



CITY OF WHEATLAND

CITY COUNCIL MEETING STAFF REPORT

March 28, 2023

SUBJECT: Police Department Take Home Vehicle Pilot Program and associated costs

PREPARED BY: Damiean Sylvester, Chief of Police

Recommendation

This is an informational item only. No action is necessary.

Background/Discussion

By August 2022, the Police Department had three patrol officers resign and take police officer positions with other departments. From July 1st through October 2022 the Police Department had three officers in the Field Training Program (FTO), leaving the department short staffed on patrol until the new officers completed the POST (Police Officer Standards and Training) mandated training program. This shortage forced trained officers to work additional shifts, additional hours, and be denied time off and training opportunities.

The cost to hire one police officer is \$400 (polygraph), \$1500 (background investigation), \$450 (psychological exam), \$500 (medical exam), \$750 (uniforms and equipment) \$1000 (ballistic vest), totally \$4600.00. This doesn't include salary and benefits the city pays a new officer while they are in the four-month FTO program.

The Police Department's current budget only pays for one police officer to work between 0100-0700 hours, 7 days a week. On certain days of the week, we also may only have one police officer working between 0700-1300 hours.

I began looking for ways to maximize staffing levels and ways to retain our current trained police officers for more than 3 years, hoping to retain them for 4-6 years. Allowing trained/experienced officers to take home a patrol car during their work week maximizes staffing levels at shift change, because the officer will be driving to work in full uniform and be able to immediately respond to calls for service or assist their partner as soon as they reach the city limits. Allowing officers who are full time employees for at least 3 years to take home a patrol car gives them incentive to stay longer, thus reducing recruitment costs, training costs, and retains officers longer which is a benefit to our community because you will have experienced officers responding to calls for service and proactively patrolling the community.

Making positive changes is important for Wheatland's ability to attract and retain officers. For example, I have had success recruiting and hiring officers who are married and have children ever since the City Council approved providing medical benefits for spouses and families. In the past, the Police Department was receiving applications from candidates who were single because the city didn't have medical benefits for their families, and some current employees would leave sooner because they were going to get married or start a family.

This is a very competitive time in law enforcement. All of our surrounding agencies are offering signing bonuses for lateral police officers. In addition, nearby agencies are also offering take home cars for officers once they complete the FTO program. Yuba County Sheriff's Department is offering \$2500-\$10,000 signing bonus plus 50 hours of sick leave and 50 hours of vacation leave and a take home car. Marysville PD is offering a \$10,000 signing bonus and a take-home car. Yuba City Police Department is offering up to \$45,000 signing bonus, Sutter County Sheriff's Department offers take home cars, Lincoln Police Department and Placer County Sheriff's Department offer take home cars.

In January of this year, I informed the City Manager I had instituted a pilot program allowing senior officers in the department to take home vehicles during their scheduled shifts. The pilot program has the following provisions:

The City will allow patrol sergeants and officers to use marked City police vehicles for travel to and from the Wheatland Police Department and an officer's place of residence under the following conditions:

- *The program is only effective during the workweek of the officer; it is not a permanent assignment of a vehicle for the sole use of the officer.*
 - o *Officers will come to the police station at the beginning of their workweek in their personal vehicle and may take a City vehicle home during their workweek. The officer shall leave the City vehicle at the Police Department on the last day of their workweek. (Overtime shifts do not qualify)*
- *Officers participating in the program must drive to work in a full police uniform and be ready to respond to calls for service upon entering the City limits.*
- *The City vehicle is for commuting only. When the officer is off duty, the City vehicle may not be used for personal use, errands, or any activity other than driving to and from work.*
- *No passengers are authorized to be in the vehicle when commuting without prior authorization from a supervisor. There is no exception for an officer's family members.*
- *When not in use, the vehicle must be parked and locked in a garage or driveway of a private residence. No apartment, condominium, or communal parking lots are authorized.*
 - o *For the pilot program, no alternative locations are approved (i.e., parking the City vehicle at a police or fire station near the officer's residence.) Only a garage or driveway in the employee's private residence is approved.*
- *Employees who have not completed 3 years of continuous full-time service with the City are not eligible. (Full-time service as a reserve police officer will count towards the 3 years)*

- *The use of a vehicle may be impacted by maintenance schedules, major repairs, or other issues. Day-to-day use may be restricted to maintain sufficient reserves or accommodate major events in the City. Employees must be prepared to utilize their own personal vehicles for commuting with short notice from the City about one of these potential restrictions.*
- *Participation Is voluntary.*
- *Participation may be revoked at any time by the Chief of Police.*
- *Employees who are found to be in violation of the conditions of this pilot project may be subject to discipline up to and including termination of employment, pursuant to the City's Personnel Rules, Wheatland Police Department policies and the MOU between the City and WPOA/WSA.*

This pilot program will be in place for an indefinite period of time and may be discontinued at any time by the Chief of Police upon notice to WPOA/WSA.

The pilot project was established prior to my decision to retire sooner than planned from the department. This timing is unfortunate but in no way planned. As a result, I have informed the officers the pilot program will sunset when I retire on June 30th, 2023.

Alternatives

None, this is an informational staff report.

Fiscal Impact

There are currently four patrol officers eligible to participate in the program, two are in the 4-6 years of service targeted range. If all four patrol officers maximize the usage of the take home car through June 30th, 2023 the cost would be \$5932 (based on the current IRS mileage rate of 0.655). Currently not all officers take home a car when they are eligible. Currently eligible officers are only taking a vehicle home 60% of the time they are eligible to do so. Therefore, the actual projected cost is \$3559.

Attachments

None

