



**Agenda  
Public Workshop  
of the Mary Esther City Council  
March 25, 2026 - 6:00 PM**

195 Christobal Road – North, Mary Esther, FL 32569

- 1. CALL TO ORDER**
- 2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**
- 3. ROLL CALL**
- 4. PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION**
  - 4.1. Wastewater Force Main Project Update**
  - 4.2. Law Enforcement Services Review**
- 5. CLOSING REMARKS**
- 6. OTHER COMMENTS**
- 7. ADJOURN**

**\*\*\*\*\* PLEASE TURN OFF OR SILENCE ALL CELL PHONES \*\*\*\*\***

## WATCHING AND PARTICIPATION

To watch the meetings virtually, citizens may log onto the city's website ([www.cityofmaryesther.com](http://www.cityofmaryesther.com)), click the "Public Meetings" section, and select the meeting they would like to watch.

Any citizen who would like to comment on non-agenda items must submit a service request through the city's website, call customer service at (850) 243-3566, or fill out a form at city hall. A form must be completed by 12 pm one week before the day of the meeting. Filling out a form does not guarantee you will be added to the agenda. If a citizen opts to participate virtually, an email will be sent with the Zoom registration link.

### **NOTES:**

- 1) *Adjournment with continuation on the following day at 6:00 PM may be called if the meeting proceeds past 10 PM.*
- 2) *The City does not keep verbatim minutes as a matter of record. If a person decides to appeal any decision made by the Mary Esther City Council with respect to any matter considered at this meeting, he or she will need a record of the proceedings, and that, for such purpose, he or she may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based. See Florida Statute 286.0105*
- 3) *Any invocation that may be offered before the official start of the Council meeting shall be the voluntary offering of a private citizen, to and for the benefit of the Council. The views or beliefs expressed by the invocation speaker have not been previously reviewed or approved by the Council, and the Council is not allowed by law to endorse the religious beliefs or views of this or any other speaker.*

# AGENDA ITEM

Agenda Item 4.1.

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**TO:** Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

**FROM:** Jared Cobb, City Manager

**DATE:** March 25, 2026

**SUBJECT:** Wastewater Force Main Project Update

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## **BACKGROUND:**

The City has been under a Consent Order from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) since November 2022, requiring corrective action on its aging wastewater treatment facility. Following the March 2023 Council Workshop, Council directed staff to pursue a force main connection to the Okaloosa County wastewater treatment facility as the preferred long-term solution, contingent on comparable costs. Staff subsequently explored a partnership with Hurlburt Field, which was ultimately withdrawn. Okaloosa County Water & Sewer (OCWS) has since prepared a revised cost estimate for a Mary Esther standalone project, and staff has identified a viable funding path through a combination of grants, potential County participation, property sale proceeds, and utility cash or SRF loan financing. This workshop provides Council with updated cost and funding information to determine whether to continue with the force main direction.

## **DISCUSSION:**

The attached report and presentation provide a full comparison of both alternatives, including updated capital cost estimates, a funding plan, and a preliminary operating cost analysis. Both alternatives may require some level of debt financing; however, the force main is better positioned from a funding standpoint, with a lower capital cost and access to funding sources that would not be available for rehabilitation. FDEP is awaiting the City's decision on a long-term path forward, and it is important that meaningful progress toward a decision be made by the April meeting.

No formal action may be taken at a workshop. Staff is requesting Council feedback and direction so that an action item can be prepared for additional discussion and consideration at the April regular meeting. Okaloosa County Water & Sewer leadership will be present to address Council questions.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

There is no direct financial impact from this workshop discussion. Financial commitments associated with the selected alternative will be addressed through formal action at a future regular meeting.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends that Council review the attached materials, receive the presentation from staff, and provide direction on the preferred path forward.

**ATTACHMENT(S):**

1. Exhibit A – Wastewater Force Main Workshop Report
2. Exhibit B – Wastewater Force Main Workshop Presentation

# Wastewater Force Main Project Update

*Force Main to Okaloosa County Wastewater Treatment Facility*

City of Mary Esther, Florida

Prepared for City Council Workshop | March 25, 2026

**Purpose:** This report provides the City Council with an update on the Wastewater Force Main project, including revised capital cost estimates, a comparison of both alternatives (force main to Okaloosa County or rehabilitation of the existing plant), a preliminary comparison of operational costs, and an overview of funding sources. The goal is to support informed discussion at the workshop and help Council identify a direction for staff to pursue. If Council desires, staff will bring a formal resolution to the April regular Council meeting. FDEP is awaiting the City’s decision on a long-term path forward, and it is important that significant progress toward a decision be made by the April meeting.

## Executive Summary

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The City has been under a Consent Order from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) since November 2022, with an Amended Consent Order issued in October 2023, requiring corrective action on its aging wastewater treatment facility. Two alternatives exist: (1) construct a 7-mile force main to the Okaloosa County wastewater treatment facility, or (2) rehabilitate the existing plant.

Since the March 2023 Council Workshop, staff has continued to explore the force main option — including a potential partnership with Hurlburt Field that was ultimately withdrawn. Okaloosa County Water & Sewer (OCWS) has since provided updated cost estimates for a Mary Esther standalone project. Based on this work, staff is presenting the following key findings:

### Key findings:

- **Force main capital cost: \$14 million.** Staff has identified a viable funding path through a combination of grants, property sale proceeds, potential County support, and utility cash or SRF loan financing. The \$1 million state legislative appropriation has already been awarded.
- **Rehabilitation capital cost: ~\$15.42 million in 2026 dollars** (escalated from the 2019 Mott MacDonald estimate at 6% annually to 2022 by Barge, then at 4% annually from 2022 to 2026). This estimate includes an effluent pump station upgrade and new force main, though the full scope of effluent infrastructure needs is not fully defined. Additionally, several funding sources are specific to the force main option, resulting in a larger financing requirement for rehabilitation.

- **Estimated operating cost increase with force main: ~\$300,000–\$350,000/year.** However, rehabilitation would likely require more debt financing, and when the resulting debt service is factored in, the net annual cost difference narrows significantly.
- **With the force main, the City’s liability would be limited.** The City would be responsible only for the pump station and storage tank. Okaloosa County would handle the force main and all treatment. The sprayfield liability would be eliminated.

## Project Background

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### Consent Order and Regulatory Context

The City operates the Mary Esther wastewater treatment facility, which first came online in 1950 and has been modified several times. FDEP executed the initial Consent Order (OGC File No. 22-2083) on November 18, 2022, to resolve issues relating to the Mary Esther wastewater treatment plant, including nuisance conditions, unsatisfactory equipment, cracked and leaky infrastructure, and approximately 164,550 gallons in unauthorized sanitary sewer overflows between March 2019 and January 2021. An Amended Consent Order (OGC #22-2083B) was issued in October 2023 with updated requirements and timelines. The Consent Order acknowledges that the City may seek to decommission its plant by connecting to the treatment facilities of Okaloosa County as an alternative to plant repairs. FDEP is currently awaiting the City’s decision on which path to pursue.

### Barge Design Solutions Engineering Studies

The City retained Barge Design Solutions, Inc. to evaluate wastewater disposal options. The Preliminary Engineering Study, completed in December 2022, examined four alternative routes for pumping untreated wastewater to Okaloosa County or Fort Walton Beach, and compared these to the rehabilitation costs previously established in the 2019 Mott MacDonald Wastewater Rehabilitation Facilities Plan. Based on the study, the City selected the force main to the Okaloosa County wastewater treatment facility as the preferred long-term solution.

### Council Workshop – March 6, 2023

Following completion of the Barge study, the City Council held a workshop on March 6, 2023 to discuss wastewater disposal alternatives. The two viable options presented were: (1) sending sewage to Okaloosa County through a force main, or (2) rehabilitating the existing plant. Discussion covered cost, existing equipment condition, hurricane risk, funding needs, utility reserves, spray field impacts, EPA requirements, and potential revenue sources. Council provided general direction for staff to continue exploring the force main option.

### Hurlburt Field Partnership – Explored and Withdrawn

Hurlburt Field expressed interest in connecting to the proposed force main. Barge completed a Technical Memorandum in May 2024 analyzing the combined scenario at an estimated \$29.4 million. However, after completing their own alternatives study, Hurlburt Field subsequently decided to invest in their own plant, leaving the City to evaluate whether to proceed independently or revert to rehabilitation.

