

STAFF REPORT

City Council Business Item

DATE: June 17 2024

TO: Honorable Mayor and Council Members

FROM: Casey J. Day, Chief of Police

THROUGH: Merritt Perry, City Manager

SUBJECT: **Supplemental Budget Request and Authorization for the Over Hire of One Police Officer**

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Authorize a Supplemental Budget Request (SBR) approving the over hire of one Fortuna Police Officer.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Fortuna Police Department (FPD) is currently facing a critical staffing challenge that necessitates immediate action to ensure the continued continuity of operations as well as the safety and well-being of our community. Staff is currently seeking authorization from the City Council for an over hire of one additional sworn police officer. This request is being made in anticipation of potential staffing shortages. Currently, three sworn Fortuna Police Officers are seeking employment with outside agencies. All three officers have started the employment process with other agencies and should they be successful, their departure could create immediate vacancies, which will significantly and negatively impact the departments operational capabilities. In addition, two additional officers are scheduled to be placed on long-term rehabilitation and/or medical leave due to scheduled upcoming medical procedures.

OPERATIONAL IMPACT:

The City of Fortuna's event season is rapidly approaching, bringing with it a series of high-attendance community events such as the Fortuna Fireworks Festival, Fortuna Rodeo Round-Up, Fortuna Rodeo, Redwood AutoXpo, Hops in Humboldt and more. These events necessitate a substantial police presence to ensure public safety, manage crowds, manage traffic, and coordination with event organizers. During event season, the demand for police services spikes significantly. Ensuring adequate staffing during this period is paramount to maintaining order and providing timely responses to incidents.

A shortage of officers compromises our ability to respond effectively to emergencies and routine calls, posing a risk to public safety and the community's well-being. Additionally, overworked officers are more susceptible to stress and fatigue, which can affect their performance, decision-making, and overall health. The visibility and accessibility of our officers are key to maintaining strong community relations. Insufficient staffing can undermine public trust and diminish our capacity for community engagement.

OVERHIRE SOLUTION:

In order to proactively address these challenges, the Chief of Police is requesting Council authorization to over hire one additional police officer. This will ensure continuous coverage and maintain our current level of service despite potential staffing disruptions. Adequate staffing is essential to managing the increased demands of the upcoming event season, ensuring public safety, and effective event management. The ability to over hire provides the department with the flexibility needed to adapt to unforeseen circumstances without compromising service quality.

FINANCIAL/FISCAL IMPACT:

A full-time Police Officer can cost up to \$175,000 a year in wages and benefits for a full year. This cost would be partially offset by avoided overtime costs estimated at \$60,000 - \$85,000 for a full year. While the SBR is for the over hire to be in place for the entirety of next fiscal year (FY 24-25) the more likely scenario is that it will only be in place for six months or less. The over hire would remain in effect until a current officer leaves and the over hired officer can take the spot of one of the regular positions. If the over hire is in place for six months the total estimated cost required to come from reserves would be \$50,000.

RECOMMENDED COUNCIL ACTION:

The authorization for an over hire is a strategic and proactive measure to address anticipated staffing challenges and ensure the Fortuna Police Department remains fully operational during critical periods. I strongly recommend that the City Council approve the over hire of one additional police officer and the necessary budget adjustments to support this action.

1. Receive staff presentation and review Council questions
2. Open Public Comment
3. Close Public Comment
4. Motion to Approve a Supplemental Budget Request (SBR) authorizing the Chief of Police to over hire one additional police officer.
5. Voice vote.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Supplemental Budget Request