



EXTRA NEEDS WITH LIMITED RESOURCES

Do our city leaders need a reality check?

GUEST COLUMN

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The city of Madison has imposed a smoking ban and a restriction against idling engines. It has also approved a new pool with a capacity of 2,000 and, in concept, a new Central Park. Let's say, for convenience sake, these are all laudable accomplishments, initiatives and projects.

Allow me to ask, who will be charged with enforcing the smoking ban or the idling vehicle restrictions? Who will respond to police calls for service and medical emergencies at the new pool? Who will provide for public safety in the expansive new Central Park and how will those services be delivered?

Naturally, the police department will likely be tasked with responding to and/or enforcing these new ordinances. The smoking ban will impact Central District police services during prime tavern hours, a time when calls for service in the central city already often exceed the department's ability to respond. The idling restrictions will most likely impact our day shift, which is already our smallest shift in numbers of personnel.

Has any provision, or thought, been given to increasing staffing for the police department in order that we may enforce these ordinances and also maintain the high level of service Madison residents have come to expect from us? If the policy makers are sincere about enforcing these ordinances, then an increase in staffing should be in order.

The new swimming pool is going to be a fantastic recreational opportunity for area residents. With a capacity of 2,000, nearly everyone should be able to go on any given day. Understandably, the pool will be open during limited hours over a limited duration of months, but during that time there will be public safety needs there.

The police department will be called there for a variety of issues, and it is likely that the fire department will be summoned there as well for medical emergencies. The city should consider adding police staff to the South District to handle the extra work that the pool will generate.

We need to have an open discussion about how to best deliver the public safety services to the new Central Park. Will the park require additional personnel? Will there be additional equipment needs?

Sgt. Emil Quast has proposed creating a mounted unit using horses to do a variety of tasks. This may be a viable option that also could help with weekend evenings on State Street, the Halloween event, the Mifflin Street event, Rhythm and Booms and Elver Park fireworks.

We need to take a common sense approach to answering these questions. Let us begin being proactive now rather than playing "catch up" later on when some crises arise. If we want to continue to grow and develop and provide all the services we have grown accustomed to, we need to have a serious discussion about this community's priorities, how we deliver services, and our ability to pay.

We cannot afford to let these issues spin out of control before we address them or engage in some kind of disorganized scramble later in the process.

Favour is president of the Madison Professional Police Officer's Association and a founding member of the recently-created Common Sense Coalition.