

Franklin

Franklin County sheriff proposes deputy to patrol unorganized territory



[DONNA PERRY](#), Staff Writer

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FARMINGTON — Sheriff Scott Nichols Sr. on Tuesday proposed creating a deputy position dedicated to patrolling the unorganized territory, paid for through the unorganized territory budget.

The deputy would provide additional protection and law enforcement presence to the people in northern Franklin County, Nichols said.

The proposed unorganized territory budget for Franklin County is \$1.28 million. If approved by commissioners and the state, it would go from July 1, 2017, to June 30, 2018. It represents an increase of \$122,709, which includes \$100,000 for the startup costs for a deputy and cruiser in the unorganized territory.

A public hearing on the proposal will be held at 6 p.m. Monday, Dec. 12, at the Eustis Community Building on Main Street in Eustis.

The municipal services that Franklin County provides to the residents of the unorganized territory in Franklin are charged only to the unorganized territory taxpayers in Franklin County. It is state agency services, like those of the Department of Education, that are paid by all the taxpayers in the unorganized territory of the state, according to Marcia McInnis, unorganized territory fiscal administrator on Wednesday.

The 2018-19 budget for the new position would be about \$69,000, Nichols said.

Nichols told commissioners Tuesday that having a deputy dedicated to patrol the unorganized territory would reduce response times to calls in remote locations and provide proactive patrol in areas where people live seasonally and year-round.

An increased presence in these areas would reduce property crime, which sometimes goes unreported by the homeowner because it occurred at a camp, he said.

“It would also increase the chance of solving those burglaries by finding them before the homeowner,” he said.

There were 282 calls for service in the unorganized territory in the past year, he said.

The Sheriff's Office shares the north and south zones of the county with Maine State Police Troop C.

There are three deputies who cover the county zone and one trooper to cover the state police zone, Nichols said.

Franklin County encompasses Jay to Coburn Gore at the Canadian border.

Somerset County has a deputy dedicated to the unorganized territory and it is working out well, he said.

Franklin County deputies are patrolling their designated areas and assisting other agencies when asked.

“We've been showing people we are out there, but still you have to be where the calls are coming in,” he said.

Nichols said he is always looking for ways to provide a service without taking away from taxpayers.

There are nine patrol deputies.

Commissioner Gary McGrane of Jay said he personally did not want to add a new deputy position to the budget. He said there should be more coverage in the southern part of the county. The general public has not made a public outcry, only the sheriff, he said.

McGrane said he saw it as an opportunity for the sheriff to increase the number of deputies and expand the budget.

Nichols said he is only proposing adding one deputy to patrol the unorganized territory.

District Attorney Andrew Robinson said he favored anything the county could do to shorten response time in domestic violence calls to 911 because those calls are often made as a situation escalates.

Commission Chairman Clyde Barker of Strong said he favored the position.

Commissioner Charles Webster of Farmington called for the public hearing to be held in northern Franklin County to hear from the people who are affected by the proposal. He also wants to know the tax impact.

NOTE: The story has been modified to reflect the correct way the budgets are paid for by the unorganized taxpayers. It was a reporter error.

dperry@sunmediagroup.net