**Current Project Scope – Mary Esther Standalone**

With Hurlburt Field’s withdrawal, Okaloosa County Water & Sewer prepared a revised cost estimate for Mary Esther only. The scope includes a 7-mile, 16-inch force main from the Mary Esther wastewater treatment facility to the Okaloosa County wastewater treatment facility, constructed primarily by OCWS in-house crews. The 16-inch pipe was sized by Barge to provide design flows of 1,377 GPM at 73 PSI, eliminating the need for a large ground storage tank.

Upon completion, the City’s wastewater infrastructure would be reduced to an approximately 500,000-gallon storage tank and a new pump station. The City would be responsible for operating and maintaining the pump station and storage tank, including electricity. The City would not be responsible for the force main to Okaloosa County or any treatment infrastructure – that would be Okaloosa County’s responsibility, covered by treatment fees. The existing plant would be decommissioned and the sprayfield liability eliminated.

**Capital Cost Estimates**

**Option A: Force Main to Okaloosa County**

Line Item	Estimated Cost
Engineering, Environmental & Soft Costs	\$1,500,000
Pump Station & Ground Storage Tank Modifications	\$2,800,000
7-Mile 16" Pipeline (Built by OCWS)	\$7,400,000
Contingency	\$2,300,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$14,000,000</b>

**Option B: Rehabilitation of Existing Plant**

The 2019 Mott MacDonald Wastewater Rehabilitation Facilities Plan estimated the capital cost for rehabilitating the existing plant at \$11,060,000. In their 2022 Preliminary Engineering Study, Barge Design Solutions escalated this figure to approximately \$13.18 million in 2022 dollars (at a 6% annual escalation rate). Applying a more conservative 4% annual escalation from 2022 to 2026 yields an estimated rehabilitation cost of approximately \$15.42 million in today’s dollars:

Item	Amount
Mott MacDonald Base Estimate (2019)	\$11,060,000
Barge Escalation to 2022 (6%/yr × 3 years)	\$13,180,000
Escalation to 2026 (4%/yr × 4 years = ×1.170)	\$15,420,000

The Mott MacDonald plan included an effluent pump station upgrade and new force main as part of this estimate. However, the full scope of effluent force main work that may ultimately be required is not fully defined in the 2019 plan, and any additional infrastructure needs would increase the rehabilitation cost beyond the figures shown above.

## Funding Sources

### Force Main Funding Plan

The funding gap is smaller than initially anticipated. While no funding source is guaranteed until formally executed, the sources below represent the most viable path available. The \$1 million state legislative appropriation has already been awarded.

Revenue Source	Amount
OLDCC Installation Readiness (IR) Grant – Noncompetitive	\$900,000
Legislative Appropriation (State) – Awarded	\$1,000,000
<i>Potential County Financial Participation</i>	<i>TBD</i>
WWTF Property Sale	\$1,500,000
Utility Cash / SRF Loan	<i>Balance</i>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$14,000,000</b>

With 2–3 additional OLDCC DCIP cycles and state appropriation opportunities ahead, staff believes the remaining capital funding can be secured.

### Rehabilitation Funding Considerations

Both alternatives may require some level of debt financing. However, if the City pursued the rehabilitation alternative, several funding sources identified above would not be available. The WWTF property sale proceeds (\$1.5M) would not be realized, as the existing plant site would remain in use. The OLDCC IR grant (\$900K) and state legislative appropriation (\$1M) may still be available, though it is unclear how rehabilitation would rank for the OLDCC DCIP.

This would leave a larger funding gap that the City would need to finance through debt, with corresponding annual debt service.

## Operational Cost Comparison

### Current Wastewater Treatment Costs

The FY 2026 Utilities Budget includes a \$740,000 Jacobs O&M contract split between Water and Sewer. The actual wastewater treatment plant costs approximately as follows:

Cost Component	Annual Cost
Jacobs Base Contract (WWTF Portion)	\$385,817
Electricity (WWTF)	\$57,000
Solids Disposal	\$20,000
Repairs & Maintenance	\$50,000
Sprayfield Lease	\$18,000
<b>TOTAL WASTEWATER PLANT O&amp;M</b>	<b>~\$530,817</b>

### Estimated Costs Under Force Main Option

OCWS has provided a conservative wholesale treatment rate of approximately \$4.30 per thousand gallons (80% of the County’s regular rate of \$5.37/1,000 gal). Based on the City’s current average daily flow of 0.464 MGD, the estimated annual treatment cost would be approximately \$728,000. The City would also be responsible for operating the pump station and storage tank (~\$100,000–\$150,000/year for electricity, labor, and maintenance). The force main itself would be OCWS’s responsibility, covered by treatment fees.

### Comparative Annual Cost Analysis

The estimated net annual operating cost increase under the force main option is approximately \$300,000–\$350,000 per year compared to current costs. However, under the rehabilitation alternative, the City would need to finance the funding gap through debt. The annual debt service on this gap would narrow the difference between the two options significantly.

The size of the rehabilitation funding gap — and the resulting debt service — will depend on which funding sources are ultimately secured. For reference, annual debt service on a typical SRF loan at 2% interest over 30 years is approximately \$44,650 per \$1,000,000 financed. Depending on the size of the gap, the resulting annual debt service could substantially narrow the operating cost difference between the two options.

	Force Main	Rehabilitation
Operating Cost Increase	~\$300–350K/yr	—
Debt Service on Funding Gap	—	Significant*
Sprayfield Line Liability	Eliminated	Remains (~6 mi)

## Important Considerations

- **Effluent infrastructure is not fully scoped.** The approximately 6 miles of aging effluent force main to the spray fields is only partially addressed by the rehabilitation cost estimate (pump station upgrade included, but not full line replacement). Inspection alone was quoted at approximately \$20 per linear foot (2022). The cost to rehabilitate or replace this pipeline would be in addition to the escalated plant rehabilitation figure.
- **Rehabilitation carries a significant funding gap.** Several funding sources in the force main plan are specific to that alternative. The rehabilitation option would require the City to finance a substantial portion of the project through debt, with associated annual debt service.
- **Reduced infrastructure responsibility with force main.** The City would be responsible only for the collection system, lift stations, one pump station, and the storage tank. OCWS would handle the force main and all treatment.
- **Consent Order compliance.** The force main would provide a definitive path to FDEP compliance rather than an ongoing maintenance cycle.
- **Reduced environmental risk scope.** Eliminating the treatment process from the City’s responsibility reduces the scope of environmental risk. While the pump station and storage tank would remain on the existing site and are still subject to storm damage, a pump station failure is a sewage backup issue rather than an untreated environmental discharge.

## Requested Council Direction

No formal action is required today. Staff is requesting general direction from Council on the following. FDEP is awaiting the City’s decision and expects to see meaningful progress toward a resolution. Staff recommends that Council work toward providing direction that would allow formal action at the April regular meeting.

1. Does Council wish to proceed with the Wastewater Force Main to Okaloosa County as the City’s long-term wastewater solution?
2. Is there any additional information Council wants or needs before taking formal action to proceed with either the wastewater force main or rehabilitation of the existing wastewater plant?

Okaloosa County Water & Sewer leadership will be present at the workshop to address Council questions.

## Reference Documents

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- Wastewater Rehabilitation Facilities Plan (Mott MacDonald, April 2019)
- WWTP Alternatives Preliminary Engineering Study (Barge Design Solutions, December 2022)
- Technical Memorandum: Wastewater Disposal in Conjunction with Hurlburt Field (Barge, May 2024)
- Consent Order – FDEP vs. City of Mary Esther (OGC 22-2083, November 2022)
- Amended Consent Order – FDEP vs. City of Mary Esther (OGC 22-2083B, October 2023)
- Okaloosa County Capital Cost Estimate (OCWS, January 2026)
- Wastewater Treatment Rate Correspondence (OCWS, February 2026)
- OCWS Preliminary Cost Estimate – 16" Force Main
- FY 2026 Adopted Budget – Utilities Fund
- Council Workshop Minutes – March 6, 2023
- Pipeline Route Map

# Wastewater Force Main Project Update

*Force Main to Okaloosa County Wastewater Treatment Facility*

City Council Workshop | March 25, 2026

# Why we're here

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The City is under FDEP Consent Orders (original November 2022, amended October 2023) requiring corrective action on its aging wastewater treatment facility. Two alternatives remain: build a force main to Okaloosa County, or rehabilitate the existing plant. This workshop reviews updated cost estimates and seeks Council direction.


