



## Agenda Item No. 7h.

### Staff Report

**Date:** April 4, 2024

**To:** Mayor Brekhus and Council Members

**From:** Raffaello Pata, Police Chief

**Subject:** Consideration for Additional Staffing in Police Department for Succession Planning

---

#### Recommendation

It is recommended that the Town Council authorize the Town Manager to add one police officer position to the number of authorized positions in the Police Department for succession planning purposes.

#### Background and discussion

The Ross Police Department is authorized to employ seven patrol officers (including sergeants) and one police chief. For more than three years, the Police Department has experienced significant staffing challenges. Those challenges have been related to the medical retirements of two permanently injured officers, the release of a probationary officer, and recently, the long-term job-related injury of another officer. The injured officer has been on leave for more than fifteen months, with no confirmed return date. State and Federal law requires the department to reserve positions vacated for job related injuries. It has taken the department three years to hire two officers.

There are no sustainable solutions to fill vacant positions. A reserve officer was employed by the Police Department for two years to fill emergency vacancies; however, he is limited to working 960 hours a year and soon, will require mandated perishable skills training to stay certified. In 2023 the Town entered into an agreement with the Town of Fairfax to temporarily allow their officers to fill shifts on an emergency basis in Ross.

Staffing challenges create significant impacts on our officers resulting in mounting overtime hours worked, physical and mental fatigue, as well as productivity and potential burnout. Many of the Town's officers work five or six, twelve-hour shifts and then drive to their homes, in some cases over an hour in each direction, increasing their workday to 13- and 14-hour days.

Of the current seven officers assigned to patrol, four have more than 18 years of service and all of these officers are within five years of the target age for a PERS retirement. One officer has reached 20 years of service and is eligible for retirement at any time.

Hiring police officers is difficult. The California Police Chiefs' Association 2022 survey showed hiring as the number one issue in police departments across the state. In January 2024, a staffing survey of Marin County law enforcement agencies showed 33 vacancies. 25 additional peace officers were off work, injured. The Town's Police Department must compete with agencies from Sonoma and other Bay area counties. Many of those agencies provide for a shorter commute for prospective police officers. Those departments also have diverse opportunities not found within Ross's Police Department. Specialized opportunities include detectives, police dog deployment, traffic, Task Force Assignments, and promotions, all are desirable for new officers.

Based on the current staffing challenges, a responsible desire for succession planning and forecasting the needs of the Town's Police Department, it is staff's recommendation that the Town Council authorize the Town Manager to add one additional police officer position to the number of authorized positions in the Police Department for a total of eight police officer positions. This would allow the Department to plan for the town's future for policing and prepare the department for the retirement of half of its staff in the next five years. This investment in the department will, in time, improve the current staffing conditions and potentially provide cost savings. This plan will result in a reduction in the number of overtime hours worked by current staff and will in turn, improve the wellness and efficiency of the department and its employees.

The intent of this requested action is not to permanently add a full-time employee to the department. The intent is to allow the police chief to begin the lengthy process of recruiting and training a new police officer to prepare for staffing loss predicted to occur during the near future. When a new officer is hired and trained and the department is fully staffed, the Town Manager will work closely with the police chief to return the Department through expected attrition to its current staffing level of seven police officers and one police chief.

#### **Fiscal, resource and timeline impacts**

The cost to fund and equip one entry level police officer is \$150,867. A lateral police officer would cost approximately \$205,000. These costs include salary and benefits. Although it is unlikely, in the event that an officer is hired during the current fiscal year, the additional cost would be absorbed by the Police Department's adopted budget for FYE24. The Police Department's budget for FYE25 will be increased to reflect the full cost of an additional police officer.

#### **Alternative actions**

Maintain current staffing levels.

**Environmental review (if applicable)** N/A

**Attachments** None