

## **For the Record: Reporting on the Morrison Police Department**

Many of you have seen the recent news reports on the resignation of Chief Siderfin. As you know, the Jeffco Sheriff's Office is currently providing temporary law enforcement services to Morrison. I've been on the Town Board since 2016 and have lived here since 1993, so I was troubled by the inaccurate reporting on this issue. While our community deserves as much information as possible, the confidentiality of personnel matters limits what can be shared.

The Board will be discussing the future of the Morrison Police Department during the November 16th Town Board Meeting at 6:00 in the Town Hall. We welcome your participation. As always, please email us with your comments and concerns.

<https://town.morrison.co.us/133/Mayor-Board-of-Trustees>

Agendas are available on the Town website (under the government tab) five days before each meeting.

On October 25th, I submitted the following to 9 News reporter Marc Sallinger. He offered me an on-camera interview, but given the complexities and contentiousness of the situation, I declined. A television interview should not be required to correct the record. Please know the Town is working hard to meet the public safety needs of our residents and businesses. You are the audience that matters most on this matter.

-Katie Gill

Hello Mr. Sallinger,

Thanks for your inquiry. The Board was not planning to disband the Morrison Police Department (MPD), as your source suggested. It is difficult to provide balanced reporting when you only hear from one side of a complex issue. I apologize for not responding earlier, as it appears 9 News received some inaccurate information.

9 News Headline on October 20:

***Morrison PD chief resigns days after conceding ticket revenue would fall \$800K short of expectations***

The article went on to say:

***At a board meeting on Oct. 5, she (Chief Siderfin) told town leaders the department would bring in \$300,000 worth of fines this year, more than \$800,000 less than the town had budgeted for. Two days later, she submitted her letter of resignation.***

This inaccurately suggests that the Town set expectations for ticket revenue in 2022 at \$1.1 million (\$800,000 + \$300,000). This was never the case.

**Here are the facts:**

The budget presented to the Board on October 5 included \$690,000 in estimated court fines (ticket revenue), not \$1.1 million. The October 5 Board Packet is available on the Town website and here: [https://town.morrison.co.us/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Agenda/\\_10052021-687](https://town.morrison.co.us/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Agenda/_10052021-687) (See p.21 of the packet; p.16 of the draft budget)

Chief Siderfin suggested to the Board, during the Oct. 5 meeting, that \$300,000 was a more appropriate expectation of court fines, saying that fines typically amount to 25% of police department expenditures in nearby municipalities. **Based on Siderfin's recommendation, the Board decreased court fines in the budget from \$690,000 to \$340,000.** That set fines at 28% of the Department's anticipated expenditures. The Draft Budget is available here: [https://town.morrison.co.us/DocumentCenter/View/1470/2022-Draft-Budget---With-Graphs\\_Workbook](https://town.morrison.co.us/DocumentCenter/View/1470/2022-Draft-Budget---With-Graphs_Workbook)

Media reports have largely focused on *Adopted* Budget revenue projections. *Actual* Budget figures for court fines (ticket revenue) are much lower.

The second headline in the Oct. 20th 9 News story states:

***Money from fines and forfeitures makes up nearly 50% of revenue for the Town of Morrison***

This is not an accurate statement. As shown below, for the past four years, the MPD has **not provided any income to the Town**. When Department revenue **exceeds** Department expenditures, it is noted as INCOME in the budget. When Department revenue **is less than** Department expenditures, it is recorded as a SUBSIDY. Revenues from fines have funded a portion of the MPD budget. The rest has been subsidized.

