



News Release

Alachua County Sheriff's Office

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Hearing Panel Releases Recommendations on Alachua County Sheriff's Office Law Enforcement Budget Appeal

During the fiscal year 2016 budget process, Sheriff Sadie Darnell submitted a certified budget request for law enforcement personnel services funding to the Alachua County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) in the amount of \$26,277,071. Subsequent to budget discussions, the BOCC adopted a law enforcement personnel services budget of \$25,340,946 totaling \$936,125 less than what was certified by Sheriff Darnell. Included in the BOCC's cuts was funding specific to the staffing for twelve (12) previously existing and fully-funded law enforcement positions assigned to the Juvenile Relations Bureau in the amount of \$856,406. The BOCC's decision to cut funding specific to these positions was arbitrary and capricious, which is the basis of the appeal.

On July 14, 2016, Sheriff Darnell and members of her staff provided testimony on behalf of this appeal to a hearing panel represented by staff members from the Office of Governor Rick Scott, Attorney General Pam Bondi, Chief Financial Officer Jeff Atwater, and Agriculture Commissioner Adam Putnam. Subsequent to that hearing, the BOCC convened a special meeting on July 21, 2016, where they voted 3-2 to offer a compromise settlement to the Sheriff in the amount of \$156,021, along with additional financial caveats and restrictions on the Alachua County Sheriff's Office moving forward.

This evening, the hearing panel released its recommendations regarding Sheriff Darnell's budget appeal. In that report, the panel found that the BOCC's actions with regard to the budget cuts for Law Enforcement Personnel Services was arbitrary and capricious. The panel further recommended that the Administrative Commission direct the County to allocate \$543,911 to the Sheriff's Law Enforcement Personnel Services budget. This amount represents the same dollar figure Sheriff Darnell offered to accept as a compromise to the budget appeal in her letter to BOCC Chair Robert Hutchinson in January.

The next hearing before the panel of cabinet aides is scheduled for Wednesday, July 27, 2016, at 9:00 AM at the Florida Capitol in Tallahassee. Sheriff Darnell is hopeful that the BOCC takes the recommendations of the hearing panel seriously so that we may reach a suitable compromise at the local level prior to the final hearing before Governor Scott and his Cabinet on August 2, 2016.

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