

Securing Our Safety

We want your input to create:

“A Citizen-voiced plan to provide for a secure, stable and sustainable Josephine County”

www.SecuringOurSafety.org



Josephine County Adult Jail Statistics

- **Part 1, November 2016**

What happens when a community or county in the U.S. loses most of its law enforcement and justice program funding? What happens when law enforcement is unable to respond to non-emergency crimes and sometimes even unable to respond to emergencies? What happens when the local jail can't hold offenders because of severe budget cuts, and there are limited consequences to criminal behavior? Unfortunately, Josephine County, Oregon, can answer some of these questions — if we take the time to collect information.

All parts of the Josephine County criminal justice system took a big hit with the 2012 loss of federal timber funds that used to provide revenue to these programs. The County's adult jail was no exception, and cutting back on the ability to take alleged criminals to jail due to budget cuts has had a massive effect on all law enforcement agencies that operate in Josephine County.

The County has never had the budget to operate the jail at its full capacity of nearly 260 beds, even though the crime activity in Josephine County would warrant using the full capacity. Prior to 2012, the jail only had the budget to use around 160 of these beds. After the 2012 budget cuts, many serious criminals were let out of the jail, and that usage number dropped to under 100 with the inability to afford the proper amount of jail supervision to keep more beds available.

The City of Grants Pass (which has its own police force) really felt the effects of County budget cutbacks since Grants Pass, and all law enforcement agencies in the County, rely on the adult jail. By 2012 and early 2013, unless it was a serious crime, few criminals were being taken to jail. A criminal could be caught in the act, it didn't matter. Criminals and vagrants were taking citations from officers and tearing them up right in front of them, because they knew there were no consequences. Business owners downtown and elsewhere in the community were up in arms, showing up at City Council meetings en masse to complain about vagrants and crime problems around their businesses. Local articles started repeating the phrase "Citation City" in reference to offenders being cited for crimes rather than jailed. Some of these issues were documented in the following video, part of our 2015 video series called "The Cost":

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mIRHDIKZeA>

Everyone in the City and County pays the same County property tax rate, which helps fund the jail and other criminal justice programs we all use. But things were so bad in the City of Grants Pass that in mid-2013 the City Council took a bold step to enter into an exclusive contract with the Sheriff to make approximately 30 more jail beds available to the Grants Pass Police. Now, at a cost of \$972,000 per year, the Grants Pass Police could ensure that the people they arrested

would be taken to jail and held accountable...at least to some degree. As the Grants Pass Public Safety Chief has said numerous times, you can have an officer on every street corner and it will do no good unless the rest of the criminal justice system is functioning properly. Without a jail and prosecution services provided by Josephine County, it doesn't matter much how many officers Grants Pass has on its force.

