



August 30, 2011

## Adams says \$1.2M should go to police

**Other officials say it's up to the city to decide what to do with state aid**

By Jill Harmacinski [jharmacinski@eagletribune.com](mailto:jharmacinski@eagletribune.com)

LAWRENCE — The city is getting \$1.2 million from the state this fall, money State Rep. Paul Adams said should be used to hire 17 to 20 more police officers and quell city violence.

"I am saying there is a desperate situation in Lawrence with violence and chaos on a near weekly basis. ... This is the solution I am offering," said Adams, an Andover Republican. "If I were the mayor, I would be spending this \$1.2 million on the police department," he said.

But Robert Nunes, the city's state-appointed financial overseer, said the money is going to be used to pay \$400,000 in snow removal bills, unspecified legal settlements and possibly fund some police overtime.

Nunes said there are no plans now to use the \$1.2 million to restore police positions. Doing so would be dangerous because that money might not be available the following year, he said.

"This is the mayor's budget which the city council approves," Nunes said.

The \$1.2 million coming to the city in October, Lawrence's share of \$65 million in previously cut state aid, is "one-time" funding for the fiscal year 2011 budget, which started July 1. The money will be presented to the city council in a supplemental budget this fall.

But State Sen. Barry Finegold of Andover, State Rep. David Torrisi of North Andover and Lawrence State Rep. Marcos Devers, all Democrats, said the money is "local aid," and how it's spent is up to Mayor William Lantigua and city councilors.

Other cities and towns are getting similar payments — not just Lawrence, Torrisi noted.

Andover stands to receive \$109,000, North Andover \$125,000, Methuen \$332,000 and Haverhill's share is \$601,000, according to the state Department of Revenue.

"It's very easy for Rep. Adams to tell the city what to do. ... The city council, mayor and overseer have a handle on the budget," Torrisi said.

Echoing Nunes, he said the city can't rely on "one-time revenues" or it will end up in the financial trouble it faced previously. Two-thirds of Lawrence's \$76.5 million budget is funded by the state.

In spring 2010, legislators voted to allow Lawrence to borrow up to \$35 million to balance its budget and immediately plug a \$24 million deficit. Gov. Deval Patrick also appointed Nunes, a DOR official, as the city's financial overseer.

In July 2010, some 40 police positions, about one-third of the department, were lost due to layoffs and budget cuts. Police leaders repeatedly warned of a dramatic crime spike as officers would be forced to react not prevent crime.

Last week alone, a near riot occurred downtown as the nightclubs were emptying and two people were killed, one in broad daylight on South Union Street. Another 21-year-old man who shot in the head and was pronounced dead yesterday at a Boston hospital.

Due to a spate of recent violence, the mayor's office issued a statement last week, saying five laid-off police officers would be rehired immediately using \$300,000 in revenue the city expects to collect this year. Police Chief John Romero was also told he could use "necessary resources" to control crime.

State and federal grant money that could fund more police positions is also available this fall, including \$2 million in state aid just for cities, Finegold said.

"This is huge. We need to get those police officers back. ... There is no excuse," Adams said.

Adams said he met with Lantigua and asked him to use the money to bolster the police department.

"He carefully considered my proposal. I am sure he'll think about it. He listened," Adams said. "There is no question that they need more cops on the streets."

Lantigua did return a message seeking comment.

•••

Follow staff reporter Jill Harmacinski on Twitter under the screenname EagleTribJill. To comment on stories and see what others are saying, log on to eagletribune.com.

<http://www.eagletribune.com/latestnews/x640621652/Adams-says-1-2M-should-go-to-police>