

Lewis County Sherriff Office Correspondence

Update February 24, 2023

Sherriff Snaza provided testimony at the public hearing on Ordinance 1343. Community Develop staff emailed Sherriff Snaza to ask questions related to his testimony. The response is below.

Is there a level of service, such as number of officers per population or standard response time for East Lewis County?

In reference to your request, I have no formal data or response times. What I can tell you is that over the last twenty plus years the east end has only had one deputy covering the whole area, approximately 1300 square miles. In the mid 90's we had two deputies working east end nights, with one working the dayshift. Since being Sheriff I have asked every year for additional deputies to help the east end, with no results. With that being said, until there is additional coverage in the east end, I cannot nor will I support any additional develops in the east end.

Staff Research:

Community Development staff conducted additional research to determine if there was a standard level of service for policing. A standard was not found. There are recommended methodologies for determining the appropriate level of staffing for any given law enforcement department. Those methodologies not only look at officers per capita, but also work load and response time to 911 calls. While the comparisons below provide some information, it is not the only data that should be considered when determining appropriate officer staffing in Lewis County.

Washington State is in the bottom five for fewest law enforcement officers per capita (source: <https://worldpopulationreview.com/state-rankings/police-officers-by-state>).

Staff was unable to find a breakdown of officers per 1,000 persons for the jurisdictions in Washington; however, a breakdown was available for Idaho (source: <https://www.kcgov.us/868/Idaho-Officers-per-1000-Population>). The range was 0.67 officers per 1,000 persons in Spokane County to 3.25 officers per 1,000 persons in Clark County.

The statistics across the United States vary significantly from a low of 9 officers per 100,000 persons to a high of 40.6 officers per 100,000 persons. The average was 16.8 officers per 100,000 persons. (source: <https://www.governing.com/archive/police-officers-per-capita-rates-employment-for-city-departments.html>)

Thurston County employees 90 deputies. The 2020 census population of Thurston County was 294,793, for a ratio of 30.6 deputies per 100,000 persons. In Pierce County, there are 356 deputies for a population of 921,130. A ratio of 38.7 deputies per 100,000 persons. Unfortunately, data for smaller counties with comparable populations to Lewis County was not easily found on each department's webpage.

Ordinance 1343 – Supporting Materials

Lewis County's 2020 census population was 82,149. The Lewis County Sheriff Department has four squads with a Sergeant and five deputies each; for a total of 24 officers. This equates to 0.29 officers per 1,000 persons or 29 officers per 100,000 persons. The unincorporated area of Lewis County is divided into two geographic areas for the purpose of patrols. Mossyrock is the dividing line between our east and west areas of the county. On any given shift, one deputy covers the east end of Lewis County and the remaining deputies cover the west end. (source: <https://lewiscountywa.gov/offices/sheriff/sheriffs-office-field-operations/>) The proposed rezone is located in the east area.

Again, officers per capita is for comparison sake only. Adequate staffing of a law enforcement department depends on many factors including work load and response time.

Staff did reach out to 911 regarding average response time to calls from East County. 911 staff did a search of the system data, but that information is not tracked in a way that makes it easy to evaluate the average response time for East County. It would take additional staff time to pull and analyze the data in order to provide an answer to the question.