



MEMORANDUM

Date: January 29, 2024

To: Mayor and City Council

From: Gerry Beaudin, City Manager
David Swing, Police Chief

Subject: Police Department Staffing

Executive Summary

Police officer recruitment and retention in Alameda County, California, and nationwide has been challenging in recent years. Despite those challenges, the Pleasanton Police Department's sworn personnel staffing level has been relatively stable over the preceding five years until 2022. For most of 2023, the department's deployable sworn staffing level fluctuated near 80%, consistent with other similarly-sized police departments in Alameda County. The number dipped to 71% toward the end of 2023 due to many leaves (12 sworn workers' compensation cases) and 12 vacancies (including an unexpected resignation towards the end of the calendar year). Recent recruitment efforts have been fruitful: 5 officers will start the 16-week Field Training Program on February 5, 2024, 1 police recruit is planned to graduate from the academy in May 2024, and 4 recruits will start the 6-month police academy this February/ March. The additional sworn personnel will decrease the vacancy percentage substantially and will help increase deployable sworn officer resources in 2024. The City is continuing to improve the recruitment processes, retention efforts, and manage workers' compensation cases with the goal of re-establishing many of the special units by the end of 2024.

Background

At its December 19, 2023, meeting, the City Council asked staff to prepare a memo providing an update on police staffing before the scheduled spring bi-annual update. This memo provides current staffing levels and associated impacts, the historical perspective of hiring and attrition for the police department, the current recruitment strategies employed, and an overview of the hiring process, as these are interrelated elements that directly impact staffing.

Staffing in the Police Profession

The challenge of police staffing is not specific to policing or to Pleasanton and has been discussed with the City Council in recent police department bi-annual updates. Staffing

of police officer positions is a regional and nationwide concern as evidenced in professional publications and news reports from both local and national media. [The U.S. is experiencing a police hiring crisis \(nbcnews.com\)](#); [Why police forces are struggling to recruit and keep officers | CNN](#)

Current Staffing Situation and Impacts

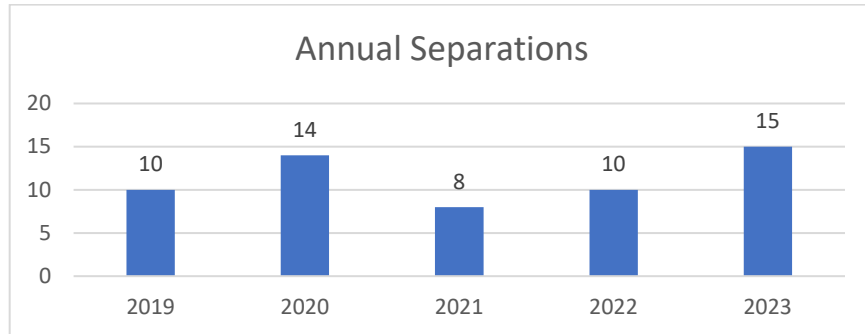
The Pleasanton Police Department has three primary divisions comprised of nine units. The Operations Division is the largest division, and similar to the Communications Center, requires staffing 24/7 365 days a year (8,760 total annual hours) and has minimum staffing requirements, which require the backfill of positions due to vacancies caused by personal leave, illness, and training.

Presently, of the 118 full-time positions allocated to the police department, 83 are sworn positions (including sworn supervisors and managers), and 35 are professional staff (including field personnel, dispatchers, administrative staff, and managers). Of the 83 sworn positions 71% are deployable in the field for emergency response; of these, 14% (12) are undeployable due to medical leave and 14% (12) due to vacancies. A promising outlook is on the immediate horizon as 5 officers will start the 16-week Field Training Program on February 5, 1 police recruit is planned to graduate from the academy in May 2024, and 4 recruits will start the 6-month police academy this February/March. The five new officers will decrease the vacancy percentage substantially; however, the deployable strength will not increase until the new officers complete training in June. Of the 35 professional staff positions, 2 are presently vacant, 1 is out on medical leave, and 3 are in training.

The City has experienced success in some of its recent recruitment efforts, which has allowed the department to add the aforementioned employees to its ranks. Unfortunately, the department also recently had 2 officers placed on medical leave, and 1 officer suddenly resigned and left the profession. The unexpected nature of these leaves necessitated reassigning the partially staffed motor (traffic) unit to patrol to bolster patrol staffing. In addition to the motor unit being reassigned, the police department has a limited number of officers assigned to investigations and reassigned the Special Enforcement Unit (SEU) members to other units in January 2022. Other vacant positions include one School Resource Officer (SRO), one Alternate Response Unit (ARU) Officer, and one Crime Prevention Officer. Based on the current pace of hiring, and barring any other unanticipated leaves, the City intends to staff the Alternate Response Unit, School Resource Officer, and reinstate the motor unit by summer 2024. Other positions will follow as staffing allows.

Deployable sworn officer strength of similarly-sized municipal agencies in Alameda County varies between 62-95%, with most agencies in the mid-80% range. The deployable strength for sworn police positions in Pleasanton during 2023 has ranged from 71%-82% (three quarters of 2023 saw the department's staffing numbers toward the higher end); this does not include those in the field training program at various times.

The police department experienced 15 separations in 2023, which is similar to 2020 and higher than normal for the past five years. This number represents sworn and civilian positions and includes all reasons for separation (industrial and service retirements, resignations, and others). This number does not include temporary employees or those who transferred to other roles within the police department. The graph below shows the number of separations over the last 5 years.



The following list provides a point-in-time count of staffing, officer deployable strength, and the commensurate impacts quarterly for 2023.