<b>Project history</b>  From Barge study through Hurlburt withdrawal	<b>Cost estimates</b>  Both options: force main vs. rehab	<b>Funding &amp; debt</b>  Who pays? What's the gap?	<b>Operating costs</b>  Does the gap close with debt service?	<b>Council direction</b>  What action, if any, for April meeting?
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*No formal action is required today. Council direction will be brought back for formal action at a regular meeting.*

# Project timeline

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- Nov 2022** FDEP Consent Order executed
  - Dec 2022** Barge Preliminary Engineering Study completed
  - Mar 2023** City Council workshop — direction to explore force main
  - May 2024** Barge Tech Memo (joint Mary Esther + Hurlburt Field scenario)
  - Dec 2025** Hurlburt Field withdraws from partnership
  - Jan 2026** OCWS prepares revised Mary Esther-only cost estimate
  - Mar 2026** Workshop: Council direction on preferred alternative
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# Two options for Council

## Option A: Force main to Okaloosa County

**\$14,000,000**

2026 estimate, viable funding path

- Eliminates sprayfield line liability
- City maintains only pump station & tank
- OCWS handles force main & treatment
- Definitive Consent Order compliance
- Reduced scope of infrastructure at risk

## Option B: Rehabilitate existing plant

**\$15,420,000**

Escalated to 2026 \$ (4%/yr from 2022)

- Rehab scope may not cover all effluent infrastructure needs
- City remains responsible for all infrastructure
- **Significant funding gap for rehabilitation**
- Annual debt service required on gap
- Can be phased (7 phases over 10 years)
- Ongoing regulatory risk remains with City

# Force main funding plan

Revenue Source	Amount	Rehab?
OLDCC IR Grant	\$900,000	Maybe
State Appropriation (Awarded)	\$1,000,000	Maybe
Potential County Participation	<i>TBD</i>	No
Property Sale	\$1,500,000	No
Utility Cash / SRF	<i>Balance</i>	Yes
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$14,000,000</b>	

Both alternatives may require some financing. The force main has a stronger funding position. **OCWS leadership will be present to answer questions.**

# Comparative annual cost analysis

~\$530K

Current WWTF  
Annual O&M

~\$878K

Proposed Force Main  
Annual O&M

~\$300–  
350K

Apparent Annual  
Increase

TBD\*

Rehab Debt Service  
(on Funding Gap)

	Force Main	Rehabilitation
Operating Cost Increase	~\$300–350K/yr	—
Debt Service (on funding gap)	—	Significant*
Net Additional Annual Cost	~\$300–350K/yr	Significant*
Sprayfield Line Liability	Eliminated	Remains

**Net difference narrows significantly when rehab debt service is included — and rehab carries the sprayfield liability**

Reference: Annual debt service at 2%/30yr SRF terms ≈ \$44,650 per \$1M financed. | \*Depends on level of potential County financial participation.

# Key considerations

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## Effluent infrastructure scope

Mott MacDonald plan includes effluent PS upgrade and new force main, but full scope of effluent infrastructure needs is not fully defined.

## Debt service closes gap

Rehab funding gap requires significant annual debt service, narrowing operating cost difference between the two options.

## Reduced City liability

City would maintain only pump station & tank. OCWS handles force main and all treatment.

## Consent Order path

Definitive FDEP compliance vs. ongoing maintenance cycle on aging infrastructure.

## Reduced environmental scope

Eliminates treatment process and sprayfield from City's risk profile. Pump station/tank failure is a backup issue, not an environmental discharge.

# Council direction

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Direction requested from Council:

- 1 Does Council wish to proceed with the Wastewater Force Main to Okaloosa County as the City's long-term wastewater solution?
- 2 Does Council wish staff to bring a formal resolution or action item to the April regular Council meeting?
- 3 Is there additional information Council wants or needs before taking formal action?

# AGENDA ITEM

Agenda Item 4.2.

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**TO:** Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

**FROM:** Jared Cobb, City Manager

**DATE:** March 25, 2026

**SUBJECT:** Law Enforcement Services Review

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## **BACKGROUND:**

The City has contracted with the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office (OCSO) for enhanced law enforcement services since at least 2001. The current contract provides two dedicated patrol deputies at a cost of \$321,061 per year—a figure that has increased 47% since FY 2020 at the same staffing level. The OCSO has confirmed that two deputies is the minimum for an enhanced services contract; a one-deputy option is not available.

## **DISCUSSION:**

The attached report and presentation provide a detailed review of the current contract, service activity and crime data, and options for Council consideration. The report also identifies supplemental public safety tools that can be layered onto any service model.

No formal action is required at this workshop. Staff is requesting Council direction on four topics: requesting formal OCSO patrol zone assignment, the future of the enhanced services contract, supplemental public safety tools, and enhancing the Code Compliance Officer's public safety role.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

There is no direct financial impact from this workshop discussion. The current OCSO contract is \$321,061 for FY 2026. Financial details of any changes will be addressed through formal action at a future regular meeting.

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends that Council review the attached materials, receive the presentation, and provide direction so that formal action items can be prepared as appropriate.

## **ATTACHMENT(S):**

1. Exhibit A – Law Enforcement Services Review Report
2. Exhibit B – Law Enforcement Services Review Presentation

# Law Enforcement Services Review

## Law Enforcement & Supplemental Tools

City of Mary Esther, Florida

Prepared for City Council Workshop | March 25, 2026

**Purpose:** This report provides the City Council with a factual overview of the City's current law enforcement arrangement, service activity and crime data, and options for Council consideration. It is not a recommendation for or against any particular model. The goal is to support informed discussion at the workshop and help Council identify a direction for staff to pursue.

### Executive Summary

The City of Mary Esther has contracted with the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office (OCSO) for enhanced law enforcement services since at least 2001. The current contract provides two dedicated patrol deputies at a cost of \$321,061 per year—a figure that has increased 47% since FY2020 while maintaining the same staffing level. This report examines that contract, compares Mary Esther's service levels with the adjacent unincorporated area, and presents options for Council consideration.

#### Key findings:

- **Mary Esther is not assigned to a patrol zone.** Outside contract hours, there is no active patrol—only reactive call response. Requesting formal zone assignment should be a near-term priority regardless of the contract decision.
- **Contract deputies handle 40% of Priority 1 calls.** Over a recent six-month period, contract deputies answered 4 out of every 10 Priority 1 (emergency) calls. The remaining 60% were handled by non-contract OCSO units.
- **Crime-related calls are trending down.** Property crime calls dropped approximately 33% from FY2024 to FY2025, a decline that coincides with changes in the commercial corridor including Santa Rosa Mall store closures. An initial review of dispatch addresses suggests that approximately 70% of property crime calls originate along the Highway 98 and Mary Esther Boulevard corridors, with approximately 30% in residential areas. Violent crime calls are low and stable.
- **Cost and staffing trend.** The contract has grown from \$218,000 (FY2020) to \$321,061 (FY2026) at the same two-deputy level—\$80.63 per capita, or ~\$56 per call for service.
- **Two deputies is the minimum.** The OCSO will not offer a one-deputy enhanced services contract. The minimum staffing level is two deputies. Council's choice is whether to continue at the current level or allow the contract to expire and pursue alternative tools.

This report presents two service options (continue the current contract or allow it to expire), along with supplemental public safety tools and a low-cost enhancement to the City's existing Code Compliance Officer role. Several of the supplemental tools—off-duty speed enforcement details, red-light cameras—have the potential to be financially self-sustaining, though realistic revenue expectations should be discussed with the OCSO.

# 1. Background

## 1.1 Contract History

The City has contracted with the OCSO for enhanced law enforcement services under F.S. 125.0101 since January 2001.

OCSO Enhanced Services Contract: Cost & Staffing History



\*FY19 = partial year (Mar-Sep). FY02-FY07 data unavailable.

