

Crescent City looking to add third K9 officer

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They still have to obtain grant funding, but one of the newest additions to the Crescent City Police Department will soon join an elite task force to help take a bite out of crime in the coastal city.

The Crescent City Council and the Measure S Committee authorized the purchase of a third police K9 dog for deployment on patrol in Fiscal Year 2023-2024 at its Oct. 2 meeting.

The police department has a contractual agreement with Meyer's Police K9 Training, LLC, in Chico and is currently working with them for the purchase of a third K9.

It is a work in progress, council had already approved the third dog for the fiscal budget year. The action (Oct. 2) was to provide the department direction to seek out the grant money.

Chief Richard Griffin was able to utilize the AKC Reunite adopt a K9 Cop matching grant program, which is focused on the purchase of police K9's throughout the country and must be co-sponsored through a local K9 Kennel Club.

The new addition will replace Lt. Kai, who is up for retirement at the end of next year.

"The K9 program is invaluable. It's astronomical in terms of what we actually get out of it," Griffin said.

"The dogs take some of the risk away from the officers. Most of the time, it's a call-out. We use the dogs to search rather than person-to-person. They work together with a common goal."

City Manager Eric Wier agreed.

"They are such a valuable tool in keeping our officers safe," he said. "I can't say enough about the K9 program the good in saving time, saving effort, decreasing the endangerment of officers.

"A lot of times all they have to do is let the dog bark and the suspect will surrender."

The new addition will eventually join the current K9 unit, which includes supervisor Sgt. Anthony Lopez and Lt. Kai, Officer Daniel Sanders and Sgt. Kostya and Sperling, who will be the handler for the new recruit.

Griffin said he has already received interest from private citizens to make the private donation to cover the required matching amount of \$2,500.

The AKC Reunite Foundation matching grant would then match the initial donation up to \$7,500 to go towards the purchase of a K9, bringing the total to \$10,000. The grant includes the \$2,500 donation to the Lost Coast Kennel Club based out of Eureka.

The police department K9 unit prides itself on community service, including visits to school activities and demonstrations allowing the community to meet and greet the dogs.

"We do a lot of outreach with our K9's, specifically at schools. Everybody loves dogs. They are not a pet and there's a difference that's for sure," Griffin said.

"They are a working dog and they are trained extremely well and they are very well behaved. We ask people not to come up right away and try to hug them. They are trained to be approachable, but when it's time to go - they know when it's time to work."

Having the dogs and their handlers leads to better community interaction and builds trust between the community and the police force, Wier said.

"Those dogs are great for protection and their role in law enforcement. But they also create an automatic connection with the community," he said. "They are trained to recognize different behavior. But that interaction on a different level is special."

When the new addition arrives, it will go through training after being selected overseas and will be trained at Meyer's Police K9.

Additional training will the dog and handler the opportunity to bond several weeks before the five-week basic academy.

CCPD is required to display a decal from AKC Reunite on the patrol vehicle that is being used for the K9 purchased with the grant funding.