

GOVERNMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE  
REPRESENTATIVE JEFF DELZER, CHAIRMAN  
DECEMBER 14, 2011

TESTIMONY BY  
PARRELL D. GROSSMAN  
BISMARCK CITY COMMISSIONER

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee. I am Parrell Grossman, a Bismarck City Commissioner and I appear on the Bismarck City Commission's behalf in support of the North Dakota Highway Patrol's request to relocate and construct a new law enforcement training academy on City of Bismarck land to be donated to the Highway Patrol and State of North Dakota and to provide funding for completion of the training facility.

For the record I do not appear as an assistant attorney general and I am taking annual leave during my appearance today.

I hold the Commission Police and Fire portfolios, acting in the roles of Bismarck Police Commissioner and Bismarck Fire Commissioner in public safety matters.

I am sure the Highway Patrol has informed you of the necessity for new and increased training space. As one example only, as you walk through the current academy, you see training scenarios often are occurring in the hallways. While resourceful, it probably is not the best location for critical training scenarios.

As I comment on location and financial expenditures, these comments as a local official are not intended to supplant your judgment or responsibilities as legislators, or to otherwise suggest that we know where to best locate a state law enforcement training facility or spend state dollars. The City, however, does want to support the Highway Patrol's request and share our perspective on the history and future of regional training needs, while emphasizing what we see as some joint benefits to both the state and City of Bismarck.

The law enforcement academy, in its current location on Bismarck State College, has been a significant part of Bismarck's community for many years. It is centrally located in the state, which makes the training facility more accessible for statewide law enforcement training purposes. With this strategic location it would make good sense to have the training center continue to be in Bismarck as a state and regional training facility. This location is particularly useful to western North Dakota law enforcement agencies and communities. The exponential growth of western North Dakota, particularly Williston and Dickinson, related to oil activity will require additional law enforcement and public safety personnel and the correlating training requirements for these public safety entities. You are well aware of the law enforcement needs with the legislature's recent authorization of new Highway Patrol officers. With some of the

changes in western North Dakota communities, this state will require better trained law enforcement, fire, or other public safety personnel.

Certainly with the oil and industrial sites, the needs likely will increase in regard to public safety responses to industrial fires, vehicle accidents, or hazardous materials accidents. An increase in demand also will necessitate an increase in specialized or other training, and a centrally located regional facility would be very useful and appropriate. In addition, Bismarck and its circle of surrounding communities obviously are growing, too, and our law enforcement and public safety needs, including up-to-date training, are increasing. A Bismarck training facility for both police and fire departments would be very beneficial to this central region of the state.

In addition, Bismarck has taken an enhanced role in regional law enforcement and public safety responses required for hostage situations, SWAT teams, bomb threats, train derailments, industrial or hazardous waste accidents, and etc., and it makes good sense for the state to work closely with Bismarck to help ensure training opportunities in this region.

Bismarck's land donation of 25 acres, valued at approximately \$2M is only a small portion of the complete cost of the relocation and construction of a new training academy and training support facilities. However, Bismarck supports leveraging and combining state and city resources to save money for both state and city taxpayers in order to maximize the training center resources and benefits to these taxpayers.

I do not claim any expertise in law enforcement or public safety merely because I hold the police and fire portfolios for Bismarck. However, I do understand the very straightforward training needs and facilities necessary to ensure that our law enforcement officers and firefighters in this state are as highly trained as possible in order to safely protect the lives of both our citizens and police officers and firefighters, as well as public infrastructure and private property.

I won't again detail all the planned training facilities or activities that are planned or proposed for eventual completion. It would be appropriate to complete this large project in phases. I will quickly emphasize the necessity and benefits of the Emergency Vehicle Operations Course, indoor firing range and Live Fire Shoot House, and Multi-Tactical Simulation Building. The EVOC "urban driving course" is critical to the safe driving skills of our law enforcement officers and public safety personnel. They should have an opportunity to regularly participate in this particular training. A live-fire shoot house is very important for tactical law enforcement live fire training. It is difficult to provide or obtain this type of training at any other facility. Finally, I want to address the critical need for a multi-tactical simulation building, or "fire tower." This facility can be used for multiple purposes to create realistic tactical scenarios or situations for public safety training like high angle rescues, SWAT training, sniper exercises, search and rescue etc. However, I want to particularly highlight the need for a facility to train firefighters with live fires. This is an exercise or training that cannot be realistically or cost-effectively duplicated elsewhere, without a fire tower or similar training building. That also would be true for most of the exercises I have just mentioned. I have visited

extensively with many Bismarck firefighters and their highest level of concern or priority for training is a fire tower. Firefighters do not want a rookie's first fire to be a real fire. Experienced firefighters also strongly desire continuous training and experience with live fires. There simply is not substitute for live-fire training. There are many volunteer firefighters in this region of the state that would rely upon and benefit from live-fire training.

This type of facility is expensive and may be something considered in a future phase. Nonetheless, a facility like this multi-tactical simulation building is necessary and important in this region of the state as soon as possible.

I cannot emphasize enough how much the City of Bismarck understands that this training center is primarily an issue for the North Dakota Highway Patrol and the State of North Dakota, and that the decisions on where to best locate state facilities and resources, and all the related expenditures, are entirely exclusively within the Legislatures purview. We merely want to support the Highway Patrol's request for the relocation and construction of a new academy and comprehensive training center, provide some limited resources in the form of a land donation, and offer our perspective on how this facility, if approved by the Legislature, could assist both the State and City's citizens.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I would be pleased to try and answer any questions or direct you to someone who can answer your questions.