

# BAILOUT

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Since the beginning of time, people have been looking for better and more innovative ways to save time and money. Some have succeeded while others have failed.

We at the Joplin Police Department feel that we have been one of the few that have succeeded. Our innovative idea was to privatize our City Jail. In doing so, we have increased officer availability and have formed a better partnership with the community.

Why did we turn to our jail to help save time and money? The answer is simple. The most time consuming duty the officers and dispatchers did on a day to day basis, was jail duty. The officers conducted a jail check every thirty minutes, transported food from the hospital to the jail, fed the inmates, watched over the cleaning company while they cleaned, and both the officers and dispatchers booked inmates from start to finish. The dispatchers also monitored the jail by closed circuit television cameras, located in the communications center. However, on a busy day, a prisoner committed suicide and it went undetected until the next jail check.

A department analysis was conducted to see which division within the department could be operated more proficiently, without compromising services to the community. The Jail was the division most in need of improvement. We considered many different methods to achieve our goal, such as: leasing out the jail, closing our jail and sending our prisoners to the county jail, or setting more court dates instead of arresting offenders of lesser charges. However, none

of these methods turned out to be feasible.

Finally in March 1994, a contract for privatizing the jail was agreed upon between Security Unlimited and the City of Joplin. The security company would provide our jail with one guard 24 hours a day. Training was conducted and Security Unlimited took over. Operations ran smoothly, however, officers were still having to provide back-up for jailers, transport meals, and transport prisoners for medical reasons. We were not saving the time we had expected and we did not have the funds to hire more staffing.

Our solution to the problem came in May of 1994. The Jackson County Jail was over crowded and was looking for other jails to house some of their inmates; A contract was signed, and within thirty days we received our first Jackson County inmate. The revenue generated has enabled us to fully staff the jail, completely freeing all officers and dispatchers from jail duties. Due to the success of our interagency agreement, the City of St. Louis approached us seeking a similar agreement.

Since **Bailout**, there have been a decreased number of calls for service for the jail, arrests have more than doubled over 1992 and 1993, and officers have been more involved with the community and community oriented projects.

We feel that by these improvements, we have better enhanced the community by freeing the officers to participate in community related activities, as well as saving the City of Joplin and taxpayers money.

# BAILOUT

"I'm sorry, but due to staffing shortages the police department will no longer provide that service." How many times have police agencies had to reduce or eliminate services to our customers because we don't have adequate personnel resources? As calls for service increase without a corresponding increase in staffing, police agencies become slaves to 911. Not only does response time to emergencies fall below an acceptable level because of this problem, but it also precludes the establishment of community oriented policing initiatives.

Calls for police service in Joplin increased from 82,000 in 1989, to 112,000 in 1994 (See Graph #1). Physical arrests increased from 3,000 to 11,000 (See Graph #2) during the same period.

There has been no increase in the sixty-two sworn personnel during that time, resulting in a tremendous drain on officers' time previously spent on crime prevention and patrol.

When David Niebur was appointed Chief of Police in 1992, police dispatchers were serving double duty as jailers. Because of budget cuts in 1987, the City had eliminated jailers and assigned their duties to dispatchers, who were physically located one floor below the jail. This decision had disastrous effects.

Police officers, previously allowed to transport their prisoners to the jail and leave, now had to wait until a dispatcher was free to come to the jail and also had to assist the dispatcher in

booking the prisoner in. This doubled the time an officer was off the street because of an arrest. It also resulted in the communications center staff being cut each time an arrest was made. This jeopardized radio communications and emergency calls for service. An analysis showed that police officers were off the street almost an hour each time they arrested someone. Most of that time was spent at the jail.

Additionally, a street officer was required to make a jail check every thirty minutes, and also officers delivered meals and fed inmates three times a day. While cleaning of the jail was performed by a private contractor, an officer had to be present during the entire operation.

The jail was monitored by closed circuit television cameras which were monitored in the communications center. As a result, a prisoner who hanged himself in the jail went undetected because the dispatchers were too busy answering and dispatching emergency calls. The City was forced to pay a large monetary settlement to the prisoner's family and the police department received considerable criticism from the news media.

