

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: REPLACEMENT OF POLICE OFFICERS FOR FY 2011/12

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, An Ames officer needs to complete an approximately 12-week field training experience within our Police Department. 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.

Consequently, there is a six month time period between the hiring of a new officer and the time she or he is able to operate independently in the field. This delay has become increasingly disruptive to our efforts to maintain a full complement of officers on the street. In the next year, the department will likely face the retirement of as many as four 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.

Last July the Council authorized the hiring of new officers as soon as a retirement or resignation date was known so that new officers could get into the training pipeline as soon as possible. To accomplish this objective, the Police Department was authorized to temporarily increase its authorized staffing level for sworn personnel from 53 to 54. That authorization, which has been in effect since July 2010, expires at the end of June 2011.

Since the challenges created by retirements will continue into the next fiscal year, it is proposed that an extension of the authority to temporarily increase authorized police officer strength be extended throughout FY 2011/12.

During the 2011-2012 budgeting process, provision for this type of temporary position was made in the Crime Prevention and Police Services section of the City's budget. A total of \$40,000 was carried forward in savings from unspent payroll funds.

It is possible that funding for this overlap will not be necessary, since salary savings from the retirement of a more senior officer are oftentimes sufficient to cover the additional cost of an early hire. The need for funding will be impacted by the timing of a particular officer's retirement, as well as the availability and qualifications of the replacement.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Authorize a temporary increase in the staffing level, when needed, in the Police Department for sworn personnel from 53 to 54 for the 2011/12 fiscal year.
2. Do not authorize an 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 direct benefits to our citizens. However, turnover and the amount it takes to train an officer 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 help keep trained and qualified officers on the street as soon as possible after the initial hire. This temporary hiring overlap will help satisfy that need.

Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council adopt Alternative No. 1, thereby authorizing a temporary increase in staffing levels for sworn personnel from 53 to 54, when needed, for fiscal year 2011/12.