



Sheriff Robert Pickell and Prosecutor David Leyton call proposed budget cuts "retaliation"

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Both the Genesee County sheriff and prosecutor on Wednesday called proposed cuts to their budgets by county Controller George Martini "retaliation" for a criminal investigation of Career Alliance Inc., the job training agency that Martini's office has some oversight responsibility for.

Sheriff Robert Pickell has been at odds with Martini over budget cuts the controller has proposed as the county looks to eliminate a projected \$15-million budget deficit for the fiscal year that starts Oct. 1.

"If George Martini has his way it eliminates my officers in the Posse (the sheriff's drug team) and the prosecutor's people in the team," Pickell said. "I'm sure the elected officials will see that as retaliatory."

Martini said last week that he was threatened by a county commissioner over proposed cuts to the sheriff's budget. He called Pickell's comments today "bull."

"Somewhere along the way somebody hasn't got it that this county is going broke," Martini said. "(The county) has lost huge amounts of resources. You can only afford so much."

Last year, FBI agents raided county offices and took 16 boxes of records partly related to Career Alliance. The FBI took over the investigation of Career Alliance from Pickell. Martini was never charged with any crime.

Since then, former Interim Flint police Chief David Dicks and his father, Super Chief Richard Dicks, have been federally indicted on fraud charges related to their private security company's work at Career Alliance.

Prosecutor David Leyton said his budget has been targeted by Martini as well and further cuts would result in the loss of three assistant prosecuting attorneys.

The two officials said they investigated Martini's ties to Career Alliance since the county is paid with federal funds to oversee the job-training agencies spending and cash draw-downs.

Leyton agreed that cuts to his budget also were in retaliation to the criminal investigation.

"The controller recommended cuts to the sheriff and myself which will devastate our fight against crime," he said.

Martini said he proposed cuts of across the board in county government -- about 5 percent of requested amounts from most offices, including Leyton's. Pickell's cut was less, about 3.5 percent, and the controller did not spell out how the sheriff should trim about \$750,000 of the approximately \$1.5 million to be cut.

"The reality is the cuts (were a greater percentage) in most of the other departments ," Martini said.

The county Board of Commissioners makes the final decision on where to cut spending to reach the \$92.3 million in revenues that the county has projected to have in its general fund.

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