



Atlantic County Sheriff's Office Photo

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Diverse group of new Sheriff Officers joins Atlantic County MICHELLE BRUNETTI POST

MAYS LANDING — Twelve new Atlantic County Sheriff Officers were sworn in at Tuesday's freeholders meeting at the Criminal Court Complex, four of whom are former Camden County police officers.

"I'm happy. This is one of the most diverse hirings we have had," said Sheriff Frank Balles after the ceremony. He said two of the new officers are of Egyptian descent and speak Arabic, while three are African American and one is a woman.

The group mainly replaces retiring officers, but one additional position was created by the county's use of private armed security at its administration building in Atlantic City. That freed up money for another position, said Balles.

Balles estimates that complying with the state's Bail Reform/Speedy Trial Act will require hiring seven additional Sheriff Officers this year into next, as his officers will be expected to be more available at all hours for bail hearings.

Also Tuesday, the freeholders heard from representatives of the nonprofit Crossroads Programs of Willingboro, Burlington County. It will provide licensed private homes for teenagers who cannot stay in their family homes because of conflict or other problems.

They would otherwise be housed at the county's youth shelter in Northfield, but County Administrator Jerry DelRosso estimated using Crossroads instead will save the county about \$450,000 a year.

The freeholders then voted to establish a pool of vendors through Crossroads to provide youth shelter beds to the county at a cost of \$209.09 a day, not to exceed \$114,476.78 a year.

County Director of Youth Services Jim Halfpenny said the program averages 1.5 teens ages 12-17 needing temporary housing each day, 365 days a year.

Crossroads Chief Executive Officer Michael Snyder said the daily figure includes transportation to school and other places, counseling and case management, as well as room and board.

He said the program is seeking families to be trained to house such youth. Call 609-880-0210 or visit crossroadsprograms.org and click on "Get Involved," then "Become a Treatment Parent."

Contact: 609-272-7219

www.atlanticcitypress.com

MPost@pressofac.com

Twitter @MichelleBPost