice for coverage. While taxpayers in the Village provide revenue for Montgomery County which appropriates funds for the Montgomery County Police Department, the appropriation by the Village of Friendship Heights enables the Village to enhance police coverage for the Village, specifically.

The regular County force provides very limited coverage and extended response time. The Village Council’s budget, derived in part from the County, supports our specific coverage.

The Village’s substation for police at 4602 North Park Avenue encourages occasional police presence, but not patrolling or stationing. Police parked at 4602 North Park are not in a critical location to observe frequent crime and are typically inside the substation rather than “on the street”.

5. What traffic violations can continue to be prevented and corrected by our off-duty officers?

Speeding, stop sign violations, and failures to yield to pedestrians are frequent violations within the Village. Our officers have begun to address each of these issues.

While average speed on Willard Avenue does not exceed the posted speed limit¹⁹, speeding still occurs on Willard Avenue.²⁰ Police officers observe speeding in both directions and ticket speeders. Regular and consistent posting of officers along Willard Avenue will be helpful to slow speeds and protect pedestrians, as it has been to date.

In addition, drivers have been observed rolling through stop signs, failing to yield to pedestrians in crosswalks, and engaging in other dangerous situations for residents.²¹ These incidents are less frequent when an officer is posted at Village intersections.

6. Do we need more speed humps on Village streets?

The Public Safety Committee and Village Manager are exploring the costs for additional speed humps. When appropriate, recommendations from the Committee will be brought forward for Council consideration.

¹⁹ Montgomery County speed study, May 2024.

²⁰ Informal conversations with officers who have been posted on Willard Avenue.

²¹ Council members have heard testimony from each other and from residents about “near-misses” and the dangers children face when released from classes at 5500 Friendship Boulevard.

7. Can police cars “patrol” the Village?

Officers may use their patrol cars to drive from one location in the Village to another to post at different locations. They may park at a location to facilitate patrol. They are not asked to “rove” in their police cars throughout the Village in constant motion nor should they be.

8. If desired, when might funds be available to conduct a consultant’s study?

The Village Council’s FY 2025 budget has an adopted line item to support the costs of both off-duty officers and the officer to supervise, recruit, and train off-duty officers as well as provide regular liaison with Village officials. The line item included an amount to cover any anticipated increase in the hourly rate for OMCPD officers negotiated by Montgomery County during FY 2025.

At the present time only one year’s data are available to support the type of performance-based approach discussed above. Such a study is premature.

After another year’s data are collected to discover whether our first year’s data are consistent with a subsequent year, Village Council might consider using any difference between the amount budgeted for off-duty officers in FY 2025 and the actual amount expensed for the same fiscal year. Should funds remain available, that amount could be “rolled forward” to support the cost of an outside consultant for such a performance-based study without an effect on the next year’s line item.

Conclusions

1. Jurisdictions in Montgomery County offer a variety of public safety presences. Some neighboring jurisdictions rely on the Montgomery County Police Department. Some deploy their own staff officers. Some rely on other resources. One neighboring jurisdiction, the Town of Chevy Chase, half the Village’s size, employs 10 full-time officers. Another jurisdiction, the Town of Somerset, even smaller by population than the Town of Chevy Chase, utilized less than 1 full-time equivalent officer. The Town of Somerset discontinued their off-duty officer after a sixteen-year presence due to inadequate supervision, lack of activity, and considerable community dissatisfaction.
2. One Montgomery County officer and one patrol car for all of Edward Sector are insufficient to provide patrol and response within the Village. The substation within the Village is not sufficient incentive to attract useful patrol presence either on foot or in vehicle. Officers spend time inside the substation or parked alongside it with neither area especially useful to the Village.
3. Crime and police activity in the Village are well-documented after one year but insufficient data have been collected to generalize from them about optimum deployment or cost.
4. Another year’s data will be helpful to better generalize activity levels in relation to deployment.

5. Village residents feel safer earlier in the day than they do in the evenings
6. Conversations with deployed officers suggest the best times for deployment are between 8 a.m. and 8:30 p.m.
7. Village residents aware of the police presence are generally supportive of it.
8. Many residents are unaware of any police presence.
9. The Village should attempt to make more residents more aware of police presence. Residents' subjective feelings of safety might be enhanced without any additional cost.
10. Additional meetings with residents, businesses, and building managers may yield useful suggestions about ways to deploy officers and improve awareness of them.
11. Village staff and the previous Village Council provided scant oversight for the deployment of Montgomery County off-duty officers. No plan of action or deployment was developed.
12. Learn from the experience of the Town of Somerset: provide adequate oversight, obtain daily documentation and reports of activity. Assure adequate oversight by the Village Manager and the Chair of the Public Safety Committee through the contracting officer.
13. Montgomery County officers have been receptive and eager to receive direction and deployment management from Village staff and the Public Safety Committee
14. Access to Montgomery County Police Department resources and information has improved with the deployment of off-duty officers.
15. For FY 2025, off-duty officers can be deployed differently to increase their effectiveness: for example, through more frequent foot patrols, increased presence along Willard Avenue and at the intersection of Shoemaker Lane and North Park Avenues at times when classes at 5550 begin and end.
16. The Village can deploy officers at times and locations desired. Captain Cokinos prefers guidance from the Village. Officers are happy to be deployed as directed. The Village has begun to direct deployment with success.
17. The Village Council has appropriated \$175,000 in the FY 2025 budget for Montgomery County officers.
18. Flex the officers' time between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 8 p.m. and increase the number of days a week for the "late shift" deployment, 12 p.m. - 8 p.m. as the length of days shorten. Experiment with three and four day per week late-shift deployment.
19. Determine the deployments desired using the present budget appropriation for the current year and explore additional "best" uses in preparation for FY 26 budget discussions.
20. The amount of the management MOU with Captain Cokinos is directly related to the cost of the officers deployed. The current amount was set by the previous Village Council.
21. Revenue is not fixed for the Village. It can be increased. Currently, the Village has adopted the lowest statutory level of tax allowed by the Charter. The tax rate could be increased. Other sources of tax income such as from new development within the Village will provide additional revenue to support police, other operating requirements, or Village amenities.

22. The appropriation for off-duty officers has not impinged on the Village's ability to improve other safety-related aspects of Village infrastructure or other desired amenities as evidenced by adoption of the FY 2025 budget.
23. At the present time, standard, accepted methodologies such as officer-to-population ratios, number deployed by other jurisdictions, optimization by workload, predetermined minimums, or calls and context studies such as a performance-based approach are either inappropriate or premature. Some suggest the Village is presently understaffed.
24. Contrast and comparisons with the numbers of officers deployed by other jurisdictions suggests no consistent "optimum" number.
25. A single year's worth of activity data is insufficient to determine an optimum number of officers based on activity level.
26. The present Memorandum of Agreement with Captain Cokinos is insufficiently framed as a desirable legal document and should be redrafted.

Recommendations of the Public Safety Committee

1. Continue to experiment with officer deployment using the amount currently budgeted for FY 2025.
2. Seek to make more residents aware of officer deployment and their satisfaction with and suggestions for improving the program.
3. Increase foot patrol and reduce posting in patrol cars except when deployed to reduce speeding.
4. Increase "stop-ins" on a regular basis at businesses along Wisconsin and North Park Avenues.
5. Protect school bus pick up and drop off times.
6. Provide presence within Village Parks and near the Red House during construction and as the business opens.
7. Focus foot patrols on Wisconsin Avenue, North Park Avenue, South Park Avenue, and Willard Avenue.
8. Focus postings in patrol cars on Willard Avenue from The Hills Plaza to North Park Avenue to reduce speeding and cover busy intersections
9. Post patrol cars mid-Village at the intersection of Shoemaker Lane and North Park to cover afternoon classes and children attending classes in 5500 Friendship Boulevard and to lessen stop sign roll-throughs.
10. Patrol Wisconsin Avenue from Willard Avenue to Marriott Hotel during "late-shift" hours.
11. Formalize a two-year contract with Jason Cokinos signed by both Captain Cokinos and the Mayor to provide off-duty Montgomery County Police officers.
12. Increase foot patrol along all Village streets, Willard Avenue, and Wisconsin Avenue.
13. Provide direct oversight of the officers to prevent a situation similar to what occurred in the Town of Somerset.
14. Require daily reports from officers which can be compiled regularly by Captain Cokinos as the basis for activity reporting and officer oversight.

15. At a minimum, receive regular reports of officer activity from Captain Cokinos.
16. Continue the practice of using Captain Cokinos and other off-duty officers to serve as liaison between the Village officials and other County departments.
17. Continue the new practice of deploying the officers at times and locations responsive to priorities directed by the Chair of the Public Safety Committee in consultation with the Public Safety Committee, and the Village Manager based, in part, on input from residents of the Village, business owners and managers located within the Village, managers of residential buildings within the Village, Council members, and other data.
18. Use 60% or 24 total hours of the 40 hour week for assigned deployment of the type described above.
19. Forty percent of the officers' time, or 16 hours, should be left available for response to calls from Village staff, residents, building managers, Village businesses, and the Montgomery County Police Department.
20. Assure officers deployed in the Village have received equity training from the Montgomery County Police Department to best enable positive interaction with the diverse population in the Village.
21. Seek a deployment of officers who reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of community residents and business owners.
22. Should the Council wish to employ a consultant to assist with exploration of optimum cost and deployment, reallocate unspent FY 2025 funds to the FY 2026 budget for that purpose.