

Mayor
John Murray
Mayor Pro Tem
Mary Hornsby
Council Members
John Plourde
Willard Rodarmel
William Siegel



**Office of the
City Manager**

119 Fox Street
Lemoore ♦ CA 93245
Phone ♦ (559) 924-6700
FAX ♦ (559) 924-9003

To: Lemoore City Council Item # 5
From: Jeff Briltz, City Manager
Date: July 26, 2010
Subject: Lifting of Hiring Freeze for Position of Police Officer

Discussion:

The Council will recall that we imposed a hiring freeze for new full-time City employees in February, 2009 for the purpose of allowing attrition to reduce overall City employment to a level that could be sustained with our reduced revenue stream. Since then, the City's full-time workforce has gone from 111 to 99, and in all but one instance, the reduction was due to retirement (some incentivized), voluntary resignation, for cause termination, and voluntary incentivized demotion to open positions. Unfortunately, we did end up laying off one full-time employee earlier this year.

At the Police Department, we have seen three sworn officers retire in the past 8 months, once we include Sergeant Wes Roberts' retirement on August 31, 2010. In addition, one Officer was separated from employment in May, and another separation is now pending. By the end of August, we expect to have five fewer sworn Officers than we had one year ago. City-wide, our full-time employee workforce is expected to be down to 97.

Overall, the City is getting much closer to achieving a level of employment that is sustainable even with our reduced general fund revenue stream. In the coming months, I will be presenting for the Council's consideration organizational changes that permit more efficient and effective use of our smaller workforce.

The Council will further recall that in April of 2009, when the three-year fiscal plan for the City General Fund was approved, the Police Department was expected to be reduced by three sworn positions. We anticipated the positions, once vacated, being the Administrative Sergeant, Problem Oriented Policing assignment, and the weekend traffic officer (motorcycle) shift. The first two assignments have been vacant for the past several months, and rather than vacating the weekend traffic shift, the Police Chief has elected to reduce the overall weekend day shift by one, and allow the traffic officer to remain, but to move to a patrol car as needed on the shift.

With two more vacancies anticipated in the next few weeks, the Department is facing a staffing shortage that will impact services if not addressed.

I am proposing that the Council permit the hiring freeze to be lifted for sworn police officer positions only, and only for the vacancies that are created beyond the three positions that were anticipated to remain vacant.

Should the Council not wish to authorize hiring of police officers to backfill the anticipated vacant positions, the two assignments that would be left unfilled are expected to be the Youth Development Officer position with the Lemoore Elementary School District, with primary assignment at Liberty Middle School, and another patrol officer staff on weekend days, which is generally the slowest shift. Leaving the Youth Development Officer position vacant has a reduced savings to the City, as the Elementary District does participate in the costs of have the officer at the School. The current arrangement for cost sharing has the District contributing \$26,000, and the City has requested a revised agreement that would reimburse 50% of our costs, with a district contribution of about \$40,000.

Incidentally, the City was invited to submit (for the second time) a federally funded grant that provides funding for the City to fill the two of the three positions that we had anticipated to remain vacant for the foreseeable future. We anticipate learning about the status of our grant application in September.

One additional piece of information to consider is that now appears to be the best time in memory to recruit well prepared Police Officers. There have been hundreds of Officers laid off from cities across the state with experience during the past year. Furthermore, many academy graduates have yet to become affiliated with Departments, as few have done much hiring at all since the recession began. I believe we should expect to see a terrifically qualified large pool of applicants should the City announce an open recruitment, something we have not seen in the past 10 plus years.

Budget Impact:

The 2010/11 Budget provides funding to fill the two positions discussed above. Each position that remains vacant has the potential to save the City approximately \$80,000 per year. If the Youth Development Officer position is one of the remaining unfilled positions, there will be a corresponding decrease in revenue of \$26,000 - \$40,000 as well, leaving a net savings of \$40,000 - \$54,000.

Recommendation:

That the Council, by motion, approve modifying the hiring freeze as discussed above.