

City of Santa Paula

City Council

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COUNCILMEMBER CARLOS JUAREZ
COUNCILMEMBER PEDRO A. CHAVEZ



CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING OF THE SANTA PAULA CITY COUNCIL

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2023

4:00 PM - City Council Special Meeting

SANTA PAULA CITY HALL
970 VENTURA STREET
SANTA PAULA, CA 93060

JULIE LATSHAW, CITY CLERK
DAN SINGER, CITY MANAGER
MONICA CASTILLO, CITY ATTORNEY

BRINGING ITEMS BEFORE THE CITY COUNCIL

You are invited to participate in all Regular City Council meetings. Agendas are posted in the front of Santa Paula City Hall, 970 Ventura Street, Santa Paula, 72 hours in advance of the scheduled meetings. The City Council's regular meetings start at 6:30 p.m. the first and third Wednesday of each month in the City Hall Council Chambers located at 970 Ventura Street in Santa Paula. Special and Closed Sessions vary by date and time.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN PERSON DURING THE MEETING: If you wish to speak at a City Council meeting, please fill out a **Public Comment Form** noting your name and address and submit the form to the City Clerk. Include the Agenda item number you wish to speak on. Members of the public may address the Council on items on this agenda only. **Public Comments are limited to 3 minutes.**

HOW TO PARTICIPATE BEFORE THE MEETING: Members of the public are encouraged to submit email correspondence on any agenda item by sending an email to cityclerk@spcity.org. All public correspondence received by three hours before the meeting date will be provided to the legislative body before the meeting. Public Comments received after, will be provided to the legislative body the next day.

Your Participation in this meeting is in the public domain; meetings are cablecast; minutes of this meeting will reflect your participation in this meeting and are posted on the city's website.

PLEASE NOTE: Be advised that if you bring a legal challenge to an action, you may be limited to raising only those issues you or someone else raised at the meeting described in this Agenda, or in written correspondence delivered to the City Council at or before the meeting. Any action is subject to the ninety-day time period set forth in Code of Civil Procedure § 1094.6.

In compliance with the **Americans with Disabilities Act**, if you need special assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact the City Clerk at (805) 933-4208. Notification 48 hours before the meeting will enable the City to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to this meeting. (28 CFR 35, 102-35.104 ADA Title II). Written materials distributed to the City Council within 72 hours of the City Council meeting are available for public inspection immediately upon distribution in the City Clerk's office.

SPECIAL MEETING - COUNCIL CHAMBERS

1. CALL TO ORDER

REMINDER: in order to minimize distractions during public meetings, all personal communication devices should be turned off or put in a non-audible mode.

2. FLAG SALUTE

3. ROLL CALL

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

At this time, members of the public may comment on any item appearing on the agenda only. Individual Councilmembers may briefly respond to Public Comments or ask questions for clarification. **Public Comments are limited to three minutes.**

5. ACTION ITEMS

5.A POLICE DEPARTMENT STAFFING CHALLENGES

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Council receive a presentation and update on staffing and service challenges within the City's Police Department and provide any direction to staff.

6. ADJOURNMENT

State of California)-

County of Ventura)- ss

I declare under penalty of perjury that I posted this City Council Agenda on the bulletin board near the front door of City Hall, 970 Ventura Street, Santa Paula, California.

On _____, at _____ Signed: _____

Julie Latshaw
City Clerk

**CITY OF SANTA PAULA
MEMORANDUM**

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Dan Singer, City Manager

Subject: POLICE DEPARTMENT STAFFING CHALLENGES

Date: November 8, 2023

Agenda Item: 5.A

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Council receive a presentation and update on staffing and service challenges within the City's Police Department and provide any direction to staff.

BACKGROUND:

Recent developments within the City's Police Department has necessitated a thorough review of staffing and service levels and options. This report is intended to update the City Council and members of the Santa Paula community as to the upcoming limitations, challenges and solutions we face and to receive any input and direction from Council on this topic.

