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## Sheriffs share facts with Fanning Springs City Council



**Fanning Springs City Councilman Tommy Darus (left) speaks with Levy County Sheriff Bobby McCallum (center) and Gilchrist County Sheriff Bobby Schultz. Darus previously had mentioned that he did not see what he felt was enough of a police presence in the City of Fanning Springs. The two sheriffs helped enlighten Darus and the other City Council members about reality versus what some individuals may think is real.**

**Story, Photos and Video By Jeff M. Hardison © Oct. 12, 2016 @ 11:07 p.m.**

**FANNING SPRINGS** -- "Just the facts, ma'am" is a phrase that entered popular lexicography as an actual catchphrase from *Dragnet* despite the line never being used on the show.

For television viewers old enough to remember one of the first metropolitan police-oriented TV shows, though, these seem like the words shared on occasion on *Dragnet*, when character Sgt. Joe Friday (actor Jack Webb) would be interviewing a female witness.

Two county sheriffs provided some facts to the Fanning Springs City Council Tuesday night (Oct. 11). And there was more than just the facts. They explained intent as well.

Levy County Sheriff Robert "Bobby" McCallum Jr. and Gilchrist County Sheriff Robert "Bobby" Schultz III addressed the Fanning Springs City Council on Tuesday night, during that governing body's regular monthly meeting.

City Council Member Thomas "Tommy" Darus III had told his fellow City Council members at a previous regular monthly meeting that he did not see what he considered to be enough of a police presence in the city limits.

The metropolitan leaders, who among other things, are the people responsible for determining the budget and the tax rate to fund that budget, learned several facts Tuesday night.

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**Sheriff Bobby McCallum reassures the City Council about the law enforcement force that is present, including some in unmarked cars.**

First, they may rest at ease in knowing their city is covered to the same level as the unincorporated areas of Levy and Gilchrist counties. And since this is a relatively densely populated area of the two counties, there are a relatively higher amount of calls for service there.

Hence, even though the City of Fanning Springs lacks its own police department, it still sees a presence of law enforcement beyond what the less populated areas of Levy County and Gilchrist County see.

Second, these municipal leaders can opt to pay the two counties' law enforcement agencies to obtain a level of municipal law enforcement coverage, however, that would exceed the typical unincorporated county coverage -- just like the City of Inglis does -- if they want to have that level of police protection within the city limits.



**Seen here are (from left) LCSO Lt. Jimmy Anderson, Sheriff Bobby McCallum, Lisa Darus (Councilman Tommy Darus' wife) Sheriff Bobby Schultz and Chief Deputy Jeff Manning.**

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Accompanying Sheriff McCallum was Levy County Sheriff's Office Lt. Jimmy Anderson, the commander of LCSO patrol deputies.

Accompanying Sheriff Schultz was GCSO Chief Deputy Jeff Manning, Capt. Sheryl Brown and Lt. Michelle Jones.



**Seen here are (from left) Lisa Darus (Councilman Tommy Darus' wife) Sheriff Bobby Schultz and GCSO Chief Deputy Jeff Manning, former Fanning Springs Mayor Cheryl Nekola, GCSO Lt. Michelle Jones and GCSO Capt. Sheryle Brown. Former Mayor Nekola spoke later in the meeting about the \$14,000 annual salary for Mayor Trip Lancaster, which started as the salary when Nekola was in office.**

Sheriff McCallum opened the dialogue.

Although Councilman Darus may not have noticed the LCSO cruisers, some units are unmarked.

Sheriff McCallum said that from Jan. 1 through Oct. 1, the LCSO had responded to calls in regard to 573 cases in Fanning Springs. These first response calls in that nine-month period ranged from domestic violence, to burglaries to drug arrests, he said.

When Sheriff McCallum happened to look at his computer-aided dispatch screen in his office on Tuesday morning, he saw three calls being answered at that minute in Fanning Springs.

“This is one of our busiest areas in the county,” Sheriff McCallum said, “in your incorporated limits.”

The complete time spent is not reflected by the first responses alone, he said. LCSO members of the Crime Scene Investigations group, Drug Task Force members and the Criminal Investigation Division staff members invest more hours as they seek to close cases, he said.

The sheriff said the people of Fanning Springs are “enjoying a pretty good deal from the LCSO.”

He charges just under \$300,000 a year via a contract with the City of Inglis for the LCSO to provide that city with a metropolitan level of service rather than the unincorporated county level of service.

If the City of Fanning Springs wants to contract the LCSO for a higher level of service, having a deputy in the city limits every minute of every day, then the sheriff said he is open to that. When Sheriff Schultz spoke to the Fanning Springs City Council, he told

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them the GCSO would accept payment for a higher level of service if the city wants that too.

Sheriff McCallum said Fanning Springs is important to him, as is all of Levy County, and he added that he knows Fanning Springs is important to Sheriff Schultz, just as all of Gilchrist County is to that sheriff.

McCallum mentioned that as a youngster, he was at the former Stuckey's location very often as he spent his youth next to the Suwannee River.

The sheriff said sometimes people don't think the law enforcement agents are working on drug enforcement, but it takes an investment of time to build cases that will stand the test of trial.

"You may recall," Sheriff McCallum said, "Mr. Hardison reported in his paper (*HardisonInk.com*) that we arrested 67 individuals. Only a few of those were from action in Fanning Springs. Those cases took 10 months to work."

He said the Fanning Springs leaders may see results from current investigations in the next few months.

