

Council supports plan to pay for police recruits

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In an effort bring new police officers to Crescent City, the city council unanimously voted to pay the way through the academy for officers willing to work in the city.

The unanimous vote will set aside around \$10,000 for each recruit to attend the 23-week police academy.

City Manager Eric Weir said the city needs to look for a different way to recruit officers because Crescent City has struggled to find new officers. The city had to even return a grant because it was unable to find an officer to fill the grant-funded position.

“We have several opportunities to increase our police force and improve the job we’re doing,” Weir told the council. “Most agencies are going through this exact same situation where they cannot find officers.”

Police Chief Richard Griffin said recruiting has become extremely difficult with many officers leaving the career altogether. With fewer people available, Crescent City needs to think differently, Griffin said.

“The recruiting issue is not just us, it’s nationwide,” he said. “Everyone’s thinking outside the box trying to find the right person and get them to come here.”

To be an officer in California, an officer must graduate from a police academy in California, and the cost can be prohibitive for prospective officers looking to start a career.

Griffin said the 23-week academy costs \$4,383 for academic expenses with food and housing around \$5,300 for the same time period.

“One of the way I think we can attract some quality applicants, especially people new to the career, is to sponsor recruits through there,” Griffin said. “What we would look at is being able to hire this person maybe a month before the academy. That would let us get them into the department and begin training and back grounds.”

In the most recent class at College of the Redwoods, 15 students started the 23-week program. Four dropped out within the first week, and 10 of the remaining 11 were already sponsored by the Humboldt County Sheriff’s Office.

Griffin said the city’s plan would have Crescent City pay the full expenses for the academy with the officer signing a contract that has a five-year repayment plan. In short, the plan would allow the new officer to work off the expense at 20% a year as long as they are on the force. After five years, they could leave with no string attached.

“This is a really good marketing plan,” Griffin said. “I have had a lot of people that are very interested. One of the recruiting cycles we likely would have had three or four people that would have come. They were peace officers in other locations.”

After the council vote, the city will immediately begin looking for recruits who can begin the academy in July.