Period	Deputies	Annual Cost	Notes
FY2008–FY2010	5 patrol	\$353K–\$368K	Peak staffing level
FY2011–FY2013	4 patrol + 1 traffic	\$350K–\$366K	1 deputy designated for traffic enforcement
FY2014–FY2017	4 patrol	\$367K–\$385K	Traffic deputy removed; reduced to 4
<b>FY2018</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>No Contract</b>	City operated one year without enhanced services
Mar–Sep 2019	2 patrol	\$126,413	Restarted mid-year at reduced staffing
FY2020–FY2025	2 patrol	\$218K–\$299K	Steady annual increases
<b>FY2026 (Current)</b>	<b>2 patrol</b>	<b>\$321,061</b>	Oct. 1, 2025 – Sep. 30, 2026

## 1.2 Current Contract (FY2026)

Category	FY 2025	FY 2026
<b>Personnel (2 FTE Deputies)</b>	\$210,890	\$229,766
Operational Expenses	\$61,614	\$61,363
Capital Replacement	\$26,625	\$29,932
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$299,129</b>	<b>\$321,061</b>

**Services included:** Two full-time patrol deputies (40 hours/week each), providing a minimum of 80 combined patrol hours per week, averaging approximately 11 hours of coverage per day. Scheduling is flexible and determined by the OCSO based on operational needs; the contract does not mandate specific shift times. Positions are not backfilled during leave or training, so actual daily coverage

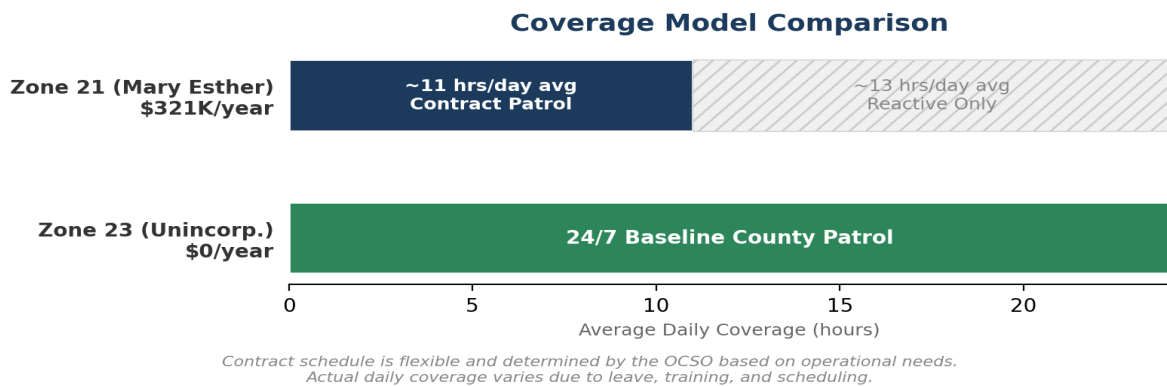
varies; one school crossing guard (4 hrs/day, 180 days/year) at no additional charge; a designated OCSO Captain as the City’s point of contact for coordination and operational matters; deputies respond to calls within city limits regardless of contract status.

**Key provisions:** Sheriff retains control over personnel; City may request replacement of any assigned deputy; City Manager serves as liaison; either party may cancel with 90 days’ notice; renews annually. Two deputies is the minimum—a one-deputy contract is not available. Off-duty deputies are separately available through RollKall Technologies to any citizen, organization, or business—this program is independent of the enhanced services contract and would remain available regardless of the City’s contract status.

### 1.3 Baseline Coverage: What the OCSO Confirmed

In response to a formal information request, the OCSO provided the following clarification regarding coverage when contract deputies are not on duty:

*“Every unincorporated area within the county is staffed and patrolled regularly. When contract deputies are not on duty, there is no regular active patrol within Mary Esther (per the contract) and only reactive calls for service occur within the city limits.”* — OCSO Information Request Response, March 2026



Based on the OCSO’s response to a formal information request, Mary Esther is not currently assigned to a patrol zone. The contract provides approximately 11 hours of daily coverage on average (80 combined hours/week); positions are not backfilled during leave or training. During off-contract hours, no OCSO deputy is specifically tasked with patrolling the city. Deputies will still respond to calls dispatched within Mary Esther, but there is no proactive presence.

This creates a structural question worth understanding. Every unincorporated area in the county—regardless of size or population density—is assigned to a patrol zone with a deputy responsible for that area around the clock. Mary Esther is approximately 1.5 square miles with nearly 4,000 residents. The adjacent unincorporated zone (Zone 23) is roughly 2.5 square miles and receives 24/7 staffed patrol at no additional cost. Under the current arrangement, Mary Esther receives active patrol only during the hours when contract deputies are on duty (approximately 11 hours per day on average). Outside those hours, coverage is reactive only.

This is not a question about the quality of the deputies or the services they provide. It is a question about how services are structured. If the contract is intended to provide enhanced services above and beyond what the county provides as a baseline, then baseline coverage should exist independently of the contract. If the contract is effectively providing the only active patrol in Mary Esther, then the service may be better described as primary rather than enhanced. Understanding

this distinction is important context for any decision Council makes about the contract going forward, and staff looks forward to discussing it collaboratively with the OCSO.

Under F.S. 316.640(2), the Sheriff is statutorily obligated to enforce traffic laws and respond to calls throughout the entire county, including within incorporated municipalities. Mary Esther residents pay the same county ad valorem taxes that fund the Sheriff’s general operations.

**Immediate Opportunity:** Regardless of which service option Council pursues, staff recommends requesting that the OCSO formally assign Mary Esther to an adjacent patrol zone so that residents receive the same baseline coverage—active patrol, not just reactive response—as every unincorporated area in the county. This request is independent of the contract and does not require the OCSO to add resources.

## 2. Service Activity & Crime Data

This section compares service activity and crime data between Mary Esther (OCSO Zone 21) and the adjacent unincorporated area to the west (Zone 23), which extends from Solar Street to the Santa Rosa County line. Zone 23 receives baseline OCSO patrol coverage without an enhanced services contract. The OCSO provided call-for-service data spanning October 2022 through February 2026, covering portions of four fiscal years. The crime data in Section 2.3 is drawn from the same OCSO CAD/RMS dispatch data, categorized by crime type. All numbers represent calls responded to, not confirmed offenses, and cannot be directly compared to published crime statistics from other communities.

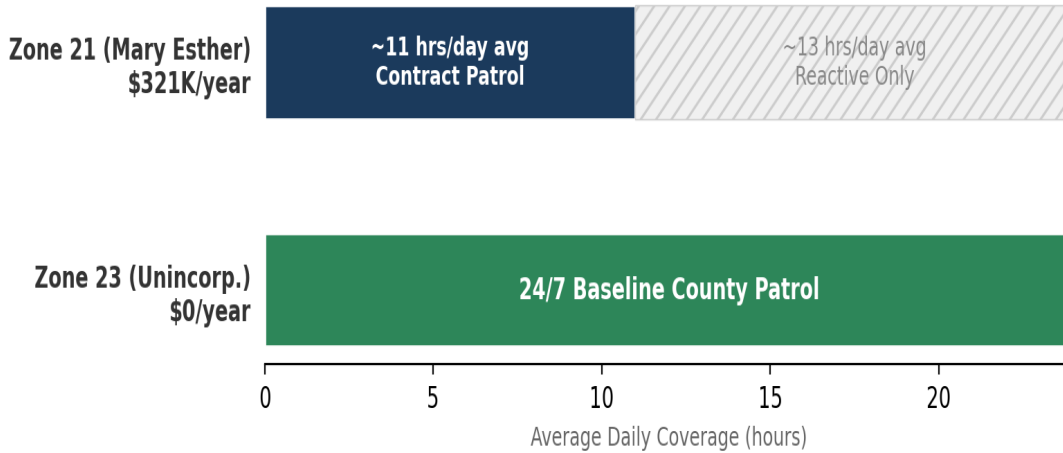
### 2.1 Zone Profiles

	Zone 21 (Mary Esther)	Zone 23 (Unincorp.)
<b>Population</b>	3,982 (2020 Census)	~8,354
Area	~1.5 sq mi	~2.5 sq mi
Coverage Model	Enhanced contract	Baseline county patrol
<b>Annual Contract Cost</b>	<b>\$321,061</b>	<b>\$0</b>
Cost Per Capita	\$80.63	\$0.00

### 2.2 Calls for Service (CFS) Trend

The chart below shows total CFS by fiscal year (October 1–September 30) for both zones.

