

STAFF REPORT

Business Agenda Item

DATE: July 20, 2026

TO: Honorable Mayor and Council Members

FROM: Amy Nilsen, City Manager

SUBJECT: **Hiring Freeze Exception – Police Chief**

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the City Council approve an exception to the current hiring freeze to allow recruitment and appointment of a Police Chief and begin the recruitment and appointment process.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The appointment of the Interim Police Chief, Matthew A. Eberhardt, occurred at a special City Council meeting on March 19, 2025, to be effective March 29, 2025, to October 3, 2026. Since this time Interim Chief Eberhardt has requested to remain in the Interim capacity until the end of 2026, which the City Manager approved. Therefore, with the pending departure of the City's Interim Police Chief at the end of the calendar year it is recommended to begin the recruitment and appointment process for a new Police Chief.

Human Resources staff will conduct the recruitment and not rely on contracting out recruitment services, which are common for high-profile positions such as this one, in order to save General Fund dollars.

The Police Chief plans, organizes, directs, and coordinates the law enforcement and crime prevention functions of the City; to ensure the protection of life, property, and individual rights of all community members through public engagement and enforcement of applicable laws and ordinances. The Police Chief oversees a staff of 28.13 allocated positions. Given the legal, operational, and economic impacts of leaving this role vacant, staff request an immediate exception to the hiring freeze to fill this position.

STRATEGIC PLAN 2026-2036:

This action supports the following area(s) of your City Council's Strategic Plan 2026-2036.

Core Values:

Quality of Life: Family, Nature and Neighbors: Safety, family life, care for youth, cleanliness, parks, forests, and river.

Priority 2: Our People – Staff Retention, Pay & Succession

Priority 7: Pedestrian Safety & Connections

Priority 8: Youth, Recreation & Community Life

FISCAL IMPACT:

No additional appropriation is requested. Salary and benefits for the position are included in the adopted budget. The Police Chief's salary is currently set at \$148,000 and is funded through the General Fund.

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Deny the exception – Not recommended. This would leave an already short-staffed department with even more vacancies and a lack of organizational structure.
- Delay recruitment until freeze is lifted – Not recommended. The City's high standards for "quality of life" do not support delaying this recruitment.

RECOMMENDED COUNCIL ACTION:

1. Receive staff presentation and review Council questions
2. Open and close Public Comment
3. Motion to approve an exception to the hiring freeze for the Police Chief position and begin the recruitment and appointment process. Roll Call vote.

ATTACHMENTS:

- A. Draft Police Chief Job Announcement