



# Agenda Report

**MEETING DATE:** Tuesday, December 14, 2021

**TO:** City Council

**FROM:** INTERIM POLICE CHIEF SIMS

**SUBJECT:** INCREASE OF SWORN PERSONNEL

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## **STATEMENT OF ISSUES:**

Five of seventy-seven authorized sworn personnel positions were eliminated from the Fiscal Year 20-21 Watsonville Police Department (WPD) budget in anticipation of Covid-19 budget challenges. Now there is a need to increase the number of police officers due to the Pajaro Valley Unified School District's (PVUSD) reinstatement of the School Community Policing Officer Program and to provide a "cushion" for anticipated vacancies due to retirements and turnover.

## **RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

It is therefore recommended that the City Council increase the number of authorized police officers on page 382 of the Council's adopted Watsonville Biennial Final Budget 2021-2023 from 42 to 44 (for a total of 74 sworn positions).

## **DISCUSSION:**

The WPD eliminated five sworn positions ( a reduction of total sworn officers from 77 to 72) in Fiscal Year 20-21, due to the anticipated budget challenges caused by Covid-19. All five positions were in the Police Officer category of the Operations Division shown on page 382 of the Budget. This created a staffing shortage in the Patrol Division. Through attrition and other programs using police officers, the WPD is unable to maintain adequate staffing levels to meet the needs of the community. The majority of WPD vacancies are carried in patrol, so a vacancy at the officer level in any other area of the organization would consequently remove one officer from regular patrol duties. For example, the reinstatement of the School Community Policing Officer Program required the WPD to reassign a patrol officer to the high school. Patrol is the foundation of the organization and police officer reassignments create a cascading effect of gaps in adequate staffing levels.

The WPD requests an increase of (2) full time police officers on page 382 of the adopted Budget to address the potential loss of staffing through attrition and the reinstated School Community Policing Officer Program. Law enforcement agencies are continually challenged with staffing since there are always vacancies occurring as a result of retirements, turnover, and other factors. When these events occur, it takes a significant amount of time to recruit new police officer candidates, complete the hiring process, have them attend a six-month

mandatory Police Academy, followed by field training that lasts another five months before becoming a solo beat officer. If a police officer trainee started the Police Academy in January 2022, it is anticipated that she/he would be patrolling the streets in November 2022. Given this information, it is important for law enforcement agencies to stay on top of hiring to mitigate gaps in service. In an effort to address anticipated staffing needs, the WPD requests the number of police officers on page 382 of the Budget be increased from 42 to 44.

**STRATEGIC PLAN:**

This request is consistent with the Strategic Plan Priority 6 – Public Safety.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

The yearly cost of hiring one entry level police officer is \$114,194. This however is not a request for a financial budget increase. The WPD may seek Council approval of a budget adjustment during mid-year review of the budget along with other items City-wide. This proposal tonight does not require a budget increase because the General Fund can absorb the cost of one of the proposed two full time officers and the cost of the second officer by savings from attrition. For example, upcoming retirements will create vacancies that will be filled with personnel at lower salaries, thus creating some savings. And PVUSD will pay the City for policing at Watsonville High School during the remainder of this school year, and possibly for both Watsonville High School and Pajaro Valley High School in the fall.

**ALTERNATIVE ACTION:**

No recommended alternatives are known at this time.

**ATTACHMENTS AND/OR REFERENCES (If any):**

- 1) Page 382 of the adopted Watsonville Biennial Final Budget 2021-2023