Staffing Levels

To provide context to our current situation, it is worthwhile to review current budgeted sworn staffing and dispatch levels, as well as current and pending vacancies. The adopted budget accounts for 32 full-time sworn positions and 6 full-time dispatchers, as follows:

# of Budgeted Positions	Position Title	Filled/Vacant/ Pending Vacancy
1	Police Chief	Filled (Interim)
2	Commander	Filled
	Commander	Injury Leave
6	Administrative Sergeant	Filled
	Sergeant	Filled (injury)
	Sergeant	Filled
	Sergeant	Vacant

	Sergeant	Vacant
	Sergeant	Vacant
5	Senior Officer	Filled
	Senior Officer	Pending Vacancy
	Senior Officer	Pending Vacancy
	Senior Officer	Vacant
	Senior Officer	Vacant
3	Officer/Detective	Filled
	Officer/Detective	Filled
	Officer/Detective	Filled
2	School Resource Officer	Pending Vacancy
	School Resource Officer	Pending Vacancy
13	Officer (SEU)	Pending Vacancy
	Officer	Filled
	Officer	Filled
	Officer	Filled
	Officer	Filled
	Officer	Pending Vacancy
	Officer	Pending Vacancy
	Officer	Pending Vacancy
	Officer	Pending Vacancy
	Officer	Pending Vacancy
	Officer	Vacant
	Officer	Vacant
	Officer	Vacant

In summary, if you eliminate the Chief and Commander positions from the equation, of the 29 sworn positions available for day-to-day service, we have eleven or twelve who appear to be continuing their service with Santa Paula, eight (8) current vacancies, and nine (9) or ten (10) individuals currently in background to lateral to outside agencies.

Dispatchers

# of Budgeted Positions	Position Title	Filled/Vacant/ Pending Vacancy
1	Dispatch Supervisor	Vacant
5	Dispatcher	Filled
	Dispatcher	Filled
	Dispatcher	Filled (pending maternity leave)
	Dispatcher	Pending Vacancy
	Dispatcher	Vacant

In summary, in addition to our vacant Dispatch Supervisor position, which was unsuccessfully floated internally for promotion, we have two vacancies with an expected departure from a third individual and another one leaving on maternity around the beginning of the calendar year.

ANALYSIS:

Considerations

While the simple “numbers” related to our sworn personnel and dispatchers tell one story, a more in-depth look tells another. And while internal and external promotions and recruitments have been underway for the past few months and will certainly provide some immediate and longer-term relief, that discussion will be detailed more fully in the section below.

To adequately provide for minimum police services in Santa Paula, we require 1 watch commander (traditionally a sergeant or senior officer) and two officers per our 12-hour shift, for four units per week. Thus, we need a total of 12 sworn positions to cover all patrol shifts, although we prefer to staff at four persons per weekend shifts, especially the evening watch, for a minimum of 14 sworn officers. In addition, to accommodate for training time, vacation leave, sick or injured individuals, we would ideally look to maintain 15 sworn personnel in addition to special assignments.

Based on our pending scenario, we will drop to unsustainable staffing levels with either eleven or twelve positions filled. This will require our two School Resource Officers to vacate their positions at the High School and Middle School and will require all of our detectives to move to patrol. It will require the freezing of all vacation and leave requests and will place added constraints on the department if members are sick or injured. In addition, it will require us to suspend any training, which is an important and often necessary consideration for our department members to stay current with laws, practices and competencies.

It is important to state that service levels will drop well below desirable levels and would likely result in increased chances of officer injury, burnout and constraints on morale. Crime statistics would likely suffer and the more vulnerable members of our community facing issues of mental health, domestic violence, addiction, and suicide, will not receive the follow-up and referral attention we normally work to afford such families and individuals. Truancy and youth-

related issues and absences, including thoughts of suicide and personal harm will not see the same level of attention afforded our youth through our School Resource Officer program. For that matter, our police department's participation in the new PAL program and our Explorer program will also be compromised.

The lack of supervision and long-tenured employees also creates difficult dynamics for our department which are hard to fully assess or analyze, but which will certainly result in increased mistakes or lack of follow-through and after-action assessment. Internal investigations into complaints of conduct or use of force, and external audits by various state, county and federal entities will suffer and could bring about increased claims, fines or penalties.

Finally, of equal concern is having limited dispatchers. Operating our emergency 911 system and non-emergency phone lines 24-hours, 7-days a week, requires a minimum of four trained individuals. While we have two candidates from our recent recruitment in background check soon to be hired (anticipated to be December 1) and then ready for training, it also appears we are about to lose one individual to a transfer, while a second individual will be out early in the year on maternity leave, as articulated above. One recent police officer academy recruit was prevented from attending the current academy and meanwhile has agreed to attend dispatcher training which hopefully provides some relief.

Contingency Efforts

With recent knowledge that a group of officers were looking to lateral to the Sheriff's Office on top of the various vacancies created by two retirements and four departures, Interim Chief Aguilar and Commander Starna immediately began assessing staffing levels, meeting with department personnel, and researching options for both sustained and temporary services.

Concerted effort has been put into pursuing academy graduates, attracting laterals and hiring recruits and reserves.

