



## STAFF REPORT

**Meeting Date:** December 2, 2014  
**To:** Honorable Mayor & City Council  
**From:** Erick Lee, Division Commander  
**Subject:** Police Department Recruitment Update  
**Attachments:** None

---

### INTRODUCTION

During the City Council's Study Session meeting on November 18, 2014, staff was requested to prepare a report updating the City Council on the status of filling Police Officer position vacancies. This report provides background on staff's work and outlines the challenges facing the City. Staff will provide a more detailed presentation on this important issue at the January 13, 2015 Study Session meeting.

### DISCUSSION

During the two (2) month period from September 2011 to October 2011, 15 sworn Police Department employees retired from City service. These retirements included one (1) Police Captain, three (3) Police Sergeants, and 11 Police Officers. Since that time, promotions have occurred, filling the Police Captain and Police Sergeant vacancies. Additionally, the City has hired 22 new Police Officers. Unfortunately, 19 sworn personnel have retired or otherwise separated from the City during this same three (3) year period.

The Police Department has two (2) new recruits scheduled to start the police academy on December 1, 2014. Another two (2) recruits are anticipated to graduate the police academy in January 2015. Currently, the City has 12 Police Officer vacancies. To fill these vacancies within the next year, and keep up with the annual rate of attrition, the Police Department has set its sights on hiring 18-19 new Police Officers. However, this is a very aggressive goal that is unlikely to be achieved without the implementation of new initiatives or approaches.

The Police Department prides itself on the high standards it has for its employees. As such, its goal for hiring Police Officers is—and has always been—**to hire not merely enough people but the right people**. But Beverly Hills, like most other municipalities, is experiencing a diminished pool of qualified candidates for Police Officer positions. Nationwide, the top reasons for this reduced pool of candidates include unfavorable demographic trends that have produced a smaller population of 21 to 35 year olds (the

Meeting Date: December 2, 2014

target age for new police officers) and social trends that have led to increased illicit drug use, maturity issues in young adults, and ethics concerns relating to many candidates' unwillingness to be truthful during the screening process.

Additionally, many local governments have implemented budget cuts, including changes to pension and other benefits, in recent years that have impacted police agencies' ability to attract Police Officers who are already employed by other cities. These prospective lateral candidates are reluctant to transfer to other agencies because transferring and losing their seniority may expose them to potential layoffs.

The City of Beverly Hills is not the only municipality in the region that has found it difficult to fill vacant Police Officer positions. In fact, the California Background Investigators Association—the professional organization dedicated to ensuring law enforcement agencies only hire individuals who meet the qualifications for peace officers under state law—estimates that there are currently 10,000 sworn peace officer vacancies throughout the state of California. The following table demonstrates that many of the cities that Beverly Hills normally competes with for local talent also have a significant number of Police Officer vacancies.

<b>CITY</b>	<b># SWORN AUTHORIZED</b>	<b># SWORN VACANCIES</b>
Beverly Hills	127	12
Burbank	159	15
Culver City	105	2
Glendale	254	2
Pasadena	241	17
Santa Monica	216	20
Torrance	225	9

It is not an overstatement to say that all of the above listed agencies are in competition with each other to hire the top law enforcement candidates in the region. Well-qualified, career-oriented Police Officer candidates know that they are in high demand and apply simultaneously with multiple police departments, oftentimes receive multiple job offers.

Historically, the City has not had a difficult time filling Police Officer positions. The Beverly Hills Police Department (BHPD) has been well-positioned in the market due to its reputation for providing excellent, proactive local law enforcement services, the outstanding support it receives from the community, and the exceptional working conditions enjoyed by its employees. And while these strengths certainly still carry-on, the region's intense competition for well-qualified Police Officer candidates has exposed some of the challenges unique to Beverly Hills in regards to attracting top talent for Police Officer positions. These challenges include its geography and relatively low crime rate.

As it is for many prospective candidates considering open positions within the City, geographic accessibility and cost of living in the surrounding areas are factors that influence Police Officer candidates' desire to work in Beverly Hills. However, because nearly every police department in Southern California is actively recruiting for Police Officers, this problem is intensified for Police Officer recruitments. Well-qualified candidates can choose to work in cities that can be easily commuted to or are in close proximity to where they reside. Many prospective candidates do not recognize Beverly Hills as having a competitive advantage to overcome this challenge of geography.

Additionally, one of the City's crowning accomplishments for decades has been its low crime rate. And while this strength has attracted both residents and businesses to the

Meeting Date: December 2, 2014

City, it oftentimes is considered as a weakness by potential applicants who are considering law enforcement careers. Rather than understanding the City as a unique community almost entirely surrounded by the City of Los Angeles where Police Officers have the opportunity to do proactive police work, suppress crime, apprehend criminals, and impact the lives of nearly 300,000 people on a daily basis, many prospective candidates wrongfully assume that Beverly Hills is a sleepy town where crime rarely occurs and where they would not have the opportunity to do “real” police work. BHPD recruiters have the ability to address this challenge and have been successful in doing so. But their opportunity to do so relies on getting personal contact with, or literature into the hands of, potential candidates to combat the misconceptions that many have about a law enforcement career in Beverly Hills.

