

SHELBY COUNTY LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL BOARD

P.O. BOX 1006
COLUMBIANA, AL 35051

Shelby County Law Enforcement Personnel Board

Work Session

August 28, 2025, at 4:00 PM

Sheriff's Office Training Center—Large Classroom

543 McDow Road Columbiana, AL 35051

I. START OF WORK SESSION

The work session began at 4:11 p.m.

II. ATTENDANCE

Present:

Mr. Jake Guercio, Board Chairman

Mr. James Sellers, Board Secretary

Mr. Rick Ogden

Mr. Alan Miller

Mr. Bill Keller

Danielle Warren, LEPB Administrative Assistant

Others Present:

Major Jay Fondren

Captain Mark Bishop

Lieutenant David Perry

Sergeant Tommy Maddox

Sergeant Crystal Motley

Ms. Krissie Masters

Ms. Leigh Ann Bates

Ms. Teresa Smith

Ms. Jamie Rogers

III. DISCUSSION

Mr. Jake Guercio opened discussion restating the objective of the work session and what had been asked of the Board Members. Mr. Alan Miller began discussion recalling the one time payment COLA that was adopted two years ago. He also reminded attendees about the adoption of last year's COLA and how it was well above what the County requested the Board adopt. He noted the Board's decision to do so was based on assurances from the Sheriff that the Sheriff's Office funds could cover it. He stated that the COLA did not go away and that when moving into

subsequent years is when it becomes an issue. He further stated that, in terms of cost of living adjustments, Sheriff's Office employees are still above what County employees received. He added that it was important to consider that especially in light of agencies that are currently experiencing budget restrictions or cuts, some of them substantial. He stated that, while Shelby County operates fiscally conservative, the decision to not extend a cost of living adjustment is based purely on economic forecasts. He expressed concerns regarding flat funding in the future and how it could affect personnel, recruitment, and retention.

Mr. Bill Keller interjected that he had not seen the numbers but that there was no easy solution. Mr. Miller responded that he would get the figures for review. Mr. Jake Guercio stated that he had briefly looked at the numbers, and it is an anticipated budget. He further stated there was not a finite time that the County could not give a COLA increase.

Major Jay Fondren stated he recalled discussion regarding rolling up salary lines and giving a one time COLA prior toward the end of fiscal year and asked if that had been discussed. Mr. Guercio responded that he had been told that if numbers are better than anticipated then that would happen in terms of a one time payment. Mr. Miller stated that he believed the County would do something when and if they were able. Mr. Guercio stated it would not occur until the next fiscal year.

There was a brief discussion regarding how one time payments affect retirement. Mr. Miller stated his concern that adopting COLA's when the County is not able could create the impression that the Board disregards the fiscal state of the County and concentrates only on other agencies or cost of living increases on a national level. Lieutenant David Perry stated that every year the County has a "doom and gloom" attitude and it is never that bad. He noted that it makes it difficult to believe them. He further stated that the reason state employees are not getting a COLA is because they are receiving paid paternity and maternity leave.

Mr. Guercio discussed how employees, unless the employees are topped out or are not eligible for their merit step raise, would receive their 4%+ merit step raise and how there are not many companies that offer that. He also reminded attendees of the difficulty to get the current payscale approved and how he is still reminded of that. Mr. Keller stated he believed it was due to last year's COLA adoption. Mr. Keller stated that, as a taxpayer, if the County is stating that the revenue cannot support a COLA, that he has to believe it. He added that he simply has not seen any numbers, but he understands and wishes circumstances were different.

Mr. James Sellers stated that adopting a COLA is about keeping pay in line with current costs of living and everything is more expensive. He further stated that adopting a COLA keeps employees on track and causes concern to potential recruits who see a payscale that has not been updated. He also noted that without adopting a COLA, it could cause a large increase in future pay to catch up when a new pay scale is created.

