

Crescent City to sell guns from police evidence locker

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Crescent City will soon begin selling guns it has been storing in the police evidence locker.

The city council voted unanimously to authorize the police department to sell the guns, some that were used in crimes, but many simply left behind over the last few decades.

Police Chief Richard Griffin told the council one huge task he has undertaken is cleaning out the evidence locker. Much of the evidence has been destroyed or turned virtual, but the department has done nothing to date with the 100-plus guns it has been storing.

"This started when I took over," Griffin said. "We did an audit of certain things. One of the main ones was the evidence room. It's been a couple of years."

Griffin said the evidence room was packed with evidence from the '70s on and was so full the door could barely open.

He said while the department has been able to make some gains in cleaning out old evidence, it had two options for the council to consider in regards to firearms. State law allows police departments to either destroy firearms or sell them through a licensed federal firearms dealer.

"I know when I took over, you could barely open the door to the evidence room," he explained. "I could show it to you now and you can almost walk to the back."

The department has found at least 100 firearms, many than can be disposed of. Any weapon used in a murder case must be held for 99 years and weapons used in other violent crimes must also be stored for a certain amount of time.

"Anything that qualifies as an assault weapon cannot be sold under California laws," he added.

Griffin said he wanted guidance from the council before moving forward.

"It's a hot-button issue, so you can guide me in what you want," the chief said.

The council strongly supported the idea of seeling the guns, with many saying any profits should be used to fund the department's Explorer program for children.

"I was really hoping selling would be an option here, and I'm glad it was," Councilor Beau Smith said.

"Any firearms that were used for an assault or a murder will not be sold, so that's a good thing," Mayor Jason Greenough said. "This can turn something that was used in an illegal way into a benefit."

Griffin said the majority of the guns had no links to crime, explaining many were simply left behind at hotel rooms or turned in for safekeeping and never picked up.

"I personally would like to see them sold and I would like to see it go to the Explorer program," Mayor Pro Tem Isaiah Wright said.

Smith then mad a motion to sell the guns which Wright seconded.

"I think that's a great idea," Greenough said. "Send it to the Explorers. It's bringing up the next generation of officers."