

## Sheriff Whittington Speaks

Written by Marty Carlson  
Friday, 21 December 2012 08:13 -

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It's been a busy six months for Bossier Parish Sheriff Julian Whittington since his July swearing-in – but a few changes and quiet progress in the Sheriff's Office hasn't been the stuff of news. But he sat down earlier this week to talk about the Bossier Parish Sheriff's Office (BPSO) and provide an up-date of changes and advances.

"I'm basically a low profile kind of guy; I believe in just getting the work done," said Whittington.

That work has included moving the Sheriff's Office back to the Bossier Parish Courthouse, which was one of Whittington's campaign promises.

Whittington said he believes the courthouse is where people expect him to be, along all other elected parish officials. Whittington said another – much tougher – issue to tackle was getting realistic with the Sheriff's Office budget, and that required "substantial salary changes."

Whittington said it was a difficult move and hard on the household budgets of employees whose pay was impacted; he gave 60 days for them to prepare.

"I was very proud of our folks," Whittington said. He explained that the former pay structure had to be changed as its path was unsustainable and his office wouldn't be able to maintain it without serious changes.

"We're public servants," said Whittington. "I wish we could pay them five times what we do, but

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we can't do that." The Sheriff said that his deputies will not enjoy any raises this year, and he pointed to lower sales tax and gaming revenue along with constantly increasing costs of running the Sheriff's Office as contributing to a slim budget plan.

Whittington also said that he's added about 15 new personnel to the department since July 1 as a result of absorbing a state substance abuse program previously housed in a corrections facility closed by the state as a result of budget cuts. As a result, 452 state prisoners were transferred into the Bossier system (medium security facility) for the nine month intensive substance abuse program. Whittington said that the state pays for all costs, including instructors, associated with the program. Additionally the state pays \$24.29 per inmate per day for those in the program.

Building relationships and collaborative efforts also count high on Whittington's list of accomplishments. In October the BPSO and Bossier City Police Department created a joint narcotics task force; last week the two law enforcement agencies created a white collar crime ID theft unit. The BPSO is also assisting the city police department with vacation house checks during the day shift. Whittington also noted that his office has very good working relationships with state and federal law enforcement agencies such as the FBI and Marshal's Service.

Looking to the next few months, Whittington said he hopes to train some of the Sheriff's Posse members as funeral escorts – and complete work on an ordinance that will authorize Posse members to write citations for handicapped parking violators and folks who violate the law regarding passing stopped school buses. Whittington was emphatic about his disdain for violators on either count – “... there's just no excuse,” he said.

“As crime goes, we're very fortunate,” Whittington observed. “Most of our calls are traffic calls.” And he emphasized that drivers can expect fairly regular repetition of last Friday's DWI checkpoints – “We will have more in the future; we're letting people know we are serious (about stemming DWI incidents).”

Finally, Whittington talked briefly about school safety in the wake of the Connecticut tragedy. Whittington emphasized that while his department cannot keep every school totally safe, he and his officers are committed to protect our children at school – and will continue to increase that security everywhere they can.

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Whittington's first six months has been quietly busy – look for more of the same over the next several years from this committed, but always understated, public servant.

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