



City Council

Agenda Item

Subject: Authorization for the Police Department to hire a full-time permanent officer due to officer on military leave.

Meeting: City Council - Jan 17 2023

From: Amanda Mack, City Manager

SUGGESTED MOTION:

I move to approve the authorization for the Police Department to hire a full-time permanent officer due to officer on military leave.

STAFF REFERENCE(S):

Tim Toomey

ATTACHMENT(S):

[Permanent Officer Justification](#)

The history of hiring temporary officers:

In recent years, the WPD has been faced with staff shortages due to existing patrol officers being deployed for National Guard or Army Reserve service. Those deployments have ranged in duration from nine to eighteen months.

In the spring of 2016, the WPD began filling those shortages by hiring “full-time-temporary” police officer positions. Typically, a temporary officer was hired, began training, and then sometime in the first three to six months, the resignation of a different full-time officer caused a vacancy. The temporary officer was converted to full-time-permanent status. In most cases, we hired another temporary officer to serve during the remainder of the deployment period.

This same scenario of filling vacancies with temporary officers has occurred six times since 2016. In all cases, a subsequent resignation allowed us to convert the temporary officer to full-time status. In other words, we have never been forced to “lay off” a temporary officer.

It has proven difficult to get quality applicants when the position is advertised as being “temporary.” In the most recent occurrence (October 2022), we only had two applicants for the temporary position. Applicant A was hired as a temporary officer, and then converted to permanent status a month later, due to a resignation. Then, Applicant B was hired as temporary, only to be converted to permanent status within a month due to another resignation.

The current situation:

We are authorized to employ 40 police officers. That most recent temporary officer being converted to full-time is/was our 40th officer (with one of the 40 being deployed). That also means we have yet another temporary vacancy. The full-time-permanent officer who is currently deployed is expected to return to work in September of 2023. Both of the applicants from the October 2022 hiring list have been hired, leaving no other applicants available. If we advertise the position as temporary again, we are likely to get a very limited number of applicants; and given the training period of a new officer is eight to ten months, that newly hired officer will not be actively working in a productive capacity by the time the deployed officer returns.

The proposed solution:

Instead of advertising the need for a temporary officer, we would like to advertise it as permanent. In other words, we are requesting to be authorized to hire a 41st full-time-permanent officer. Of course, only 40 of those officers would be a payroll expense to the City. Because, we know we are going to be faced with three to five resignations in any given year, it is extremely unlikely that we would be at 41 officers (being paid by the City) when the deployed employee returns in September of 2023. We would simply not hire a replacement when we are faced with the inevitable resignation sometime during the summer or fall of 2023.

This proposal of advertising the position as permanent would be more likely to generate a better and deeper list of qualified applicants. Assuming we never actually get to the point where we pay a 41 officers a monthly salary, the cost to the City is a non-factor. If we do not see a resignation between now and September 2023, we would be faced with a situation where the City would have 41 officers actively on its payroll. However, the lack of any resignations for that nine-month period of time would be an unusual and very positive situation to be in. If that situation were to unfold, of course, we would not hire a replacement when we received the next resignation.

