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Ed and Cathy

Look at this column by Yael from 4 years ago. Corwin lied back then.

Also you should have your aide look at the 64130 series in the Star for Corwin quotes about needing to keep up and revive neighborhoods in order to fight crime. If Corwin and Flunk get their way we have more cops, but more crime because you would have to cut basic city services like code inspectors by so much.

Corwin says in this piece that the Police are "top heavy". I bet he has added more staff since then !

steve

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Changing priorities

New chief's open-mindedness should help Kansas City Police Department

Yael T. ABOUHALKAH

Chief Jim Corwin promises to be an agent of change for Kansas City's Police Department. Good for him; it desperately needs one.

"Just because we've done it forever and forever and forever doesn't necessarily mean we have to keep doing it that way," Corwin said Tuesday.

The agency must reduce its bloated civilian staff, freeing up money to add police officers.

The police also may have to kill a capital improvement (such as expanding its communications facility) to save funds to build high-quality police stations.

The new chief brings an encouraging open-mindedness to his job. That kind of leadership is required at the Police Department, which faces huge challenges in protecting people today and in the future.

Kansas City's rate of violent crime is too high.

The department has failed to hire new officers that were promised by elected leaders in 2002.

Funding problems have delayed construction of a new Metro Patrol station near 63rd Street and the Paseo and a modern training academy north of the Missouri River.

Sure, that's just looking at the bleak side of things. But it's the side that many people see, especially every night when they turn on their television sets and hear about another murder, rape or robbery.

Corwin watches the same shows and acknowledges that "perception is everything," that many residents are convinced the city suffers from too much crime.

The overall numbers are indeed glum, but they are much better than they were in the early 1990s.

Kansas City recorded 1,450 violent crimes per 100,000 people in 2004. That rate is about 45 percent higher than the average for U.S. cities with populations between 250,000 and 500,000, according to the latest FBI statistics. Kansas City's population is just more than 440,000.

However, Kansas City's rate has fallen to only half of what it was in 1992, which was a staggering 2,900 violent crimes per 100,000 people.

It's extremely good news that murders, forcible rapes, robberies and aggravated assaults have gone down dramatically since then, even faster than they have in many other large U.S. cities. And property crimes in Kansas City have declined as well. (See chart.)

This development has occurred for many reasons.

Tough-on-crime legislation put more lawbreakers behind bars. The percentage of young people more likely to commit crimes fell. And the police started new programs aimed at getting drug dealers and gun users off the streets.

One thing the Police Department didn't do, unfortunately, is add a lot more officers.

In 2002, Mayor Kay Barnes and the City Council pledged to hire 180 officers over a nine-year period if voters approved a higher sales tax dedicated for police capital projects. Voters did their part. And the council gave the Police Department hundreds of thousands of dollars to add officers. **Problem is, the police staff used the money for other things.**

**That left council member Jim Rowland incredulous. Rowland said last week that he had expected the agency to hire the officers, as the council had directed.**

In an interview, Corwin pledged to try to find enough money to "hire all the officers" the city is behind on, or roughly 60, including those funded in the city's new budget starting May 1.

The Police Department should try to find the money in its own budget rather than ask for more from City Hall.

Where to look first?

Making a long-overdue point, City Manager Wayne Cauthen wants the Police Department to slim its civilian staff of about 700 positions. Cauthen said the department had "one of the highest civilian support ratios in the country for cities of our size."

Change is coming, the chief promises.

Corwin appears ready to consolidate some services (such as human resources) with the city staff, to save money and become more efficient. That would be a welcome change from past chiefs, who did not lead the way on this commonsense course of action.

**"My feeling is, we're top heavy," Corwin said, while discussing a planning meeting scheduled today with police management.**

It's encouraging that Corwin sounds open to the idea of killing one of the police capital projects. That would free up enough funds for other projects that were dangled before voters in 2002.

When I suggested eliminating one police project last April to former Chief Rick Easley, his top staff vowed they would complete every project because all were needed.

But City Hall doesn't have enough tax revenue to do everything. And it starts with Chief Corwin setting priorities at the Police Department.

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