



## CITY COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

**MEETING DATE:** Tuesday, April 14, 2026  
**TO:** CITY COUNCIL  
**WRITTEN BY:** POLICE CAPTAIN RADICH  
**RECOMMENDED BY:** POLICE CHIEF SHAB  
**APPROVED BY:** TAMARA VIDES, CITY MANAGER

**SUBJECT:** RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING FY25-26 CONTRACT WITH COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ FOR MENTAL HEALTH LIAISON, NOT TO EXCEED \$102,233

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### RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council adopt a resolution authorizing the City Manager to execute a contract, with minor changes if needed if approved by the City Manager and City Attorney, between the City of Watsonville and the Santa Cruz County Health Services Agency for one (1) Mental Health Liaison to partner with the Police Department, in an amount not to exceed \$102,233, for a term of one (1) year, commencing on July 1, 2025 and ending on June 30, 2026.

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### BACKGROUND:

Since 2015, our Police Department partnered with the Santa Cruz County Health Services Agency, Department of Behavioral Health, to have a Mental Health Liaison accompany our Police Officers in the field, to develop a rapid response model, for crisis calls for service in the community involving individuals with severe mental illness and/or co-occurring disorder to assist in rapid triage and connection to on-going health services and primary care. At that time, our Police Department's Crisis Assessment Response and Engagement "CARE" Team was established, and the department committed to on-going cost-sharing if the program demonstrated success. The partnership has demonstrated success year over year, and the need for mental health services in our community has only increased since then.

### DISCUSSION:

The Police Department has been cost-sharing the Mental Health Liaison position since the inception of this program. The Mental Health Liaison is a full-time employee of the Santa Cruz

County Health Services Agency, Department of Behavioral Health, who is exclusively assigned to our Police Department on a full-time basis. Due to rising personnel costs, this is the first year that our City's 50% portion of the cost-sharing has exceeded \$100,000, and required the City Council's approval.

Having a Mental Health Liaison partnered with our Police Officers provides a coordinated, professional and compassionate response to families and community members affected by mental illness. Our CARE Team works with partner agencies to achieve improved outcomes for individuals by diverting them away from the criminal justice system whenever possible. Our CARE Team has demonstrated to be successful and both, the County of Santa Cruz and the City of Watsonville are committed to providing necessary matching funds to support the full-time position on an on-going basis. The Mental Health Liaison works out of our Police Department building, so they can rapidly respond to crisis calls for service with our Police Officers, Monday through Friday from 8AM-4PM, excluding holidays.

### **CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA) DETERMINATION:**

This contract is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") because the contract does not qualify as a project and will not result in a direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment. (CEQA Guidelines, §§15060, subds. (c)(2), (c)(3), 15061, subd. (b)(3).

### **STRATEGIC PLAN:**

**Community Engagement & Well-being  
Public Safety**

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

The cost of the (1) year contract is not to exceed \$102,233, and it would be funded by the general fund; account #150-409-7361-00000.

### **ALTERNATIVE ACTION:**

No reasonable alternative exists at this time.

### **ATTACHMENTS AND/OR REFERENCES (IF ANY):**

None.