



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
14TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT, STATE OF COLORADO
MATT KARZEN, DISTRICT ATTORNEY
Serving Grand, Routt and Moffat Counties

September 6, 2022

TO: Donald Broom, Melody Villard, Tony Bohrer; Moffat County Board of County Commissioners
Beth Melton, Tim Corrigan, Tim Redmond; Routt County Board of County Commissioners
Rich Cimino, Merrit Linke, Randy George; Grand County Board of County Commissioners

FROM: Matt Karzen, District Attorney, 14th Judicial District

RE: Information for Tri-County 2023 budget submission

Dear BOCC's –

With the 2023 budget meeting ahead, I am writing to provide some information about the DA's office 2023 budget proposal, and provide some data comparisons on case numbers YTD. Of course my door is open at all times if you have any questions, concerns or curiosities about our work.

Case Numbers

As most of you have heard me say previously, the raw case number data can be hard to unravel in terms of causes for any increases or decreases, particularly with unique impact events like the pandemic, substantial legislative changes and changing populations in our area over the past several years. Below is a comparison of year to date (YTD) case numbers in each county broken down by felony (F), misdemeanor (M) and traffic (T) cases. One note – weekend bond hearings began in April pursuant to new statute, and a new case numbering system for those matters complicates the data collection, but the differences are small.

Grand

9/1/21: F = 91, M = 272, T = 425

9/1/22: F = 64, M = 187, T = 317

Changes: Felonies 30% down, Misdemeanors 31% down, Traffic 25% down.

Routt

9/1/21: F = 145, M = 278, T = 375

9/1/22: F = 125, M = 270, T = 295

Changes: Felonies 14% down, Misdemeanors 3% down, Traffic 21% down.

Moffat

9/1/21: F = 141, M = 190, T = 233

9/1/22: F = 116, M = 238, T = 180

Changes: Felonies 18% down, Misdemeanors 25% up, Traffic 23% down.

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Overall in the 14th Judicial District, YTD for September 1 between 2021 and 2022, the changes are as follows: Felonies are down 19%, Misdemeanors are down 6%, Traffic cases are down 23%. Combined new cases across the district are down 17%.

Operations

Staffing

The biggest operational challenge we face is staffing. We have had a vacant DDA position in Moffat for several months, and we are losing a DDA in Grand on October 1 due to their inability to find suitable housing. The cost of living as it currently is in NW Colorado, coupled with the absence of any meaningful supply of housing for working professionals, is and will continue to impact our ability to deliver quality prosecution services to the people of the 14th Judicial District. I expect we will be down 2 of 9 attorney positions come October 1, 2022, and if recent trends hold, it may be sometime before we can attract suitable candidates to fill those positions. Because we cannot serve our mission without qualified people staffing the office, I am seeking an 8% increase in personnel budget for 2023, in the hopes that we can compete not just with other prosecutor's offices for attorneys, but with restaurants and other businesses that are beginning to pay wages better than administrative professionals can make with our office. On this topic, I found some examples that for me bring the issue into sharp focus:

- There are law enforcement Sergeants in our jurisdiction making between \$110,000 and \$140,000. This is excellent news, but demonstrates what it takes to attract qualified professionals to our area.
- Local sandwich shops in one of our resort town are hiring at between \$25 and \$35 per hour.
- Estimates for the COLA adjustment for social security for 2023 are between 8% and 10%.
- A recent rental residence in Routt County, suitable for a working couple and perhaps 1 child, was advertised at \$3200 per month with three months rent due up front.

Information and case management

The process of modernizing our case management systems so the information is accessed and transmitted electronically continues, consistent with CRS 16-9-702 and Colo. R. Crim. P. 16 V. We continue to struggle with the inherent challenges of working with three separate IT departments in three different counties, and after much discussion and assessment among the stakeholders, I have concluded the best way forward is to outsource our case management IT needs to a single service provider from the private sector. Other rural offices have found success with the single source model, and given the history of challenges we continue to face, it is clear to me that Pro Velocity, out of Grand Junction, is the right choice. Two of the most critical things that will do for us is make information access seamless and efficient across our three-county judicial district jurisdiction, and ensure 24/7 tech support services. Currently we have neither of those, and because the lack of smooth information access creates tech support needs outside business hours and weekends, our attorneys and staff are regularly without the ability to perform critical

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tasks when working evenings, weekends or remotely. Engaging private sector single source services is reflected in our 2023 budget proposal.

Trial status

The pandemic backlog is keeping the trial schedules busy generally, although we are still seeing some trials delayed due to covid issues. Looking forward, we have several priority trials scheduled across all three counties between now and early 2023, including a homicide, multiple sexual assaults, felony assault, grand theft, domestic violence and other offenses. It is a complicated schedule, given our staffing challenges (more below), but we currently have a plan in place to achieve our mission goals.

Adult Diversion

Our grant funded adult diversion program is progressing well. We received additional funding for FY23 and the program is filling up fast. Currently we have 13 participants, 11 from Routt, 2 from Grand and none from Moffat, with an additional 7 people awaiting screening for entry into the program. Since the program began in 2020 we have had 27 participants, 14 of which successfully completed the program as of 9/1/22. Routt County has the most participants historically, but the numbers from Grand and Moffat are increasing.

Budget Highlights FY22

We are scheduled to replace a vehicle in 2023.

We are seeking an 8% increase in our personnel budget to offset rising costs of living and mitigate against the lack of affordable housing for working professionals.

We are seeking an annual budget of approximately \$63,000 to access single source IT service through Pro Velocity, which would break down as follows among the three counties: Routt \$29,672, Grand \$18,364 and Moffat \$15,198. This number can be reduced by approximately 20-30% if we agree to a full one year term with Pro Velocity. Pro Velocity is CJIS compliant and currently serves customers with significant security needs, such as school districts, and has collaborated with me and representatives from all three county IT departments in assessing their ability to serve our needs. The alternatives to going with Pro Velocity are two: 1) maintain status quo. This is untenable as currently we are unable to ensure access to our case file materials for all employees in a manner necessary to court operations, due to the differing protocols among the county IT departments. 2) One county IT department takes on all IT work for the DA's office. Given the past couple of years and the conversations I have had, and the fact that our cases arise in all three counties and will always do so, the likelihood of eliminating problems caused by different protocols among the county IT departments is very small. I am confident Pro Velocity is the right way forward.

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Unfortunately I will be in a homicide trial at the time of the budget meeting, so Assistant District Attorney Matthew Tjosvold will attend the meeting for our office. However, as always, if you would like more information about any of these budget highlights, or anything else, please do not hesitate to contact me – my cell is 970-629-5229. Thank you for your time, and please take care.

Sincerely,


Matt Karzen
District Attorney, 14th Judicial District

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