### Coverage Model Comparison



*Contract schedule is flexible and determined by the OCSO based on operational needs. Actual daily coverage varies due to leave, training, and scheduling.*

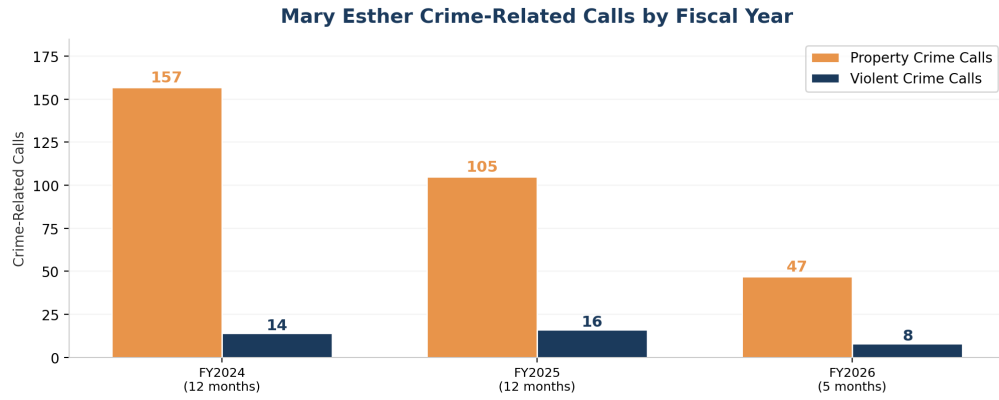
Fiscal Year	Zone 21 CFS	Zone 23 CFS	Z21 per 1,000	Z23 per 1,000	Data System
FY2023 (full)	5,996	6,599	1,506	790	Old RMS
FY2024 (full)	5,433	6,264	1,364	750	Old RMS
FY2025 (full)	5,586	5,586	1,403	669	Old + New RMS
FY2026 (5 months)	2,283	2,262	1,375*	650*	New RMS

*\*FY2026 rates are annualized from 5 months of data (Oct 2025–Feb 2026) for comparison purposes. Per-capita rates use Zone 21 pop. 3,982 and Zone 23 pop. 8,354 (both 2020 Census; Zone 23 = Tract 231).*

**Key trends:** Total CFS in Mary Esther has declined modestly, from nearly 6,000 (FY2023) to approximately 5,500 (FY2025). Zone 23 has seen a sharper decline, from 6,599 to 5,586. By FY2025, the two zones generated identical raw call volumes—despite Zone 23 having nearly double the population. Mary Esther’s per-capita rate has consistently been 1.9–2.1 times higher than Zone 23’s, driven by its smaller population and commercial activity.

**Data limitation:** The OCSO transitioned from its legacy records management system to a new platform in April 2025. While total call counts are comparable across both systems, the call type codes changed (e.g., “THEFT A/O” became “THEFTAO”). This makes year-over-year trending of specific crime categories unreliable without an official OCSO crosswalk between the two systems. The call-for-service data in Section 2.2 uses both systems. The crime data in Section 2.3 uses the same CAD/RMS dispatch data, categorized by crime type (e.g., theft, burglary, battery). FY2025 spans both systems.

## 2.3 Crime-Related Calls in Mary Esther



Crime-Related Calls	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026 (5 mo)
Property Crime	157	105	47
Violent Crime	14	16	8
<b>Total Crime Calls</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>55</b>

### Data Quality and Next Steps

**Important: this is call data, not confirmed crime data.** All crime data in this report is based on calls for service (CFS)—dispatch events where someone called and a deputy responded. A call categorized as “burglary” means a burglary was reported, not that one was confirmed. CFS numbers will always be higher than confirmed crime statistics. Because CFS data measures something different from the published crime rates used by the FBI and FDLE, the numbers in this report cannot be directly compared to other communities. Developing benchmarkable crime data (Uniform Crime Reporting, or UCR, and the National Incident-Based Reporting System, or NIBRS) is a recommended next step. Additional note on categorization: The property and violent crime counts above are based on CFS type codes in the dispatch data that correspond to the categories the OCSO uses in its monthly activity reports (e.g., Burglary, Larceny-Theft, Battery, Assault). Some call types that may involve criminal activity—such as fraud, trespassing, or domestic disturbances—are not included in either category because the OCSO does not include them in these totals. The numbers above should be understood as approximate and have not been independently validated by the OCSO.

**What the data shows.** Property crime-related calls in Mary Esther dropped approximately 33% from FY2024 to FY2025, with retail theft calls (larceny) declining significantly. This decline occurred during a period when several stores at the Santa Rosa Mall closed, with the mall’s interior shutting down in September 2025. While the timing suggests a possible connection, other factors may also be contributing. An initial review of the dispatch addresses suggests an approximately 70/30 split between commercial and residential areas—with the majority of property crime calls originating along Highway 98 and Mary Esther Boulevard. The OCSO has confirmed that the Target store alone generated 30 property crime-related calls and follow-ups over a recent six-month period (September 2025 through February 2026). Violent crime calls are low and stable, with zero murder calls across the entire reporting period. The right tools for addressing commercial retail theft are different from the tools for residential crime, and not every solution requires additional patrol hours.

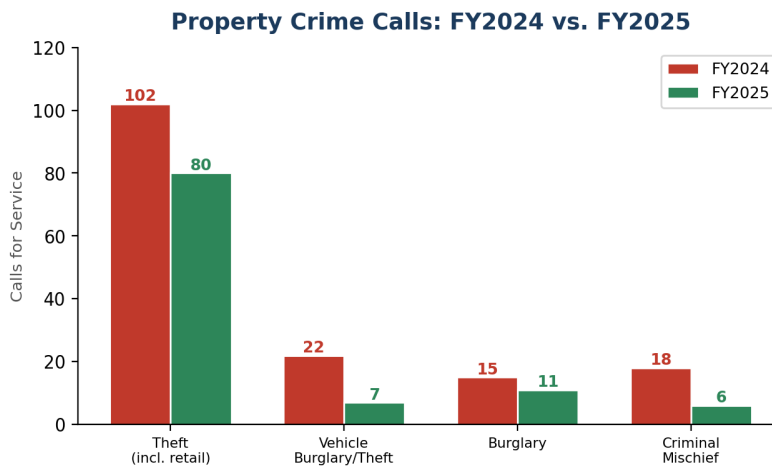
**Next steps.** The crime category counts above are derived from the OCSO’s CAD/RMS dispatch data, which records every call a deputy was dispatched to. These are calls responded to, not confirmed

offenses. To benchmark against other communities, the City would need UCR or NIBRS data—confirmed offense counts that are reported to the FBI and FDLE under standardized definitions. The OCSO is also transitioning to NIBRS (the updated FBI standard), which will provide even more detailed data going forward. This report does not attempt peer benchmarking—that work requires identifying comparable communities and should be done carefully in partnership with the OCSO.

**The zone-to-zone comparison.** The Zone 21 vs. Zone 23 call volume comparison (Section 2.2) uses CFS data because it is available for both zones on an identical basis.

*Recommended follow-up:* Staff should work with the OCSO to (1) obtain confirmed offense data (UCR or NIBRS) for Mary Esther, which would allow benchmarking against other communities for the first time, and (2) develop a collaborative approach to identifying the most effective tools for the specific types of calls Mary Esther generates.

## 2.4 Context: What the Numbers Tell Us

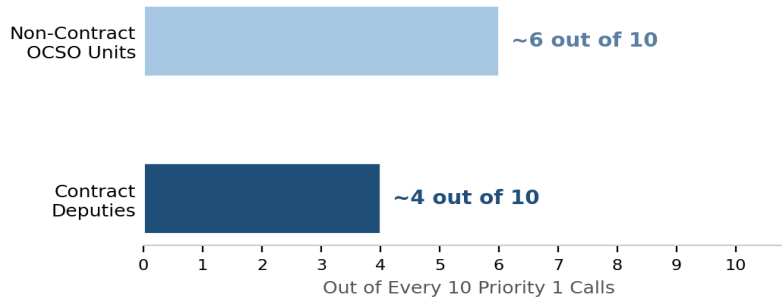


Source: OCSO CAD/RMS dispatch data, Zone 21.