If there is ever any concern or need, Sheriff McCallum said, please call him and he will do whatever he can to resolve any problem. He asked if there were any questions.

Councilman Darus asked if there is anything residents and visitors in Fanning Springs can do.

Sheriff McCallum said "If you see something, call us. Let us know.

"(Reporting) anything suspicious lets us get on top of it," Levy County Sheriff McCallum said, "before something bad maybe happens."



**Gilchrist County Sheriff Bobby Schultz tells the City Council to about how Fanning Springs is safer now than before he took office.**

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**Gilchrist County Sheriff Bobby Schultz asks the people of Fanning Springs to feel comfortable in calling the GCSO or the LCSO when they see something that appears suspicious. Sometime what appears to be a criminal venture turns out to provide information for an arrest later, or even right after the deputy looks into a call from a resident or visitor in the City of Fanning Springs.**

Gilchrist County Sheriff Schultz spoke next.

He said the GCSO responded to 15 calls in that county's part of Fanning Springs between Oct. 1 and Oct. 10.

Domestic violence, drug violations, and some burglaries are among the calls in 2016 that the GCSO responded to within the city limits of Fanning Springs.

When Sheriff Schultz took office, he said, people told him about areas of Gilchrist County where there was more law enforcement needed. Fanning Springs was one of those areas, he said.

The Criminal Investigation Interdiction Unit of the GCSO goes to "trouble spots," such as Fanning Springs, he said. Among the tools they use, is when a person commits a traffic violation, that provides a reasonable cause to check them, Schultz said.

The sheriff said that he made Fanning Springs one of the focal points for his deputies to get rid of the criminal element. He knows that mission is not complete, and the GCSO continues working on it.

Sheriff Schultz said his deputies and Sheriff McCallum's deputies have greatly reduced the drug trade in Fanning Springs since those two men took office.

One letter the sheriff received said that residents of the area for 45 years used to be afraid to let their children walk around in Fanning Springs. Now, they feel safe when their grandchildren visit them. This is the safest they feel Fanning Springs has been in 45 years, he said.

Sheriff Schultz said Florida Statutes require sheriffs' offices to maintain law enforcement in cities when those cities lack a police force.

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Therefore, he said, the people of the city of Fanning Springs will continue to see Gilchrist County and Levy County deputies in the city.

Sheriff Schultz said the burglary rings broken up by the GCSO in the past four years has been well-documented in *HardisonInk.com*.

“They’ve been arrested,” Sheriff Shultz said. “They’ve gone to prison. Drug houses have been taken down. They’ve gone to prison.”

The sheriff then answered the question from Darus, “What can citizens do?”

He echoed Sheriff McCallum’s advice.

“Not one person can take care of all the issues we have,” Sheriff Schultz said. “In Fanning Springs, it’s no different. We need you to continue helping us.

“At the Sheriff’s Office in Gilchrist County,” Sheriff Schultz continued, “we have ‘One Team. One Mission.’ Simply put, that is we are all working together for a common goal. Our goal for Fanning Springs is to make it the safest place possible to raise a family, have a business and to continue growing.”

The sheriff asked the people to keep calling. Let the GCSO decide what is illegal, he said.

“Don’t ever feel that you are bothering the Gilchrist County Sheriff’s Office or the Levy County Sheriff’s Office,” Sheriff Schultz said. “You pay tax money. Call us!”

Certainly there may be a call when there was nothing, but then again the call about that suspicious vehicle might pan out and lead to the arrest of a fugitive. Or it may curtail the would-be burglar’s plans when he or she sees the cruiser responding to the area.

“As Sheriff McCallum said,” Schultz said, “don’t let anything fester. If you had any problem with the Gilchrist County Sheriff’s Office, I am very accessible. Call me. There is nothing we can’t overcome if we work together. Absolutely nothing... If we work together.”

Among the final comments Sheriff Schultz shared was that last weekend, there were 15 law enforcement officers in the Gilchrist County part of Fanning Springs. Several cars were unmarked, he added.

Traffic stops in this venture, he continued, offered chances for those law enforcement officers to “Be professional, be courteous and be objective.”

Sheriff Schultz said that as long as he has breath going through his body, he will not allow drug pushers to take over Fanning Springs.

“We won’t ever give up,” Schultz said. “And I’m asking you not to give up.”

After the presentations, Fanning Springs Mayor Howell E. “Trip” Lancaster III said he appreciates the accessibility he has personally seen from both sheriffs and their command staff members.

Mayor Lancaster said he feels blessed to have both sheriffs watching over Fanning Springs, and he is grateful as well for Dixie County Sheriff Dewey Hatcher Sr., on the other side of the Suwannee River.

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**Fanning Springs Fire Chief Ron McQueen speaks highly of the two sheriffs and the deputies from Levy County and Gilchrist County.**

Fanning Springs Fire Chief Ron McQueen said the fire department works with “the troops on the ground” from the two sheriffs’ departments, perhaps more than any other department in the city of Fanning Springs.

Chief McQueen mentioned there are medical calls where a law enforcement officer is necessary as well.

McQueen said he knows the other day there were GCSO deputies who went on the Florida Greenway Trail to capture people with contraband.

Levy County deputies come by City Hall and the Fire Department, Chief McQueen said, and they check doors to make sure they are locked.

Chief McQueen said he knows Gilchrist County and Levy County deputies are in the area all the time.

“We appreciate the hard work they do,” Chief McQueen said. “We have never had any issues with the sheriffs or their deputies.”