

Council approves bonus plan for police hires

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The city council in Crescent City unanimously approved a lateral hiring program that will pay experienced police officers a \$10,000 bonus to move to the Crescent City Police Department.

The vote goes hand-in-hand with a similar decision a week earlier to pay the cost of the police academy for recruits.

“A lateral transfer is just as important to build that police department staff,” City Manager Eric Wier said. “Can we incentivize someone to laterally transfer? This program would not be unique to Crescent City. It’s just a sign of the times.”

In fact, almost every police department and sheriff’s office in Northern California has similar programs with bonuses ranging from \$5,000 to \$20,000.

Wier said Crescent City can afford the effort thanks to increased funding from Measure S.

“This would work for us,” Wier said. “We would give the person \$5,000 on their hire. They would receive \$2,500 at the end of their FTO (field training) and they would receive \$2,500 at the end of probation. The

entire program would be about a year.”

Wier said the city was also proposing \$2,000 in relocation assistance for any officer moving from outside Del Norte County.

Police Chief Richard Griffin said the challenge of hiring police has made it necessary to think creatively when hiring.

“This is the next step to complete our marketing plan that makes us a destination place to come,” Griffin said. “To have a program like this will allow us to be competitive with those agencies. It is hard to be competitive with Humboldt, Eureka when they’re down there by the academy, and they have the bonuses. Hopefully this will allow us to find one or two people who want to move in from out of the county to here.

“The pool of applicants for being police officers anymore is dwindling. To those that want to be police officers and want to stay in it, it’s a good time. They can move anywhere in the nation because everyone is hiring.”

The resolution approved by the council would only kick in if applicants have finished the academy and have one year of experience with another agency.

“What we’re getting is the more qualified person,” Griffin said. “That’s why I think it’s a really good addition that we can attract people like that.”

Griffin said the plan proposed to the city council was based off a program with the Humboldt County Sheriff’s Office. While there is no requirement an officer stays, Griffin said he is confident they will.

“The key is to be able to attract them here, to be able to get them here,” the chief said. “With a program like this, once someone has already been to another agency, it’s pretty typical they’re going to be at the second agency for at least three to five years. In the word we live in today, with the recruiting, it’s one of the chances we have to take.”

The council strongly supported the proposal, but suggested adding a little more money to the pool for moving expenses.

“The \$2,000 moving costs, come on, we know it’s going to cost a lot more than that moving here,” Councilor Beau Smith said. “That won’t cover moving here from Eureka. I agree it will help. Things are little more expensive right now, and we’re short officers. If we want quality officers, and we want to get them here and we want them to live here, I would be comfortable with another \$1,000. I totally agree with the moving expenses.”

Councilor Blake Inscore also supported increasing moving expenses.

“I want this to be an incentive for somebody that wants to come here to come here, and I don’t have problems raising this up a little bit,” Inscore said. “You want people to want to be here and contributing their part to make the commitment to be here. I don’t know where the balance is.”

Inscore also said if someone with more experience, at sergeant level or higher, was interested in coming to Crescent City, Griffin should have the authority to offer even more in moving expenses.

I hear we should probably up that amount,” Mayor Jason Greenough said. “I’m in favor of it. It’s extremely expensive to do anything in California right now. Do you think \$3,000 is better?”

Inscore made a motion to approve the lateral movement bonus program, effective July 1 to June 30, 2023, while increasing the moving allowance to \$3,000. Smith seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.