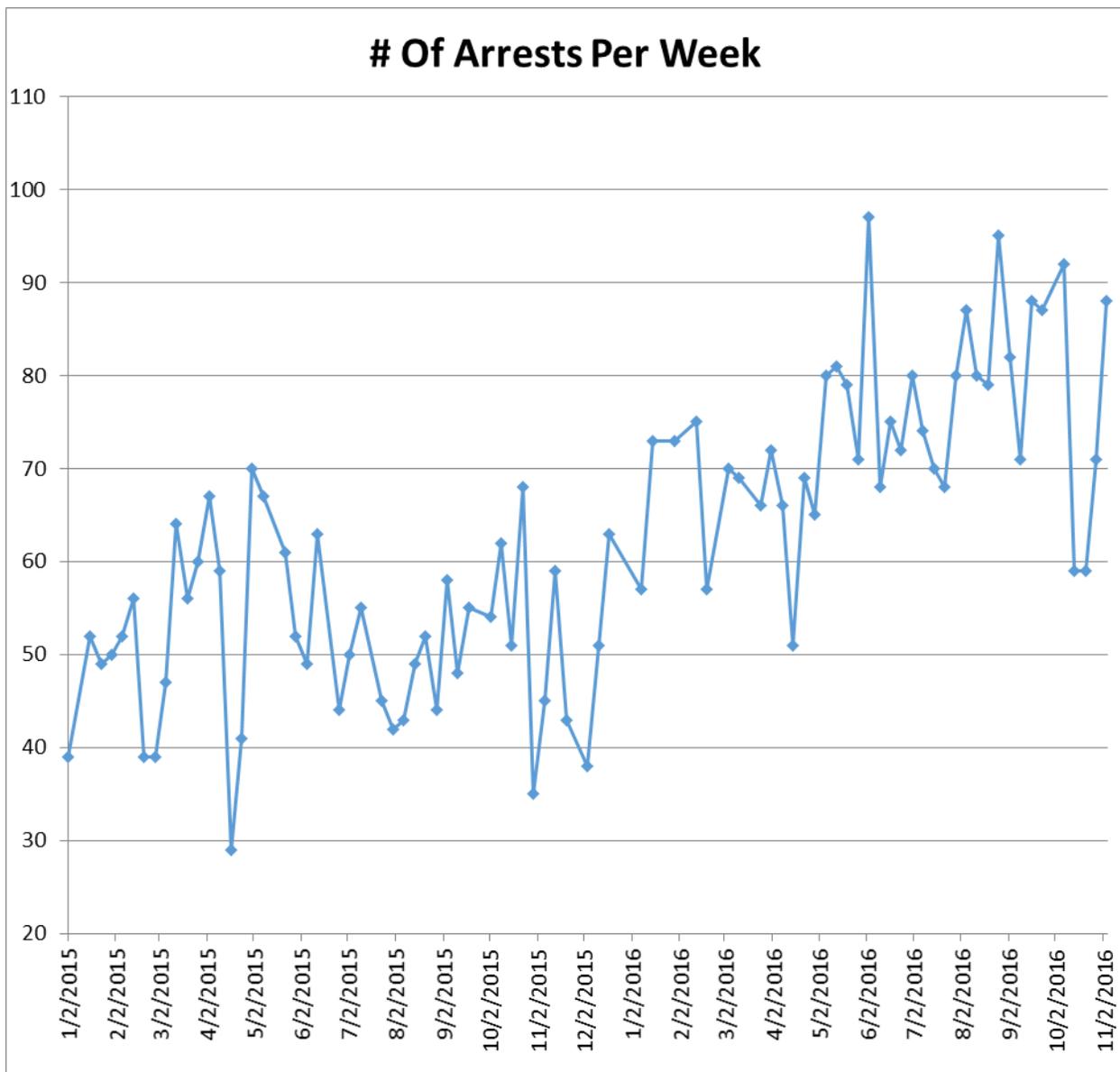
When criminals know there are no consequences for their behavior, they commit more crimes. But when a justice system has "teeth" and crimes result in jail time, criminal behavior is curbed.

The stats from before and after the Grants Pass jail contract illustrate this. The numbers of arrests and citations by Grants Pass Police decreased significantly after those jail beds became available to the City officers. Repeat offenders were being held accountable and were no longer being arrested or causing problems in the community as frequently. Additionally, when someone is arrested and taken to jail, that is an opportunity to check for out-of-area warrants. Criminals could now also be sent back to other municipalities to answer for their crimes in the jurisdictions where those crimes were committed. Word got out fast that Grants Pass was no longer a safe harbor for criminals...and behavior changed.

The investment in jail services worked out very well in helping to clean up Grants Pass and once again hold criminals accountable. It's our own local proof that we need to invest further in jail services for the benefit of everyone in the County and for all law enforcement agencies that operate here. However, looking further into the stats, we would equate the existing jail services contract to a Band-Aid over a large wound. Our jail is still not serving anywhere close to our county's need. Grants Pass Police and the other enforcement agencies in Josephine County still can't keep someone in jail unless that person is suspected of a serious crime. The jail is a "revolving door" – just about every time a new person is taken to jail, another alleged criminal is let out the back door. The jail beds are there, there's just not enough staff to fill them.

With the City jail bed services contract in effect for a little more than 3 years now, let's take a look at arrest and citation statistics for the City of Grants Pass police for the last couple years. The two charts on the following pages show the number of Grants Pass Police arrests per week, and the number of citations per week, for 2015 and 2016 to date.

GRANTS PASS POLICE



Source: City of Grants Pass weekly reports

As you can see above, a disturbing trend is emerging. The statistics above are alarming on a couple of levels.

