

Sheriff's Office Unveils Refurbished Patrol Cars

March 21, 2013

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The Hall County Sheriff's Office is unveiling the first example of what could turn out to be an extensive cost-savings measure: refurbished law enforcement vehicles.

Hall County Sheriff Gerald Couch laid out his proposal to upgrade his department's aging fleet during a Hall County Board of Commissioners meeting in January. With the commission's help and support, the department took delivery of its first refurbished vehicle. The 2001 Ford Crown Victoria was turned over to Jacky Jones Ford for refurbishment a few weeks ago. The dilapidated patrol vehicle had seen 12 years of service, logged over 172,000 road miles, had extensive engine idle miles, worn out seat covers, faded paint and was in desperate need of an overhaul. The vehicle was in such poor condition it was constantly on the brink of being taken out of service, but no better vehicle was available to replace it. Now the car sports a new engine and drive train, suspension components, interior, and other parts as needed. Additionally, the vehicle sports the department's new paint and graphics scheme. But not all is brand new; the department was able to reuse the lights, siren, radio, and other specialized equipment that was already bought and paid for and was still in serviceable condition. Not only does the car have a brand new look and feel, it comes with a 3 year unlimited mileage warranty from the dealership. In terms of dollars and cents, the Sheriff's Office has a little over \$14,600 invested in this refurbishment package, as opposed to the approximately \$32,000 to \$35,000 it would cost to purchase and outfit a brand new patrol vehicle.

In all, the total cost savings realized for one refurbished, fully equipped patrol car vs. purchasing and outfitting a brand new vehicle is over \$17,000 per car. Some of those savings are derived from all of the aforementioned emergency equipment the department already owns, which is not compatible with the new law enforcement vehicle platforms being offered by auto manufacturers. By refurbishing a Crown Victoria and being able to reuse that equipment, the department saves about \$5,000-6,000 per vehicle. Also, by selecting white instead of the gold color which has been the Sheriff's Office mainstay for years, costs are reduced by an additional \$2,300 per car. And finally, the new graphics package costs about \$60 less than the old design.

"This is a great example of how we can accomplish our mission of protecting and serving while being better stewards of the taxpayer's money," said Sheriff Couch. "Until we can afford to purchase new cars to rotate into our fleet, these refurbished vehicles will allow us to continue to provide a high level of service to citizens without placing an undue burden on taxpayers. Doing more, doing it better, and doing it with less are the new watchwords for our agency."

The department, which has only been able to replace a very small number of patrol cars over the past four years due to budget restrictions, would normally need to replace about twenty-five cars per year. This takes into account removing a car from patrol service (first responders) at 150,000 miles and rotating it into the Court Services or Jail Divisions, where it is utilized until it reaches its approximate lifespan of 200,000 miles. Currently, 48 vehicles in the fleet have more than 200,000 miles and are beginning to require costly repairs. With this new program, those same vehicles can begin life anew and provide the department with additional years of service.

Hall County District 3 Commissioner Scott Gibbs echoed his support of Couch's efforts to update the aging fleet.

“This program not only saves taxpayers money, but it also keeps used patrol cars out of junk yards,” Gibbs said. “The safety of our citizens is a top priority for this commiss