

Sheriff Bringing Communication, Professionalism and Unity to Agency



PBA representative Jim Wiggins and Sheriff Bobby McCallum sign a three year PBA contract outlining ages, benefits and working conditions for sheriff's office deputies and detention officers. *Photo by Terry Witt.*

By Terry Witt
Senior Staff Writer

Relations between Sheriff Bobby McCallum and the Policeman's Benevolent Association have never been better.

McCallum and PBA Director of Organizational Services Jim Wiggins signed a three-year contract last week as Wiggins' lavished praise on the new sheriff.

Wiggins said the deputies and correctional officers of the sheriff's

office are enjoying the professionalism and fairness that McCallum brought to the job.

"They feel differently about Sheriff McCallum and his professionalism," Wiggins said.

Wiggins said employees know about McCallum's "distinguished law enforcement" career and how his background has influenced the way he runs the agency.

"They feel he brings the sheriff's office to a new level," Wiggins said.

McCallum joked that he's not distinguished. He's probably just old.

But he said he has attempted to bring an atmosphere of fairness and equality to the sheriff's office.

He said his remarks were not intended as criticism of former Sheriff Johnny Smith.

But McCallum said he has his own way of doing things.

"Our deal is; everything we do we try to be fair and equitable," McCallum said. "They are not the highest paid folks in the world."

McCallum said the sheriff's office had employees who were not working as hard as they should. He worked to "equalize that out." Everyone has to pull their load.

He said correctional officers are not treated as working for a separate entity. The sheriff's office, deputies and correctional officers, work as part of the same organization, which is a change in thinking and a change in the way the organization actually works.

There were correctional officers who had worked for the sheriff's office a long time but had never walked into the sheriff's administrative offices next door to the jail since they were first hired, McCallum said.

McCallum said his command staff actually pays visits to the jail during late night hours just to see how things are going and to visit with correctional officers who might not see them otherwise.

“We try to make them aware there is one sheriff’s office. There are different divisions, but we are one and that has helped with the detention staff,” McCallum said.

He said command staff sometimes pays unexpected visits to patrol officers in their zones just to talk. They want to find out what’s going on and open lines of communication with the officers. He said the command staff has worked to resolve differences between employees without showing favoritism. He said communicating with employees is an important aspect of his management style.

Wiggins said “dispute resolution” is one of the hallmarks of McCallum’s administration. He is known for resolving disputes.

“He is by no means a rubber stamp, but he lets them know we’re going to try to get along,” Wiggins said.

McCallum said employees have responded to his efforts to encourage professionalism.

“Their professionalism has really come through. I have had very few complaints,” he said.

Wiggins added, “We have very few internal complaints and we used to have a lot.”

The Policeman’s Benevolent Association is a union. Its members negotiate for better pay and they can address issues related to working conditions. They cannot strike.

McCallum is concerned about starting pay for deputies and detention staff. A starting deputy earns \$28,840, which is less than Alachua, Marion, Citrus and Gilchrist counties.

“I want to bring up the starting pay for deputies and detention officers,” he said.

The sheriff said he is aware that Levy County is a fiscally constrained county with a low tax base.

But he said there is a need for increased starting pay.