**Property crime.** As noted in Section 2.3, property crime calls are declining. An initial review of dispatch addresses suggests approximately 70% of these calls originate along the Highway 98 and Mary Esther Boulevard corridors. As the commercial landscape continues to evolve, staff should continue to monitor these trends and work with the OCSO to identify targeted responses—whether that is loss prevention coordination with retailers, LPR cameras at key locations, or off-duty details focused on the commercial corridor.

**Violent crime.** Violent crime calls remain low and stable. The majority of violent crime calls in the CAD data are coded as battery or assault; the data does not indicate whether these are domestic or non-domestic in nature. Neither the volume nor the trend suggests a public safety crisis.

### Who Responds to Priority 1 Calls in Mary Esther?



Based on OCSO characterization: "approximately 4 out of every 10" 2,460 Priority 1 calls over 6 months (Sep 2025 - Feb 2026)

**Contract deputies handle 40% of Priority 1 calls.** Over a six-month period, there were 2,460 Priority 1 calls in Mary Esther. Contract deputies handled approximately 4 out of every 10. The OCSO noted this is the expected ratio based on actual hours worked after accounting for training, vacation, and leave. The remaining 60% were handled by non-contract OCSO units responding from the surrounding area.

**Traffic stops result primarily in warnings.** From December 2025 through February 2026, contract deputies conducted 278 traffic stops. Of these, 238 (86%) resulted in warnings, 25 (9%) in citations, and 9 (3%) in arrests.

**Bottom line:** Crime-related calls in Mary Esther are trending down—property crime calls dropped approximately 33% from FY2024 to FY2025, a trend that coincides with changes along the commercial corridors. Violent crime calls are low and stable. The contract provides active patrol during scheduled hours (averaging ~11 hrs/day), a designated Captain as point of contact, community-familiar deputies, and a school crossing guard. Outside contract hours, coverage is reactive only. The question for Council is how to build on this positive trend and allocate resources where they will have the greatest impact.

### 3. Service Options for Council Consideration

For context, small Florida municipalities take a range of approaches to law enforcement, from full-service contracts exceeding \$200 per capita to no contract at all, relying entirely on baseline county coverage. Each community’s circumstances are different. The OCSO has confirmed that two deputies is the minimum staffing level for an enhanced services contract—a one-deputy contract is not available. This narrows the decision to two options. Each can be supplemented with the tools described in Section 5. *In all cases, staff recommends pursuing formal zone assignment (Section 1.3).*

#### Option 1: Continue Current OCSO Enhanced Contract

- **Description:** Maintain the current two-deputy contract.
- **Annual Cost:** ~\$321,000 (FY2026), with annual increases expected.
- **What it provides:** Two dedicated patrol deputies familiar with the community providing proactive patrol, traffic enforcement, and security checks during contract hours; full sworn authority; a designated OCSO Captain as the City’s point of contact; school crossing guard at no additional cost; City retains right to request personnel changes.

- **Considerations:** Contract deputies handle approximately 40% of Priority 1 calls and provide the only proactive patrol presence in the city. The designated Captain provides a direct communication channel with OCSO leadership. Costs have increased 47% since FY2020 at the same staffing level. City has limited direct control over scheduling and operational priorities. Two deputies is the minimum—there is no option to scale down.

## Option 2: No Enhanced Contract + Enhanced Civilian Presence

- **Description:** Allow the contract to expire. Request formal zone assignment. Enhance the Code Compliance Officer role per Section 4. Deploy supplemental tools (Section 5).
- **Estimated Cost:** One-time vehicle upgrade of \$3,000–\$8,000. No recurring contract cost. Contract cost (~\$321,000/year) redirected to general fund. Off-duty OCSO deputies remain available through RollKall at published rates (see Section 5.4).
- **What it provides:** Baseline OCSO response continues for all dispatched calls. Contract funds (~\$321,000/year) become available for other City priorities. Enhanced civilian presence and supplemental tools can provide visible deterrence. Off-duty details can provide sworn enforcement for specific needs.
- **Considerations:** No dedicated deputies; response dependent on county-wide staffing; loss of school crossing guard; traffic crash investigations would fall to the Florida Highway Patrol, where typical response times often exceed one hour (per OCSO); loss of designated OCSO Captain as point of contact; coverage depends on zone assignment outcome. The City operated without a contract during FY2018. Note: non-contract OCSO units currently handle approximately 60% of Priority 1 calls, but losing the contract would also eliminate the proactive patrol, community familiarity, and coordination that the remaining 40% represents.

### Side-by-Side Comparison:

	OCSO Contract	Sworn Presence	City Control
<b>Option 1: Continue</b>	\$321,061/yr	2 dedicated deputies	Moderate
<b>Option 2: No Contract</b>	\$0	Baseline + off-duty as needed	High

Supplemental tools (Section 5) and cost recovery (Section 6) can be layered onto either option.

## 4. Code Compliance Officer: Visibility and Deterrence

The City’s Code Compliance Officer is already in the community daily performing code enforcement and parking enforcement. Two low-cost enhancements would increase the officer’s visibility and provide an additional set of eyes in the community. To be clear: this concept does not create a law enforcement role. The Code Compliance Officer is not a deputy, is not trained or equipped for law enforcement duties, and would not respond to crimes, domestic disputes, traffic incidents, or any situation requiring a sworn officer. The enhancements below are strictly about visibility, deterrence, and better communication with the OCSO.

### 4.1 Community Service Officer-Style Vehicle

The City’s current code compliance vehicle is a truck with minimal markings. Upgrading to a community service officer-style vehicle—with professional graphics, City seal, reflective striping, and an amber light bar—would create a significantly more visible presence. To the casual observer, these

vehicles resemble law enforcement vehicles, which is the point: visibility alone deters opportunistic behavior. The officer's daily rounds through neighborhoods, parks, and commercial areas would become a constant, visible reminder that someone is present and paying attention. Cost: \$3,000–\$8,000 one-time for vehicle graphics, striping, and lighting.

## 4.2 Formalized OCSO Reporting Channel

The officer already informally reports concerns to the OCSO. This enhancement simply formalizes that relationship: a designated OCSO point of contact, a simple format for reporting suspicious activity or recurring problems, and periodic check-ins. It provides the OCSO with an additional set of eyes in the community at no cost to them.

## 5. Supplemental Public Safety Tools

The following tools can enhance public safety regardless of which service option the City pursues.

### 5.1 License Plate Reader (LPR) Cameras

LPR cameras capture plate data from passing vehicles and compare them against law enforcement databases. Cost: \$2,500–\$5,000 per camera plus \$1,500–\$3,000/year subscription (vendors like Flock Safety include hardware, installation, and hosting). Data can be shared with OCSO through a law enforcement portal.

### 5.2 Security Cameras in Public Parks

Recommended: a law enforcement-integrated platform—not consumer equipment—that provides the OCSO with direct portal access and evidence-grade video. Cost: \$500–\$2,000 per camera; \$10–50/month cloud storage. Staff should evaluate whether to consolidate with the LPR platform for simplified OCSO access.

### 5.3 Automated Traffic Enforcement

- **Red-Light Cameras:** Authorized under F.S. 316.0083. \$158 fine per violation; City retains \$75. Vendors install and operate at no upfront cost. The City's TIEO-certified Code Compliance Officer can administer the program with assistance from adjacent law enforcement agency. Legal status uncertain: On March 3, 2026, a Broward County judge ruled the statute unconstitutional. The ruling applies only to Broward County but is being cited statewide. The case is headed to the appellate courts. Staff recommends against committing capital until the legal question is resolved.
- **School Zone Speed Cameras:** No longer viable after the school on US 98 closes this year. Speed data showing ~700 vehicles/day exceeding the limit by 11+ mph demonstrates a persistent corridor problem requiring alternative enforcement.

