



**TOWN OF SURFSIDE**  
**Office of the Town Manager**  
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**LETTER TO COMMISSION**

No.:16-2024

To: Mayor Charles W. Burkett, Vice Mayor Tina Paul, and  
Members of the Town Commission

From: Mark Blumstein, Acting Town Manager *MB*

Date: December 30, 2024

Subject: **Proposal to Contract Police Services with Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office**

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The purpose of this Letter to Commission (LTC) is to transmit the attached Proposal to Contract Police Services with Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office prepared by our Chief of Police.

The Mayor has initiated a discussion of this item for the upcoming Town Commission Meeting of January 14, 2025.

*If you have any questions or need additional information, feel free to contact me.*

Enclosed: Proposal to Contract Police Services with Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office

## Ana Gonzalez

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**Subject:** UPDATE: Proposal to Contract Police Services with Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office

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**From:** Edward Holbrook <eholbrook@townofsurfsidefl.gov>

**Sent:** Friday, December 27, 2024 2:06 PM

**To:** Mark Blumstein <mblumstein@townofsurfsidefl.gov>

**Cc:** Ana Gonzalez <agonzalez@townofsurfsidefl.gov>

**Subject:** UPDATE: Proposal to Contract Police Services with Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office

### Proposal to Contract Police Services with Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office

#### Introduction

The Town of Surfside has faced persistent challenges with its police department, including operational inefficiencies, staff instability, low morale, and significant financial burdens. Contracting police services with the Miami-Dade Sheriff's Office (MDSO) offers a timely and comprehensive solution to these longstanding issues. With the next town commission election scheduled for March 2026, this transition—if implemented promptly—would allow the new leadership to assess the benefits of the MDSO partnership for up to a year. This document outlines the reasons why this decision is both urgent and beneficial for the town, its residents, and the officers.

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#### Key Benefits

##### 1. Cost Efficiency

- Transitioning to MDSO services would significantly reduce the Town of Surfside's annual police budget. For example, the estimated cost of services under MDSO is projected to be much less than the current Surfside Police budget of \$7.5 million. This cost includes comprehensive law enforcement support and specialized services without additional fees.

##### 2. Access to Enhanced Resources

- MDSO provides specialized services such as:
  - Crime Scene Units
  - K-9, Aviation, and Marine Patrols
  - SWAT and Crisis Intervention Teams
  - Advanced Training Programs and Investigative Support

- Mounted Patrol
  - Any many more services
  - These services, currently outsourced or unavailable, would come bundled under the contract at no extra charge.
  - 3. Liability Transfer**
    - MDSO assumes liability for litigation involving officers, reducing Surfside’s financial and legal risks. This includes responsibility for hiring, promotions, discipline, and retirement.
  - 4. Retention of Familiar Officers**
    - Existing Surfside officers can transition to MDSO, ensuring community familiarity. Importantly, the Town Manager retains control over which officers remain in Surfside. If the Town Manager deems it necessary to replace an officer, MDSO will facilitate a transfer, swapping out officers with others from MDSO within days. This ensures Surfside maintains the highest standards of professionalism and alignment with community expectations.
  - 5. Improved Stability and Professionalism**
    - MDSO’s centralized management structure mitigates political instability that has historically impacted Surfside’s police leadership. Officers would benefit from consistent policies, support, and training opportunities.
  - 6. Integration with Current MDSO Services**
    - MDSO already provides fire rescue and dispatch services to Surfside. Adding police services creates a streamlined emergency response system, enhancing coordination and efficiency.
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## Addressing the “Why Now?”

- 1. Chronic Leadership Instability**
  - Surfside Police Department has experienced repeated leadership changes, with six or more police chiefs and command staff turnovers in the past seven years. These changes are often tied to political shifts within the town commission, creating instability and undermining long-term planning. Contracting with MDSO would provide a stable, professional structure immune to local political fluctuations.
- 2. Persistent Discipline and Staffing Challenges**
  - Recent and ongoing issues include:
    - A civilian employee’s termination that may lead to litigation.
    - A sergeant’s demotion for poor performance, currently pending arbitration.
    - A sergeant frequently deployed with the Air Force Reserves, causing staffing disruptions and concerns over potential abuse of USSERA laws.
    - Officers turning in zero statistics per shift, further indicating low morale and disengagement.
  - Transitioning to MDSO would address these issues by providing clear and consistent disciplinary and staffing oversight.
- 3. Training Deficits**

- Due to staffing shortages, officers are unable to attend necessary training programs, impacting their effectiveness and professional growth. MDSO's training infrastructure would eliminate this issue, ensuring officers receive the support they need.
  - 4. Financial Pressures**
    - Commissioners have expressed concerns about the financial strain of funding the police retirement system. Contracting with MDSO would alleviate this burden, transferring pension obligations to the county and providing significant cost savings.
  - 5. Upcoming FOP Contract Negotiations**
    - The current Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) contract expires at the end of September 2025. Starting MDSO services now would allow Surfside to avoid contentious contract negotiations, as officers would transition to MDSO's collective bargaining framework.
  - 6. Low Morale and Operational Inefficiency**
    - Morale within the department is at an all-time low, with officers disengaged and underperforming. MDSO's structured environment and resources would revitalize officer engagement and effectiveness.
  - 7. Preparation for the 2026 Commission**
    - Implementing this change before the March 2026 elections ensures the new commission will have time to evaluate the partnership's success, providing continuity and minimizing disruption during the transition period.
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## Addressing Concerns

- 1. Community Familiarity**
    - Residents will continue to see familiar faces patrolling their neighborhoods as Surfside's current officers transition to MDSO. The Town Manager will play an active role in ensuring alignment with community standards, retaining or replacing officers as necessary, with MDSO's support in facilitating smooth and timely transitions.
  - 2. Pension and Benefits**
    - Officers would either transfer into the Florida Retirement System (FRS) or retain their existing pensions. Provisions would be negotiated to ensure no loss of accrued benefits.
  - 3. Service Levels**
    - The contract specifies minimum staffing levels (e.g., four officers per shift), countering concerns about reduced coverage. These levels are customizable based on community needs.
  - 4. Operational Oversight**
    - While MDSO manages day-to-day operations, Surfside retains control through contract stipulations. Annual reviews and open communication channels ensure responsiveness to the town's priorities.
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## **Conclusion**

Surfside's longstanding challenges—political instability, financial pressures, staffing issues, and low morale—demand immediate action. Contracting police services with MDSO provides a proven, cost-effective solution that ensures stability, professionalism, and community-focused policing. Acting now ensures a smooth transition and gives the incoming 2026 commission the opportunity to assess and build upon this partnership's success.

## **Next Steps**

1. Conduct a detailed cost-benefit analysis with MDSO representatives.
2. Begin contract negotiations, ensuring provisions for officer retention, pension security, and staffing minimums.



***Edward Wayne Holbrook***

***Chief of Police***

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