- March
 - Vacancies: **7 sworn**, 4 civilian
 - Leave: **8 sworn**, 3 civilian
 - Deployable Sworn Strength: 82%
 - Impacts: SEU collapsed, reduced staffing in CIU and Traffic
- June
 - Vacancies: **5 sworn**, 7 civilian
 - Leaves: **11 sworn**, 1 civilian
 - Deployable Sworn Strength: 81%
 - Impacts: The above impacts and Crime Prevention pulled to ARU
- September
 - Vacancies: **10 sworn**, 6 civilian
 - Leaves: **11 sworn**, 2 civilian
 - Deployable Sworn Strength: 75%
 - Impacts: The above impacts and one position SRO vacant, motors reinstated, one officer assigned to ARU
- December
 - Vacancies: **12 sworn**, 2 civilian
 - Leaves: **12 sworn**, 1 civilian
 - Deployable Sworn Strength: 71%
 - Impacts: Same as above and one Sergeant and two motor officers pulled from traffic enforcement. Delayed officer assigned to ARU. Planned reinstatement by summer 2024.

Recruitment Strategies

An important piece of the staffing strategy is recruitment. In addition to the human resources team serving the entire City and LPFD, the police department has a recruitment team comprised of a diverse group of sworn officers and professional staff that actively recruit throughout the year; this includes attending hiring and community events throughout the Bay Area. The goal of the recruitment team is to treat all potential applicants like a college would treat a Division 1 athlete being courted to attend a certain school through the building of personal relationships with the applicants. This strategy is reinforced through several anecdotal success stories and recent professional recruitment publications and surveys. [RecruitmentRetention.pdf \(policeforum.org\)](#)

One of the most significant changes made in 2023 was hosting (rather than requiring applicants to do this elsewhere) the Police Officer Standard Training (*POST*) *entry-level law enforcement test battery* (written exam), which is required for entry-level officers (recruit). The Pleasanton Police Department hosted six testing dates in 2023 and plans to host one test every month through mid-2024. As a result of this strategy, the department has hired three applicants who participated in this process and has other individuals at various stages of the hiring process.

Another strategy recently employed in recruitment was the implementation of *Interview Now*, a recruitment and communication software solution. This technology has been used at all recent recruitment events and provides staff with contact information of potential applicants. This information is forwarded to recruitment staff who follow up directly with the potential applicants.

The police department recruits for three separate police officer classifications: lateral officer (those officers who have completed a police academy, and have at least completed their probationary period), academy graduate (those who are enrolled in or have completed the police academy but have not yet completed probation), and recruit officer (those who have not yet enrolled in the academy). The hiring process for academy graduates and lateral officers is more streamlined as both positions are sent to a Captain's interview after receiving their initial application. The recruit candidate process is longer for several reasons, including State-required testing (written and physical ability) and a structured interview. After completing the interview, the human resources department qualifies those applicants that meet the minimum standards and releases the list to police department staff for the next stages of the hiring process. From this point on, all three processes are identical. Police staff then schedules pre-psych screening and a pre-background meeting.

The timeline for hiring an officer ranges between three to five months, primarily attributed to the time required for a thorough background check and the subsequent psychological and medical tests.

Among the strategies recently employed to streamline the hiring process is expediting interviews for academy graduates. In 2023, the process of academy graduate interviews was changed to allow those who qualify to be immediately interviewed by a Police

Captain instead of grouping them until a sufficient number of applications was received. This significantly shortened this process, and, in most cases, applicants are now interviewed within one to two weeks of receiving an application. Another strategy being employed is running processes in parallel whenever possible, whereas previously, the process occurred sequentially.

Recognizing that Pleasanton (like most local governments) is a services-based organization, and that the recruitment of high-quality staff benefits both the community and the organization, the City will be evaluating the recruitment process to look for strategies to deepen the pool of qualified applicants across the organization – including the police department. This effort will optimize internal processes and external strategies to attract and retain high-quality employees, foster the long-term success of the organization, its workforce, and best support the community.

Retention

While recruitment is a key component of a fully staffed department, another component is retention. The police department is focused on retention through Goal 1 of the Department's strategic plan – *Invest in a Healthy and Engaged Workforce*. The priority items of the plan are also included in the recently adopted City-wide ONE Pleasanton Strategic Plan. Being an employer of choice is a critical component which includes maintaining a welcoming culture and thoughtful leadership that intentionally seeks a voice from employees in decisions when feasible.

Work Related Injuries

As noted previously in this memo, the police department presently has 12 officers and 1 civilian member out on medical leave from various work-related injuries. This number has remained relatively consistent during the past year as injuries take time to heal or to determine if an employee is able to return to work. Many employees who are unable to perform the essential duties of a police officer for extended periods of time (i.e., more than one year) are eventually retired through the Industrial Disability Retirement program. The higher-than-normal number of officers out on injury is a significant impediment to staffing. While one is out on medical leave the City is unable to hire for their position without authorization for an over-hire. A strategy that has been applied in other agencies is to over-hire for officers on leave until such time as all vacant officer positions are filled. This approach will be discussed in upcoming mid-term budget meetings but will be challenging as cost containment and reductions will be the focus. Bringing more General Fund revenue into the City will be essential as the City grapples with challenges like this one.

Conclusion

While police department staffing is an ongoing concern, staff is encouraged by the recent success and is optimistic that current and future investments of time and resources will yield dividends of a fully staffed department by late 2025. One approach to expedite the staffing timeline is to implement new ways of attracting more experienced officers. The police department is no longer attracting a high number of experienced officers which requires the investment of more than six months of time and

more than \$80,000 in training expenses for the police academy. If a sufficient number of experienced officers applied and providing the ability to over-hire for some of the officers on extended medical leave, staff anticipates all specialized units would be reinstated by the end of 2024.