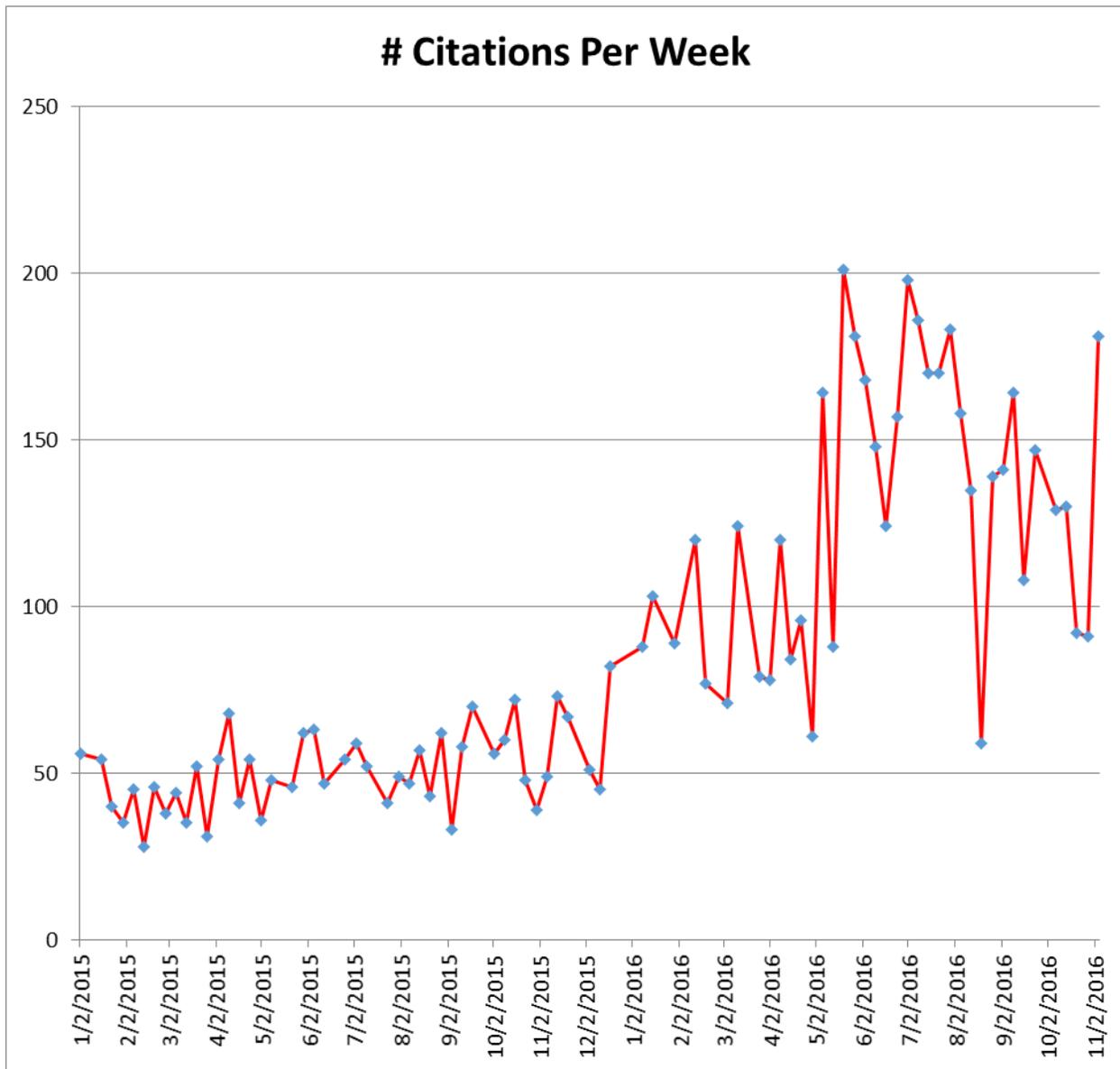
First, let's keep in mind that the City Police only have about 30 total jail beds available to use. This doesn't go very far when arrests are generally in the range of 50-90 per week. This also means that there are not jail beds available for sentencing purposes when the court sentence would result in local jail time rather than prison time. Due to the "revolving door" effect of our local jail, and with this many arrests, this suggests the average jail stay is extremely short. If someone stole your personal belongings, was caught, and only stayed in jail for one day, how would you feel about that?

Second, the data itself shows arrests on the rise for the last couple years. In 2015, City police were generally arresting between 40 and 70 people per week. This year, weekly arrests are

between 60 and 90. As the Grants Pass Police have hired a few more officers to meet the need, and also formed a Nuisance Intervention Team a couple of years ago, the increase in arrests is probably a combination of better police work and an increasing number of incidents needing police attention.

And it's not the case that police are writing fewer citations and taking people to jail instead; see the graph below on citation numbers in 2015 and 2016.

