

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: TEMPORARY INCREASE IN POLICE STAFFING

BACKGROUND:

Replacing a police officer is a time intensive process. Officers are required by law to attend and successfully complete the 13-week residential training program at the Iowa Law Enforcement Academy. This training cannot occur until the officer has actually been hired by a police department. In addition, Ames police officers complete an approximately 12-week field training experience. Field training is a practical learning experience managed by Ames police trainers that orient new officers to police work at the Ames Police Department. The field training experience allows the new officer to demonstrate competency in the job before being allowed to operate independently in the field.

The six month lag time between hiring new officers and their being able to operate independently in the field has become increasingly important in our ability to maintain a full complement of officers on the street. In the next two years, the department will likely face the retirement of as many as eight senior officers. The loss of personnel alone will be a burden on the department, but these officers will also take with them years of experience and expertise.

To address this issue, the department desires to hire new officers as soon as a retirement or resignation date is known. For example, one of our sergeants has announced his intention to retire in September of 2010. With the commitment of that retirement, the department would like to hire a new officer immediately to get the new officer into the training pipeline as soon as possible. To accomplish this, however, Council needs to temporarily increase the authorized staffing level for sworn personnel from 53 to 54.

Budgetary provision for this type of temporary position was made in the Crime Prevention and Police Services section of the City Budget. When the 2010-11 Budget was adopted, \$40,000 was included in the 2009-10 Adjusted Budget from previous year savings to allow for the temporary hiring of a 54th officer. Since these funds were not utilized last year, the 2010-11 Budget will be amended in February to cover the cost of this temporary hire.

It is possible that the additional funding to provide for this overlap will not be necessary, since salary savings from the retirement of a more senior officer could be sufficient to cover the additional cost of an early hire. In addition, the department currently has an officer on extended deployment in Afghanistan. Although that officer fills one of the slots in our list of 53 sworn officers, he is not drawing pay from the department while on deployment. The savings from that salary could be used to fund the initial early hire.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Authorize a temporary increase in the staffing level in the Police Department for sworn personnel from 53 to 54 for the balance of the 2010-11 fiscal year.
2. Authorize a temporary increase in the staffing level in the Police Department for sworn personnel from 53 to 54 for the purpose of replacing the retiring sergeant.
3. Do not authorize a temporary increase in the staffing level in the Police Department.

MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

A fully trained and staffed police department is clearly desirable and provides a direct benefit to our citizens. However, training requirements for new officers make it difficult to maintain full staffing levels. With the addition of the known retirements approaching, the Police Department needs to take additional steps to provide trained and qualified officers on the street as soon as possible after the initial hire. This temporary hiring overlap will help satisfy this need.

Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council adopt Alternative No. 1, thereby approving the Police Department's request to temporarily increase staffing levels for sworn personnel from 53 to 54 for the balance of the 2010-11 fiscal year. The need for extension of the temporary position will be evaluated at that time to determine if a further extension will be warranted.