Sergeant Crystal Motley discussed the issue with health insurance and how costs of prescriptions have increased so much that touting health insurance benefits is not as big a recruitment tool as it used to be. Then followed a brief discussion regarding health insurance. Mr. Keller then asked how many employees had left to go to a competing agency. Major Fondren responded that typically it was a Jail Deputy leaving to become a patrol officer but figures were not available at the time of the meeting. Captain Mark Bishop stated that turnover is primarily due to employees leaving law enforcement or retiring. Mr. Keller stated that he always asks and has not gotten the sense that, with the information presented, that the Sheriff's Office is not competitive when it comes to salary and benefits compared to competition. He added the struggle comes to topped out employees. Captain Bishop responded that while they may not be losing many employees to other agencies they do keep an informal eye on people hired by other agencies that did not apply to the Sheriff's Office. He further added they are just as concerned about retention as they are recruitment.

Mr. Rick Ogden stated he understood the County looks at everyone the same but felt something needed to be done because, as a law enforcement officer, it does not feel the same. He discussed the circumstances, sometimes extreme, that law enforcement officers must face. He stated concern over falling behind other agencies. Further he addressed how topped out employees will not receive anything, estimated to be around 30-40% of Sheriff's Office employees. Mr. Guercio agreed with Mr. Ogden.

Mr. Guercio stated uncertainty about adopting a COLA percentage due to potential long-term ramifications. He stated the County may do something at a later date, if able. He noted the County's concern over the budget. Mr. Ogden, addressing Mr. Miller, asked whether any decision will be based on what costs the Sheriff's Office could absorb. Mr. Miller stated it would not matter next year. Mr. Keller stated that a one time payment would not affect future budgets. Mr. Sellers stated that if the COLA was a percentage, and then later during a pay study and needing to go higher, it would affect budgets anyway.

Ms. Leigh Ann Bates addressed the importance of being able to recruit because not just anyone can step in and fill the role. Mr. Guercio addressed the recruitment issue

and how much money has been spent on recruiting efforts. He noted that increases in website traffic increased, but did not see those numbers reflected in actual applications and new hires. He proposed looking at ways to use those funds internally, such as referral bonuses. He stated he had been speaking to the Board attorney regarding the legality and feasibility of such a program. He further added that the best employees come from current employee referrals. Mr. Miller stated he believed that was an idea worth exploring.

Major Fondren addressed adjusting longevity pay. He stated retention is equally important. Brief discussion regarding past decisions regarding health insurance coverage and paid time off followed. Mr. Ogden stated they needed to speak with the Sheriff since a one-time payment would likely come from the Sheriff's Office budget. Mr. Sellers addressed the prior Board decision to not do one-time COLAs going forward following the last adoption of a one-time COLA payment. Some addressed the fairness of a new employee receiving a one-time payment versus more seasoned employees receiving a one time payment. The question was posed whether it could be a one time percentage. Mr. Miller responded that it could be arranged that way. It was noted that 71 out of 247 employees were topped out, or 27%. Mr. Guercio stated that if they did a one-time percentage, they would have to figure out what that percentage would be based on total payroll cost. Major Fondren stated it could not be based on the total budget, but on the actual number of employees.

Mr. Guercio requested a count of the exact annual figures paid based on the number of employees to date. Concerns were expressed over rolling over budgets and caution needs to be taken over making that assumption. Mr. Keller stated the Board should refrain from making decisions based on assumed budget rollovers. Mr. Miller posed making a one time percentage payment before the end of FY 25 and if conditions improved later, than can address that then.


Mr. Miller stated they could not make a decision because it would impact the Sheriff's Office FY 25 funds. It was noted that if later the County decided to move forward with a true COLA later, then could adopt the additional amount to bring everyone current. There was discussion whether that could happen and whether the Sheriff's Office budget could handle that.

Mr. Guercio stated they could approach the Sheriff and state the Board would like to do a certain amount COLA and ask whether the budget could handle that. Discussion returned to budget rollovers.

Mr. Guercio asked Mr. Ogden to approach the Sheriff and ask what percentage can the budget afford. Mr. Guercio also requested the exact figure of the number of employees and how 2% would impact the budget. He requested this information be provided by next Tuesday. Mr. Miller stated that there was discussion about no longer rolling funds over. He noted that may be a likely reaction moving forward.

IV. END OF WORK SESSION

The work session ended at 5:28 p.m.

X 
Mr. Jake Guercio, Board Chairman

Date: 9 / 2 / 2025

X 
Mr. James Sellers, Board Secretary

Date: 9 / 2 / 2025