### 5.4 Off-Duty OCSO Deputy Details (RollKall)

- **Off-Duty OCSO Deputies (RollKall):** Available for traffic enforcement, neighborhood patrols, park presence, and general security. OCSO tiered rates: Tier 1 \$37/hr, Tier 2 \$47/hr, Tier 3 (holidays) \$52/hr, each +\$2/hr admin fee. RollKall charges 8% management fee. 4-hour minimum. Voluntary and not guaranteed.

- **FHP Directed Patrol:** No cost to the City. FHP has jurisdiction on US 98. However, the City has no control over when enforcement occurs, and the Pensacola District has historically been understaffed.

**Recommended approach:** Pursue both: RollKall for City-controlled speed enforcement and patrols; FHP as a no-cost supplement when available.

## 6. Cost Recovery Through Enforcement

**Guiding Principle:** The cost of enforcing traffic safety should be covered by those who violate the law, not subsidized by taxpayers. The goal is to ensure that enforcement tools can sustain themselves financially so they do not compete with other budget priorities.

### 6.1 Off-Duty Deputy Details on US 98

Item	Estimate
Off-duty deputy rate (Tier 1)	\$37/hr + \$2/hr admin fee = \$39/hr
RollKall management fee	8%
Cost per 4-hour Tier 1 detail (with fees)	~\$168
Cost per 4-hour Tier 2 detail (with fees)	~\$212
Frequency	2–4 details per month
<b>Annual enforcement cost</b>	<b>~\$4,000–\$10,200</b>
Est. citations per detail	TBD
Avg. fine per citation (with court costs)	~\$220
<b>Est. annual total fines generated</b>	<b>TBD – consult OCSO</b>

*Revenue depends on citation volume, which is uncertain—OCSO deputies currently issue warnings 86% of the time. Staff recommends consulting the OCSO. The enforcement cost (~\$4,000–\$10,200/year) is modest enough that a small number of citations would cover it.*

### 6.2 Red-Light Cameras

Per F.S. 316.0083, the \$158 fine is distributed: \$75 to the City, \$70 to the state, \$10 to EMS, \$3 to Brain and Spinal Cord Trust Fund. After vendor fees (~\$30–40 per citation), the City nets approximately \$35–45 per violation at zero upfront cost.

## 7. Questions for Council Discussion

The following questions are intended to guide the workshop discussion and help Council identify a direction for staff. No formal action is required at this workshop. Any direction provided will be brought back for formal action at a regular City Council meeting.

### 7.1 The Zone Assignment Question

*Should the City formally request that the OCSO assign Mary Esther to an adjacent patrol zone so that residents receive baseline patrol coverage during non-contract hours?*

This is the foundational question. If Mary Esther is assigned to a patrol zone, residents would receive the same baseline coverage that every unincorporated area in the county receives. The enhanced contract would then truly provide additional service on top of that baseline. Council may wish to direct staff to formally request zone assignment and to discuss with the OCSO how baseline and enhanced services should work together. This request is independent of the contract decision and does not require the OCSO to add resources—only to include Mary Esther in existing zone assignments.

## 7.2 The Contract Question

*Given the data presented in this report, does Council wish to continue the current OCSO enhanced services contract as-is, continue with supplemental tools to address specific concerns (e.g., traffic enforcement, park presence), or allow the contract to expire and pursue an alternative approach? What direction should staff take?*

Considerations that may inform this discussion:

- The contract costs \$321,061 per year (\$80.63 per capita). Costs have increased 47% since FY2020 at the same staffing level, consistent with broader law enforcement cost trends statewide.
- Contract deputies handle approximately 40% of Priority 1 calls and are the only source of proactive patrol in Mary Esther. The remaining 60% of Priority 1 calls are handled by non-contract OCSO units that would continue to respond regardless of the contract.
- The City operated without a contract during FY2018.
- A one-deputy contract is not available. The choice is between two deputies or none.
- Off-duty OCSO deputies would remain available through RollKall for targeted enforcement under either option.
- The contract provides benefits that cannot be replicated through other means: deputies with community familiarity, a designated Captain for coordination, and a school crossing guard at no additional charge.

Note: Zone assignment, if granted, would provide baseline patrol coverage that does not currently exist during non-contract hours. This request can be made regardless of the contract decision.

## 7.3 Supplemental Tools

*Which supplemental public safety tools, if any, should staff explore further?*

- LPR cameras at key entry/exit points
- Security cameras in public parks (law enforcement-integrated platform)
- Red-light cameras (monitoring the Broward County due process ruling)
- Off-duty OCSO speed details on US 98 through RollKall
- FHP directed patrol coordination

## 7.4 Code Compliance Officer Enhancement

*Does Council support equipping the Code Compliance Officer with a marked City vehicle and formalizing the reporting relationship with the OCSO to improve visibility and deterrence?*

This is a low-cost enhancement (\$3,000–\$8,000 one-time) that increases visible city presence. It applies to either service option and does not require OCSO approval.

## Appendix A: Data Sources

- OCSO CAD data: Zones 21 and 23, April 2025 – February 2026 (received March 12, 2026)
- OCSO traffic stop data: December 2025 – February 2026 (received March 12, 2026)
- OCSO formal information request response (received March 12, 2026)
- Population: Mary Esther 3,982; Zone 23 8,354 (both 2020 U.S. Census; Zone 23 = Tract 231)
- OCSO contract history: City records, FY2001 – FY2026
- OCSO Off-Duty Deputy Program: [www.sheriff-okaloosa.org/programs/hiring-off-duty-ocso-deputies/](http://www.sheriff-okaloosa.org/programs/hiring-off-duty-ocso-deputies/)

## Appendix B: OCSO Information Request — Questions and Responses

*The following questions were submitted by the City to the OCSO in March 2026. Responses were provided by Captain Rader, the City's designated OCSO point of contact. The document is reproduced in full.*

### 1. Comparison Data

**Q 1.1:** Monthly activity reports for the OCSO district immediately west of Hurlburt Field (October 2022 through present).

**A:** Excel sheets provided that allow filtering for desired information. Zone 21 is Mary Esther. Zone 22 is Hurlburt AFB and contains Highway 98 from Mary Esther west city limit up to Solar Street. Zone 23 is Solar Street to the Santa Rosa County line.

**Q 1.2:** Geographic identifier for that area so we can pull population estimates for per-capita calculations.

**A:** 2020 Census Tract identifier 231.

### 2. Priority 1 Response

**Q 2.1:** For Priority 1 calls in Mary Esther, roughly what percentage are handled by our contract deputies versus other OCSO units?

**A:** We were able to pull data for a 6-month period (9/1/25–2/28/26) which shows 2,460 Priority 1 calls for service in Mary Esther. Per the contract, 2 deputies are to work 40 hours per week each without backfill while on training and leave. The best analysis so far shows that contract deputies answered 4 out of 10 Priority 1 calls in the city during this period. This is the expected number based on their actual hours worked in Mary Esther and taking into account their training time, vacation leave, and sick leave. It should be noted that during a portion of this time period, a focused traffic safety campaign generated many Priority 1 Traffic Stop calls by contract and non-contract deputies alike.

**Q 2.2:** When our contract deputies are unavailable or called out of Mary Esther, how does backup or mutual aid from other units typically work?

**A:** Available deputies are dispatched according to call priority if it occurs during non-contract hours. If the contract deputy is working and busy on another call, pending lower priority calls will generally wait until the contract deputy is available. Higher priority calls take precedence regardless of the time and the closest deputy (not on another high priority call) is sent as soon as possible.

### 3. Traffic Enforcement

**Q 3.1:** General breakdown of citations and warnings by location.

**A:** Refer to traffic stop data chart attachment. Keep in mind that this does not match the activity reports due to the manner in which data is compiled. If a deputy generates a Traffic Stop and makes a drug arrest, the CFS type is usually changed to a Narcotics Violation. The location listed is the final stop location and not the location of the offense.

**Q 3.3:** Breakdown by residency (Okaloosa County residents vs. out-of-county visitors)?

**A:** This is not tracked.

**Q 3.4:** Is there a general protocol for deputy discretion on warnings versus citations?

**A:** Deputies have discretion in how to handle non-criminal traffic violations and most criminal traffic violations. There are exceptions for mandatory arrest/citation (i.e. Driving Under the Influence, Driving While License Suspended/Revoked for DUI, etc.).