When the City purchased a new \$2 million "state of the art" communication system in 1993, Chief Neibur and the Command Staff convinced city leaders that it was not good management to use dispatchers as jailers, for a number of reasons. City leaders agreed, but insisted that the police department find a more cost effective way to replace the dispatchers than by hiring jailers. An analysis revealed that we had a difficult task at hand without using police officers or hiring new employees.

### **Privatization as an Option**

While the department looked at several options, such as leasing out the jail, closing the jail and transporting our prisoners to the county jail, located eighteen miles away, or reducing the types of violations we were physically arresting persons for and cite them in lieu of arrest, none appeared to be very viable to the department or community, until we considered privatization. Though numerous cities in Missouri had privatized services such as garbage disposal and utilities, none, to our knowledge, had ever turned to the private sector for law enforcement services, so this would be a unique step. A study of the privatization of federal correctional institutions conducted by the United States Justice Department was easily obtained and reviewed by the Chief of Police and provided input into our final decisionmaking.

Request for Proposals were published and a number of private security companies submitted bids seeking to operate the jail. It was obvious early on in this process however, that only one of them had experience in running a jail, and that was at a federal correctional center with long term prisoners. While the department was determined to free-up officers to perform more crime prevention functions and to become more involved with the community, other than responding to 911 calls, we were just as determined to have a very high quality jail management program.

There were still some city officials who were not convinced that privatization was the answer to our problem, even though the City Council had authorized a study of it. So, it was more than seven months after the bids were received that a contract was agreed upon. Initially it provided

for one guard, around the clock, at a cost of \$ 112,000. The police department has veto power over any proposed or current employees and conducts background checks on them.. Training is mandatory with content provided by the department.

This initial proposal worked well, as far as it was supposed to, but there were still time constraint problems for police officers. They still transported prisoner meals three times a day; still had to provide backup for jailers; and still had to transport prisoners to hospitals for medical reasons. The time savings was far less than anticipated. The obvious solution was more private staffing for the jail, but there were not funds allocated for that.

**Another community's quandary provides Joplin with needed resources for community policing while promoting interagency cooperation and problem solving.**

At about the same time the police department was trying to figure out how we could afford more staffing for the jail, we learned that the Jackson County, Missouri Jail at Kansas City, was severely overcrowded and was under a court-ordered mandate to decrease their jail population immediately. They were facing \$5,000 a day in fines if they could not comply. Kansas City is located approximately 120 miles North of Joplin.

Within thirty days of learning of Jackson County's problem, we had negotiated a contract with them to house up to 16 inmates at a cost of \$45 a day per inmate. Our agreement included a clause which requires them to furnish us a complete criminal history on each prisoner. We will not accept any prisoner serving time for violent crimes and have the right to return any prisoner

within 24 hours should they cause trouble in jail. All medical costs for the prisoners are assumed by Jackson County.

Within a few months, the department realized more than \$100,000 from this agreement. The additional revenue generated by the department's entrepreneurship has solved many problems. Officers are no longer required to remain at the jail while their arrestee is booked in. We now are able to afford delivery of inmate meals from one of the city's hospitals. When medical problems necessitate transfer to a hospital, a guard is available to transport and secure the inmate. Officers are no longer pulled from the street to standby while the jail is cleaned.

### **The Big Payoff**

How has our agreement with Jackson County benefited efforts to strengthen police relations and promotion of community participation? Our officers are now able to spend considerably more time in the prevention of crime through community interaction. They have been able to make dozens of presentations to neighborhood and school groups, conduct weekly tours of police and jail facilities; conduct business and residence security surveys which we previously did not have time to do.

An **Open Garage Door Program** was implemented in December 1994. This initiative is designed to make the community more aware of the hazards of leaving one's garage door open.

When an officer observes an open garage door, they report the address to the Police Sentinel Coordinator. A letter is then sent to the property owner advising them of the hazard and asking their help in reducing the chance of a crime occurring. In just four months, the program has received overwhelming response by the officers, with more than 250 open garage doors being reported.