- Two (academy complete) laterals have been hired from other agencies, one with five months of field training and the other with three months. The extensive training should allow us to keep their field training in Santa Puala to around three months, making each of them available to be on their own by early-to-late February.
- Three (academy complete) laterals are in the application and background process who may be cleared by early in the year and then will require three-to-four months of field training.
- One new lateral should be joining us in February. He will require the usual four months of field training, making him available for patrol in June.
- One Police Trainee is currently in the Ventura County academy right now and is scheduled to graduate in March, after which four months of field training will be required, making him available around August for patrol.
- Up to four independent recruit trainees currently in academy at Rio Hondo are scheduled to graduate at the end of this month. All four have completed applications with our police department and would then need at least four months of field training.
- We will be seeking Council approval in mid-November to establish a "signing bonus" structure and a "referral bonus", among other suggested benefits.
- We have at least five (5) potential officers waiting for interviews for hire to be sent to the academy. Rio Hondo in Whittier is holding spots for us for the January academy, otherwise we would need to wait until April for spots in the Ventura Academy.

- We have at least one (1) more entry level Dispatch applicant waiting for an opportunity to interview, and we have identified other staff members able to provide very limited dispatch backup.
- One former Reserve Officer is undergoing background and will return to duty shortly with us. In addition, we have one individual who is an active Reserve Police Officer. With their schedules they can help out not only on patrol, but also with investigations when necessary.
- Interim Chief Aguilar is working to extend the contract with Mike Aranda to continue to support special projects and grants and compliance issues within the department. Council approval will be required in December.
- Emphasis will need to be placed on the upcoming salary survey the Council has budgeted for in order to fully examine and respond to the City's salary and benefit package for police personnel.

The Chief and Commander have been actively reaching out to all municipal, county and state law enforcement agencies in our region requesting their support for targeted services or backup resources should we be unable to adequately serve the public or cover gaps in patrol and investigations.

Of course, staffing by outside law enforcement agencies is contingent upon their respective staffing availability at any given point in time and nobody has indicated they could assist us for an extended period of time. There are also consequences to bringing in outside help, including limited familiarity with our community, street system, past detective case files, etc. Still, some help could be available to us as summarized below:

- Oxnard and Ventura Police Departments to assist with patrol services
- Port Hueneme Police Department to provide a dispatcher
- Simi Valley Police Department for patrol and special enforcement services
- CHP for serious or fatal traffic collisions and investigations
- Ventura County D.A. for investigation services for sexual assaults
- Ventura County Sheriff for major crimes investigations

Many of these services could come at no cost to the City or would be billed based on the time expended in Santa Paula. We continue to look at other options, including advertising for more openings and working to attract Reserve Officers.

Conclusions

Neither Interim Chief Aguilar nor I are advocating to eliminate our police department, nor merge with the Sheriff's Office. However, if I am to be accountable for the organization and the public's safety and if I'm to stay true to the expectations vested in me by the City's Municipal Code, then I have an obligation to bring these matters to your attention so we can have an open conversation about our capacity and how we serve this community.

The short-term erosion of services to our community and the potential harm that comes with it is real, as are the limitations we may find in attracting and retaining good talent given our less-than-competitive salaries. Employee morale, lack of training and compliance, and the departure for any reason of even just one additional employee could force us into a default position or require us to ask the Sheriff to provide limited or full-service law enforcement for our community.

Most of all, I would hope that Council and the interested public come to this discussion with an open mind and absent any finger-pointing. While I've done my best to understand why we are in this predicament, the one thing that is quite clear is that there isn't just "one thing." Retirements, injuries, historical issues, leadership changes, internal investigations and tensions, disparate labor negotiations, low salaries, and an uncertain future, are all contributing to the scenario before us. Yet we can only get through this successfully with one shared voice and vision.

STRATEGIC PLAN:

Not applicable.

FISCAL IMPACTS:

This report is intended as a status update, thus there are no direct costs or cost savings associated with the report, as there are no specific recommendations accompanying the report.

OPTIONS:

Based on the information provided, the Council may wish to ask staff to seek a formal proposal for services by the Ventura County Sheriff, either for temporary help or a long-term contract. Doing so may allow for a slow down in the transition of staff while such a relationship is more fully explored.

Of course the Council is under no obligation to seek outside law enforcement services. Moving forward, the City's Police Department has the interest and commitment to get through a difficult staffing time, but it will come at a cost, both fiscally and physically for our department members, but also recognizing potentially dramatic impacts to our community.

ATTACHMENTS: