

Maine
Cumberland **County**
POSITION PAPER FOR AGENDA ITEM

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| TO: | Cumberland County Commissioners |
| FROM: | Captain Dean Fredericks |
| DATE: | 04/13/2026 |
| SUBJECT: | Acceptance of an Additional \$2,025,665.99 in Grant Funds from Howard Buffet Foundation |

Requested Action: Acceptance of an additional \$2,025,665.99 in grant funds from the Howard Buffet Foundation for the Sheriff’s Office Human Trafficking Initiative.

Background & Purpose of Request:

I wanted to update Commissioners on the significant progress we have made in developing the Human Trafficking Intelligence Analyst position. As you are aware, we were before the Commissioners in March concerning the partnership with Preble Street and the Buffett Foundation to address the increasing prevalence of organized criminal human trafficking in the State of Maine. The Buffett Foundation has identified Maine as one of three states experiencing a sharp rise in these offenses and selected our agency as its sole law enforcement partner within the state. In March, the Commissioners accepted a \$500,000.00 grant over five years. We have received word from the Howard Buffet Foundation that they would like to provide additional grant funds towards this initiative. This additional opportunity would increase the grant to \$2,525,665.99, an increase of \$2,025,665.99.

As previously discussed, the Buffett Foundation has committed to fully funding a new Criminal Intelligence Analyst position—distinct from the existing Criminal Analyst role—for the next five years. In addition, the Foundation has agreed to fund 50% of the total compensation for a detective assigned to human trafficking investigations over the same period. Detective Ben Schaffer is currently assigned to the regional human trafficking task force, where he attends regular monthly meetings and actively contributes to case development. Additionally, the new proposed budget includes overtime funding for the detective and intelligence analyst.

I became aware of the Grant funding increase during a recent budget conversation with Preble Street and Buffett Foundation representatives. On April 6th, I was presented with an updated budget from the Buffett Foundation that included the funding increase. The budget provided by the Buffett Foundation for this initiative has increased to over 2.5 million dollars. This amount includes the original amount and 5-year term previously accepted by the Commissioners. As this partnership grows and we identify other needs that will help strengthen our investigative capabilities, we can request additional funding from the Buffet Foundation to accomplish our goals.

This partnership has been instrumental in identifying funding opportunities for critical investigative resources, including personnel, specialized equipment, investigative software, and advanced training. The initial proposal to fund the Criminal Intelligence Analyst position was approved by the County Commissioners and represents a substantial enhancement to our investigative capabilities. I became aware of the Grant funding increase during recent conversations with Preble Street and Buffett Foundation representatives.

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Since joining the agency, I have identified several areas where the Criminal Investigations Division (CID) requires growth to meet the demands of increasingly complex cases. One of the most significant gaps is our current inability to effectively extract and analyze electronic data from devices such as

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cellular phones, computers, and other storage media. This limitation directly impacts the quality, efficiency, and completeness of our investigations.

The additional funding opportunity provided through this partnership comes at a critical time. CID is routinely tasked with investigations involving digital evidence, and the acquisition of modern forensic tools, software, and training will significantly improve our ability to conduct thorough and timely investigations. All equipment, training, and personnel funded through this initiative will remain under the operational control of the Sheriff's Office and will support all CID investigations—not solely those related to human trafficking.

Importantly, the Foundation's offer to fund 50% of the detective's compensation carries no conditions beyond our continued participation in the regional human trafficking working group. We will not add any detective positions beyond our current staffing, the Sheriff's Office did not solicit the increased grant funding.

The Buffett Foundation has established similar partnerships with law enforcement agencies across the country, funding personnel, equipment, and training without issue. I have maintained ongoing communication with Hailey Virusso, Director of Anti-Trafficking Services at Preble Street and the local representative for the grant, and have identified no concerns regarding the structure or expectations of this partnership.

Looking ahead, additional funding opportunities may become available as we implement this position and identify further areas for growth. Our goal is to have the new analyst hired and in place by July 1, 2026. I am currently working with Foundation representatives to evaluate investigative software, subscription services, forensic data extraction tools, and training programs that will best enhance our capabilities. The Foundation has already agreed to fund these important investigative resources.

This investment in investigative technology will bring our capabilities more in line with those of similarly sized law enforcement agencies across New England. As the five-year partnership period nears its end, we intend to discuss its success and whether to continue the partnership with the County Commissioners. I respectfully request the opportunity to speak on behalf of my request at the next Commissioners meeting. I will have Hailey Virusso of Preble Street and the Howard Buffet Foundation with me to answer any questions the Commissioners may have.

Funding Amount and Source: See attached funding source document - Howard Buffet Foundation

Attachments: See attached budget breakdown of wages/benefits/equipment/training/Etc.

Agenda Item Number: _____

Date on Agenda: _____

Result

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Vote Tally:

Vote Result:

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Roll Call Vote if Meeting Remotely:

Chair of Board, Date