**Actual 2018 Revenues and Expenditures (Police Department)**

Court Fines Revenue = \$899,659

Traffic Control and Police Training Fees Revenue = \$281,380

Total PD Expenditures = \$1,233,777

**2018 Subsidy to PD = (\$51,283)**

**Actual 2019 Revenues and Expenditures (Police Department)**

Court Fines Revenue = \$935,934

Traffic Control Fees and Police Training Fees Revenue = \$220,867

Total PD Expenditures = \$1,438,419

**2019 Subsidy to PD = (\$280,717)**

**Actual 2020 Revenues and Expenditures (Police Department)**

Court Fines Revenue = \$815,114

Traffic Control Fees Revenue = \$11,165

Total PD Expenditures = \$1,125,015

**2020 Subsidy to PD = (\$298,331)**

### **Estimated 2021 Revenues and Expenditures (Police Department)**

Court Fines Revenue = \$200,000\*

Traffic Control Fees Revenue = \$200,000

Total PD Expenditures = \$1,080,588

**Estimated 2021 Subsidy to PD = (\$650,588)**

### **2022 Draft Budget (Police Department)**

Court Fines Revenue = \$340,000

Traffic Control Fees Revenue = \$200,000

Total PD Expenditures = \$1,195,365

**2022 Subsidy to PD = (\$655,365)**

Note: Traffic Control Fees are NOT traffic tickets. The MPD contracts with Bandimere Speedway and Red Rocks Amphitheater for event traffic control. Perhaps confusion on this has led to some of the inaccurate reporting of ticket revenue.

On October 19, 9 News highlighted Siderfin's letter of resignation, citing "demands for the Department to support its own budget" as one reason for her resignation. As shown in the 2022 Budget figures above, most of the \$1.2 million in projected MPD expenditures is set to be subsidized, with 28% coming from Court Fines and 17% from Traffic Control Fees. The MPD is not expected to contribute any income to the General Fund.

9 News also reported that the Town Manager wanted the Department to forego community policing in order to write more tickets instead. Neither the Town Board nor the Town Manager ever directed the Department to stop doing community policing.

In the 9 News story on October 20, political science professor Robert Preuhs said that if there's only one stream of revenue funding a town, the pressure to write more tickets is higher. Of course this is true, but the attendant suggestion, that "only one stream of revenue" (traffic tickets) funds Morrison, is inaccurate. Other sources of revenue include Taxes, Licenses & Permits, Intergovernmental (grants), and Charges for Services.

**Kyle Clark referred to the Town of Morrison as a speed trap "famous for handing out speeding tickets like souvenirs for drivers on 285."** There's another side to this story, which was reported by Fox31 on August 27, beginning with the headline: *Locals plea for safety improvements after another fatal crash on US 285*. According to reporter Ashley Nichols, "The most common complaint is that drivers do not adhere to the speed limit, particularly between Morrison and Bailey."

This is nothing new. A September 27, 2019 News 4 story by Alan Gionet called it *Deadly Travel: The Challenges of Highway 285*. Gionet went on to say, "Federal traffic data shows there were 22 people killed in crashes on Highway 285 between C-470 and Bailey from 2012-2017. There were 15 people killed on Interstate 70 between Morrison

and Dumont in the same period. I-70 has three times the average traffic volume.” Residents of Morrison often hear those sirens racing up to accidents on 285.

On September 18-19, former Chief Siderfin gathered speeding data along Highway 8 in Morrison. This is a road which bisects our residential neighborhoods, along which pedestrians walk. At a Town Board meeting on September 21, Siderfin reported that 80% of the traffic was traveling *at least* 10mph above the 35mph speed limit during the study. The top speed was recorded at 98mph.

Morrison’s municipal judge, who also presides over several other municipal courts, has emphasized that the speeds cited in Morrison are significantly higher than what he typically sees in other jurisdictions. In a presentation to the Town Board on February 16, 2021, Judge Thrower referred to the “consistently and remarkably high speeds on Highways C470 and 285.”

Dangerous roadways in and adjacent to Morrison include US 285, C-470, Hwy. 74, and Hwy. 8. Shouldn’t public safety on these highways include speed enforcement?

Thanks for considering this information. The press plays a vital role in our communities.

Sincerely,

Katie Gill  
Trustee  
Town of Morrison