GRANTS PASS POLICE



Source: City of Grants Pass weekly reports

Once again, a disturbing trend is surfacing. Both the number of arrests and citations show an upward trend over the last two years.

Despite the recent rise in arrests and citations, the decision for Grants Pass to rent extra beds in the County adult jail has paid off. Serious crimes such as person-on-person type crimes (in the City of Grants Pass) have actually decreased since the crisis first began in 2012, but high levels

of property crimes and lower-level type crimes have persisted. According to the broken windows theory, if left unaddressed, the larger numbers of lower level crimes will eventually turn into more serious crimes.

It's clear that both the City and Josephine County need to invest significantly in additional adult jail capacity to impact safety and crime levels in Josephine County, even if the number of officers out there serving us at present does not change.

The following is a story reported by SOS recently via Facebook. Unfortunately, this is the type of situation that is common until we invest back in the Josephine County criminal justice system.

“JAILED SIX TIMES SINCE MAY”

During a special saturation patrol in the Illinois Valley on Oct. 29, 2016, the sheriff himself nabbed a suspect. Sheriff Dave Daniel heard Travis Bohn was speeding his way in a stolen car with deputies in pursuit, so he laid out spike strips on Redwood Highway, ending the chase and catching Bohn.

Bohn was jailed and charged with eluding an officer, meth possession and reckless driving. He's been charged in six cases since May, but in each case he was quickly released from the Josephine County Jail, which operates at half its capacity because of underfunding.

This time around, Bohn remains in jail — for now. His other five cases are still pending. Here they are:

- MAY 30: Bohn was found on Riverbanks Road in a Chevy S10 pickup truck that had been stolen from the Lorna Byrne Middle School parking lot earlier in the day. He told a deputy he'd bought the truck for \$250 from a man who told him where it was parked and that he could start it with a screwdriver. He was charged with unauthorized use of a vehicle, and was released from jail on June 3.
- AUG. 8: Bohn was arrested on a warrant, and was charged with unlawful entry into a motor vehicle and third-degree theft for an incident in which items were stolen and gas was siphoned from a van on Lower River Road. He was released from custody that same day. He failed to show up for his next court appearance, and another warrant was issued for his arrest. He was arrested on that warrant on Sept. 23, but was released from jail on Oct. 3, and again failed to show up to court.
- SEPT. 12: Bohn was arrested on a warrant for failing to appear in court in another case involving charges of unauthorized use of a vehicle and meth possession. In that case, he's accused of stealing a Nissan on Aug. 6.
- SEPT. 23: Bohn was arraigned in a fourth case in which he's charged with unauthorized use of a vehicle and criminal mischief for a Sept. 22 incident in which Grants Pass police found him near H and Ninth streets in a car that was reported stolen that morning. He failed to appear for an Oct. 14 hearing in that case.

• OCT. 7: Bohn was indicted on yet another charge of unauthorized use of a vehicle for a July incident in which he's accused of stealing a Nissan.

The Josephine County Jail is a revolving door because of understaffing, and this is not an isolated case. It's no wonder the Grants Pass area was found to have the highest rate of car theft in Oregon:

http://www.oregonlive.com/commuting/index.ssf/2016/07/oregons_car-theft_capital_its.html

Our local criminal justice system does not have the budget to hold criminals accountable when they break the law. We need to invest in public safety, or this catch-and-release cycle will continue, with offenders back out on the streets to commit more crimes.

About SOS:

Securing Our Safety is a non-profit 501(c)(3), citizen-led organization dedicated to the mission of providing for a secure, stable, and sustainable future for Josephine County, Oregon.

SOS was formed by local business owners, community leaders, parents, retirees, and other concerned citizens to explore any and all ideas that might help address the county's long-term needs. The initial focus has been primarily on finding sustainable sources of funding and/or cost savings to restore criminal justice services. More broadly, SOS has explored a range of potential solutions to make Josephine County a safer, more stable, more sustainable community; to build the alliances across disparate community groups; and to seek to restore trust and communication between local citizens and their elected officials and other public servants.

With our **Public Safety Crisis Analysis** project launched in 2016, Securing Our Safety's first objective is to gather facts to help engage county residents in Josephine County before crime-related problems spiral even more out of control than they are today. The second phase will be to engage in a community outreach effort and have the public weigh in on the level of services needed and the various options available to restore funding to our law enforcement and justice programs. In essence, this second phase will be a community engagement and consensus-building project.