#### 4. Crime Context

**Q 4.1:** Do large retail locations (like Target) generate a significant portion of our property crime calls?

**A:** Between 9/1/25 and 2/28/26, Mary Esther Target showed 30 calls for service for property crime calls and follow-ups. FWB Wal-Mart had 100 for the same period. This often fluctuates depending on the stores' corporate policies and the effectiveness of their personnel in discovering these offenses.

#### 5. Patrol Coverage

**Q 5.2:** During hours when our contract deputies aren't on duty, does Mary Esther receive routine patrol coverage from other OCSO units, or only dispatched calls?

**A:** Every unincorporated area within the county is staffed and patrolled regularly. When contract deputies are not on duty, there is no regular active patrol within Mary Esther (per the contract) and only reactive calls for service occur within the city limits. The city of Laurel Hill is in a similar situation. Laurel Hill is incorporated but does not have a police department and does not contract for enhanced police services; their city is contained within a ~200 square mile zone that is patrolled by a single deputy.

#### 6. Contract Services

**Q 6.1:** Having a designated point of contact like yourself is something I find valuable—would that kind of direct access change if we didn't have a contract?

**A:** Having a designated point of contact can certainly be beneficial for coordination and communication. Entities that maintain a formal contract are typically given priority in terms of responsiveness and direct communication. For entities without a contract, requests and communications are handled as part of the broader obligations within the commander's area of responsibility and are prioritized alongside other operational demands. In those cases, communication generally occurs during normal business hours, Monday through Friday.

**Q 6.2:** Are there any programs, services, or resources the City receives under the contract that wouldn't be available otherwise?

**A:** Proactive measures such as traffic safety campaigns, active patrols, security checks, citizen contacts, et cetera will be unlikely to happen. Law enforcement staffing for city-sponsored events (e.g., Veteran's Day Parade) would be coordinated and paid through RollKall Technologies, LLC as an off-duty detail. Keep in mind that off-duty employment is not guaranteed and it is up to individual deputies to choose to sign up for events through this platform. Traffic crash investigations would be the responsibility of the Florida Highway Patrol. Typical response times are often more than one hour for FHP.

**Q 6.3:** What are the preferred options for residents to submit feedback, concerns, or tips through non-emergency channels?

**A:** They can call 651-7400 for non-emergency needs. The OCSO also has communications options on their website [www.sheriff-okaloosa.org](http://www.sheriff-okaloosa.org).

# Law Enforcement Services Review

## Law Enforcement & Supplemental Tools

City of Mary Esther, Florida

City Council Workshop | March 25, 2026

*Understanding our law enforcement arrangement, reviewing crime data,  
and exploring options to serve our community effectively.*

# Why We Are Here

This workshop is an opportunity to better understand our law enforcement arrangement, review what the data tells us about crime in Mary Esther, and discuss how to serve our community most effectively going forward.

1

## Zone Assignment

Should Mary Esther receive the same baseline patrol as every unincorporated area?

2

## The Contract

How can we ensure the contract provides true enhanced services?

3

## Tools & Next Steps

What additional tools can improve public safety along our corridors?

*No formal action is required today. Council direction will be brought back for formal action at a regular meeting.*

# The Current Contract

**\$321,061**

Annual Cost  
(FY 2026)

**2**

Dedicated  
Deputies

**\$80.63**

Per Capita  
Cost

**47%**

Cost Increase  
Since FY2020

## What the contract provides:

- Two patrol deputies (~11 hrs/day avg; schedule is flexible; not backfilled)
- One school crossing guard (4 hrs/day, 180 days/yr) at no additional charge
- Designated OCSO Captain serves as City's point of contact
- City retains right to request deputy replacement; Sheriff retains personnel control
- Two deputies is the minimum — a one-deputy contract is not available
- Either party may cancel with 90 days' notice

# Baseline Coverage: A Structural Question

*"Every unincorporated area within the county is staffed and patrolled regularly. When contract deputies are not on duty, there is no regular active patrol within Mary Esther."*

— OCSO Information Request Response, March 2026

	Zone 21 (Mary Esther)	Zone 23 (Unincorp.)
Active Patrol	~11 hrs/day avg (flexible)	24/7 baseline patrol
Off-Hours	Reactive calls only	Active patrol continues
Annual Cost	\$321,061	\$0

This is not a question about the quality of deputies or services. It is a question about how services are structured — and whether baseline coverage should exist independently of the contract.

***Staff recommends requesting formal zone assignment regardless of the contract decision.***

# Crime-Related Calls: Trending Down

Source: OCSO CAD/RMS dispatch data. These are calls responded to, not confirmed offenses.

	FY2024	FY2025	FY2026 (5 mo)
Property Crime Calls	157	105	47
Violent Crime Calls	14	16	8
Total Calls	171	121	55

- Property crime calls declined ~33% from FY2024 to FY2025, coinciding with Santa Rosa Mall store closures
- Initial analysis: ~70% commercial corridors (Hwy 98 and Mary Esther Blvd), ~30% residential
- OCSO confirmed Target generated 30 property crime calls and follow-ups in 6 months
- Violent crime calls are low and stable — zero murder calls across the entire reporting period
- **Next step: Work with OCSO to obtain UCR/NIBRS confirmed offense data for benchmarking**

*These numbers cannot be compared to other communities. CFS data measures something different from the published crime rates used by the FBI and FDLE.*

# Service Activity Highlights

## Priority 1 Response

Contract deputies handle **~40%** of Priority 1 calls

Non-contract OCSO units handle the remaining ~60%

2,460 P1 calls over 6 months  
(Sep 2025 – Feb 2026)

## Traffic Stops

**278 stops** (Dec 2025 – Feb 2026)

86% warnings

9% citations

3% arrests

*Revenue from off-duty speed details  
should be discussed with the OCSO  
before projecting budgets.*

**Bottom line: Crime-related calls are trending down. The question for Council is how to build on this positive trend and allocate resources where they will have the greatest impact.**

# Options for Council

The OCSO will not offer a one-deputy contract. Each option can be supplemented with the tools in Sections 5–6.

## Option 1: Continue Contract

~\$321,000/yr

- Two dedicated, community-familiar deputies
- Designated Captain as City point of contact
- School crossing guard included
- Full sworn authority; ~40% of P1 calls
- Costs have increased 47% since FY2020
- Only source of proactive patrol in city

## Option 2: No Contract

~\$321,000/yr redirected to general fund

- Request formal zone assignment for baseline patrol
- OCSO still responds to all dispatched calls
- Off-duty deputies available via RollKall
- Enhanced Code Compliance presence
- Loss of crossing guard & designated Captain
- City operated without contract in FY2018

*Supplemental tools (Sections 5-6) and cost recovery (Section 7) can be layered onto either option.*

# Supplemental Public Safety Tools

These tools can enhance public safety under either option.

## Off-Duty Deputy Details (RollKall)

**\$4K–\$10K/yr**

Speed enforcement on US 98, neighborhood patrols, park presence.  
City-controlled scheduling.

## LPR Cameras

**\$4K–\$8K/yr**

Flock Safety at key entry/exit.  
OCSO already uses Flock.  
Shared law enforcement portal.

## Code Compliance Vehicle Upgrade

**\$3K–\$8K once**

Community service officer-style vehicle. Visibility and deterrence.  
Not a law enforcement role.

## Park Security Cameras

**\$2K–\$6K + fees**

Law enforcement-integrated.  
OCSO direct portal access.  
Evidence-grade video.

# Questions for Council Discussion

## 1 Zone Assignment

Should we formally request that the OCSO assign Mary Esther to an adjacent patrol zone?

## 2 The Contract

Continue as-is, continue with supplemental tools, or allow the contract to expire? What direction for staff?

## 3 Supplemental Tools

Which tools should staff explore further?  
(LPR cameras, park cameras, off-duty details, FHP)

## 4 Code Compliance

Should staff proceed with a community service officer-style vehicle and formalized OCSO reporting?

*No formal action required today. Direction will be brought back for formal action at a regular meeting.*

# Thank You

The full report, supporting data, and source documents are available for review.

City of Mary Esther | March 2026