Since 2011, the recruitment of Police Officers has been one of the City’s top priorities. In collaboration with Human Resources, the Police Department has thoroughly re-evaluated its recruitment process and streamlined systems to narrow timelines associated with processing candidates. Changes include transitioning to a new written exam, offering written and physical agility testing throughout the month, and assigning additional personnel to expedite background investigations. Additionally, staff has critically evaluated the City’s expectations for these candidates in light of society’s changing norms and values, adjusting screening processes and approaches to salient issues without compromising the high standards required to become a BHPD Police Officer. The City also implemented a Signing Bonus Program for “difficult-to-fill” positions that allows candidates who are successfully hired as Police Officers to receive a bonus of up to 10% of the position’s annual base salary.

Another key change has been the revitalization of the department’s Police Cadet Program. Changes recently implemented in this program allow for individuals who have completed college but are not ready to become Police Officers to be hired in a part-time capacity and receive training to prepare them for future full-time law enforcement service. Additionally, funds appropriated by the City Council in FY14/15 have allowed for the expansion and enhancement of this program. With these new enhancements, the City has the ability to mentor up to 14 young adults and expose them to the various facets of the Police Department. The City’s investments in the Police Cadet Program have already begun to pay dividends, as three (3) of the four (4) new recruits in the academy were once participants in this program.

Despite the changes that have been implemented to assist with recruitment, a significant number of Police Officer positions still remain vacant, and—considering recent trends and impending retirements—the department anticipates continuously recruiting for these positions for the next many years. There are plenty of applicants in the candidate pool. The City’s problem relates to not having enough *well-qualified* applicants in this pool. For example, a total of 2,568 candidates applied for the Police Officer position in FY13/14 (2,452 entry levels and 116 laterals). Of these, only eight (8) candidates (including four laterals) were ultimately hired as Police Officers. This means that over 99% of the candidates were disqualified or voluntarily withdrew at some point during the screening process.

In light of the City’s current number of Police Officer vacancies (12) and anticipated retirements in the coming years, the Police Department believes that it will take two (2) to four (4) more years to fill all of its Police Officer positions. The City Council has requested staff to develop a plan to reduce this timeline to six (6) months. Without reducing its standards, the Police Department would need to advance 18 to 24 *well-*

Meeting Date: December 2, 2014

*qualified* applicants into its background investigation process by February 2015 to meet this goal. To do so, according to recent trends, the City would need approximately 600 applicants to participate in each physical agility testing and interview session that is planned during December 2014 and January and February of 2015. This needed applicant pool is much larger than the 10 to 20 applicants that typically participate in these sessions.

In order to address this problem and immediately close the recruitment gap, staff recognizes that the City needs to attract many more *well-qualified* Police Officer candidates into the recruitment process. The Police Department has identified a number of solutions that would help address this problem. While some are tactical/administrative in nature, others relate to policy issues and would require direction from the City Council for implementation. Potential initiatives to improve Police Officer recruitment timelines that will be presented to the City Council for review and consideration at its January 13, 2015 meeting include:

- Scholarship Program
  - The establishment of formal relationships with criminal justice programs at colleges and/or universities may provide Police Department recruiters with more opportunities to market the City as a law enforcement career destination to young adults who are preparing themselves for this career path.
  
- Signing Bonus Program
  - The City's current program to provide signing bonuses in the amount of 10% of base salary for "difficult-to-fill" positions has been in-place for approximately 18 months and can help to persuade Police Officer candidates to choose to work in Beverly Hills instead of another competing agency. An increase to this bonus amount may improve the program's effectiveness and help to City to attract more *well-qualified* candidates.
  
- Referral Program
  - The Police Department has known for many years that the City's employees are its best resource for recruiting for Police Officer positions. According to a recent survey, approximately 50% of the department's employees indicated that they were referred to BHPD by another person employed by the City. Implementing a program that validates this resource and provides employees with incentives to act as informal recruiters could assist with the City's efforts to hire Police Officers.

Although the City does have a considerable number of Police Officer vacancies, the Police Department is steadfastly committed to deploying officers in a manner that ensures public safety and addresses the City's quality of life issues while these recruitments are underway. The department is currently working with representatives of the Beverly Hills Police Officers Association to reorganize its deployment of officers in the field to address concerns recently raised by the City Council. These changes are targeted for implementation in January 2015.

Meeting Date: December 2, 2014

**FISCAL IMPACT**

None at this time.

**RECOMMENDATION**

No action needed as this is an informational item.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David L. Snowden", written over a horizontal line.

David L. Snowden, Chief of Police

Approved By