

Dire conditions impact retention of deputies

December 5, 2023



“The effects of inflation and poor pay compromise law enforcement in our county.” So says Del Norte County Sheriff Garrett Scott. The sheriff shared his disappointment upon losing 11 deputies (including the recent tragic loss of Deputy Deanna Esmaeel) by December 1.

“Conditions are dire,” said Scott.

The departing deputies cite opportunities for increased wages and family ties to other areas causing the exodus. The sheriff laments the modest pay scale which aggravates the inability to pay competitive wages.

Del Norte County ranks in the bottom quarter in pay scale percentile. According to INDEED recruitment, Sheriff Scott is the 39th highest paid sheriff among California’s 58 counties. Across the state, according to ZipRecruiter, salaries for deputies ranged from \$34,332 to a \$110,996, with an average of \$72,467 or \$34.84 per hour. California ranks second of the 50 states nationwide. Step 1 entry level deputies for Del Norte county are paid a modest \$24.88 per hour which translates to about \$51,750 per year.

“That’s not very much money to support a family anywhere in California and certainly not in Del Norte,” according to Sheriff Scott.

The sheriff announced three individuals assigned to Del Norte County will begin the 24-week academy training in January.

Additionally, deputies must address the 246 coroner’s cases and patrol the community. Losing deputies is hurting Del Norte County.

Salary conditions in the city are slightly better than deputies schedule, but not by much. Chief Richard Griffin of the Crescent City Police Department shared the information officers received a cost-of-living allowance (COLA) of 4 percent in 2022 and this year’s COLA will fall in the 1-4 percent area after the Consumer Price Index is evaluated. Step 1 (of five) entry level for a CCPD officer is \$26.20 per hour. Last year, the city budgeted \$10,000 to send a recruit through the academy. The new hire must sign a contract for five years, earning a 20% service credit each year.

The big winner, if there is one, in law enforcement is the California Highway Patrol. With a 7.9 percent pay raise this year combined with a 6.2 percent raise in 2022, troopers will come out of the academy earning near \$104,000 annually; but the inflation impact is profound. Today’s \$100,000 is not exactly a rich person’s salary.

Due to inflation and demonization of law officers, recruitment continues to be dire. Money appears to be a fix in stimulating recruitment. And certainly, the malaise in hiring is not relegated to law enforcement. The county’s Health and Human Services Department is currently experiencing a 30 percent jobs vacancy rate.

Sheriff Scott plans to address his concern to the Board of Supervisors immediately.