



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY LUZERNE COUNTY

SAMUEL M. SANGUEDOLCE
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

ANTHONY G. ROSS
FIRST ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEY

CHESTER F. DUDICK JR.
CHIEF DEPUTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY

DANIEL E. ZOLA
DEPUTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY

THOMAS J. HOGANS
DEPUTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY

INTERDEPARTMENTAL MEMORANDUM

To: Chairwoman Kendra Vough
and Luzerne County Council Members

Cc: Manager Romilda Crocamo

From: Samuel M. Sanguedolce, District Attorney

Date: November 28, 2023

Re: Proposed Amendment to the Budget
of the District Attorney's Office

Dear Members of Council:

Our office has received the proposed budget amendment seeking to decrease our Capital Case line by \$50,000.00 (33%). Please note the dozens of personnel hours – if not over a hundred considering the number of people involved – that were spent to reach a consensus whereby department needs were met and tax increases were averted at a time of extremely high inflation and personnel shortages.

It seems every year a proposal is made to decrease this line item. You may recall last year that I appeared before Council to explain that this line item includes the special costs associated with cases that qualify as Capital during investigation, but many times may not result in the death penalty being sought or may not lead to proof such that an arrest can be made. These costs include, for example, psychological evaluations, new DNA testing by private laboratories, and forensic genealogy mapping that can potentially solve the most dreadful of Luzerne County crimes previously thought lost to the passage of time. Respectfully, this category is not where we should cut corners – especially on a balanced budget for the purpose of bolstering the reserves of the general fund.

Our office has been under budget every year for more than a decade while I have been in management. As you know, those savings do not get rolled into our budget next year. They go back to Council. If we need it to investigate years-old potentially capital cases, time is of the essence, and we must act. Improvements in forensics mean we are analyzing more cases than ever, and crimes are more heinous. Having received the Controller's objections, I must echo certain of his sentiments. I have spent hours with our Fiscal Clerk analyzing trends, needs, price hikes, and working with the Manager and Budget and Finance to propose an honest and fair budget without a tax increase. Seeing this drastic cut in such an important line item for the time is disheartening. I respectfully ask Council to rescind this request or, in the alternative, vote against the amendment.

Unfortunately, I have committed to another engagement which conflicts with this meeting, or I too would be present to defend the budget we worked so hard to present.

Please accept this correspondence as the request of this office, and me personally, to wholly reject this proposed amendment to the District Attorney's budget.