We were also able to expand our award winning **Sentinel Program** (Citizens on Patrol) as a direct result of **Bailout** Police Officers now have time to train volunteers to participate in the Sentinel Program. The training includes orientations, policy and procedure issues, assignments and duties, reports writing, communications, traffic control, crime prevention, weapon identification, motorist assists, accident investigation, evidence handling; basic criminal law and many other areas of law enforcement. The training is eight weeks in length and provides an excellent opportunity for citizen and officer interaction.

Another result of **Bailout** has been the establishment of ninety-eight Neighborhood Watch programs. The initial meeting of any Neighborhood Watch Program is conducted by police officers and the Sentinel Coordinator. Citizens are given written materials to take home and then receive instructions from officers on home and personal safety. There are follow-up visits by the officers and the Coordinator on a semimonthly basis. **Bailout** has provided the time for officers to be involved with these groups and funds for materials. Neither were available previously.

Finally, the most important benefit of **Bailout** has been improved response time for both emergency and non emergency calls. When officers were required to book their own prisoners and provide other jail services, our response time to emergency calls had risen to more than nine minutes! Experts say that the desired response time to an emergency is three minutes, and that the maximum should be no more than five minutes. We were approaching nearly double the maximum before we found a solution in **Bailout**. While we have not yet reached the five minute average response time, we are getting close. We are now providing a better quality service to our customers and yet not satisfied that we have done all we can to improve.

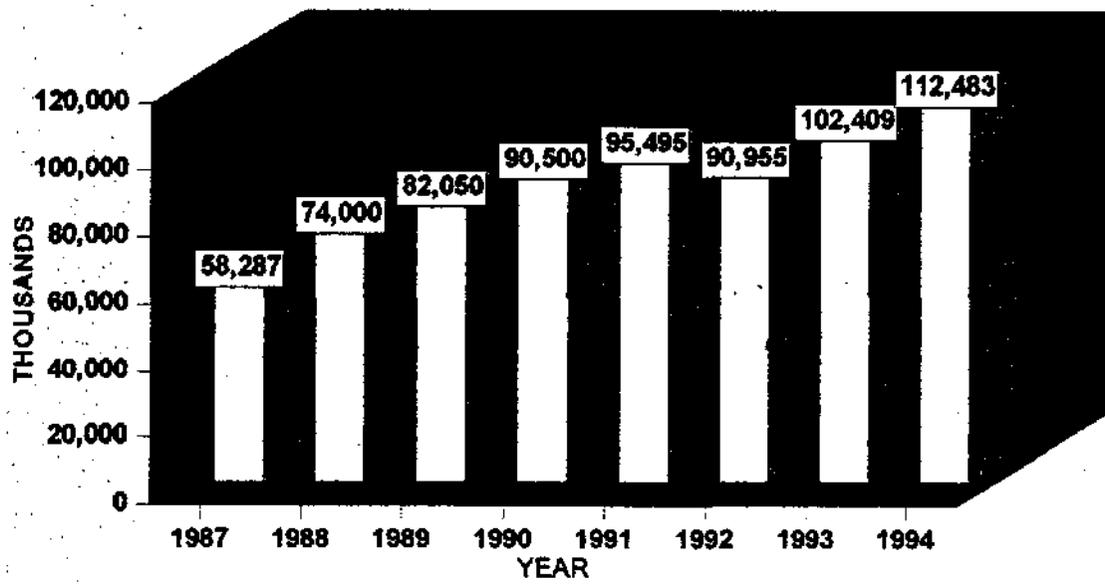
The success of our interagency agreement has become known throughout the State of Missouri. In March of 1995, the City of St. Louis approached us to seek a similar agreement. Because of an increasing crime rate, the City of St. Louis Jail is also overcrowded. Within days of being contacted, we reached an agreement to house their inmates as well. The money earned in this additional contract will probably allow us to hire additional police officers for street duty.

Another measure of the success of **Bailout** was recently received. The Jail Review Committee of Jasper County recently commended the City of Joplin for taking proactive steps by adding additional staff in the jail and building a exercise area for its inmates. None of this would have been possible without **Bailout**.

GRAPH#1

# CALLS FOR SERVICE

8 YEAR COMPARISON



GRAPH #2

# TOTAL ARREST

10 YEAR COMPARISON

