



AGENDA REPORT

Police Department

DATE:	December 17, 2024
TO:	Mayor Martinez and Members of the City Council
FROM:	Bisa French, Chief of Police Timothy Simmons, Assistant Chief of Police
Subject:	Police Officer Retention and Lateral Police Officer Recruitment Program
FINANCIAL IMPACT:	The proposed recruitment expenditure for ten officers is \$500,000; however, the cost savings to send ten recruits to the police academy is estimated at \$581,228. As such, the net fiscal impact is estimated at \$81,228.
PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION:	n/a
STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE:	The position of Police Officer in the City of Richmond has been critically difficult to fill over the last 4 years. In response to these ongoing recruitment and hiring challenges, the City of Richmond proposes that the City Council consider a recruitment and hiring incentive program for Lateral Police Officers.
RECOMMENDED ACTION:	RECEIVE an update on police recruitment and retention promising practices to increase staffing beyond 121 sworn officers; and PROVIDE direction to staff – Police Department (Chief Bisa French, 510-621-1802).

DISCUSSION:

The Richmond Police Department continues to face challenges with recruitment and retention, particularly in hiring qualified, experienced lateral police officers. These challenges have impacted the City of Richmond’s ability to recruit and retain experienced employees, which is a phenomenon that has also been seen by many jurisdictions throughout the country. To address this issue and gain a competitive advantage in the recruitment of qualified applicants, many counties and cities have adopted and implemented hiring incentives and retention incentives for current and prospective police officers to ensure they are positioned to recruit applicants into the policing profession and retain qualified officers whom they have already spent a significant amount of time, effort, resources, and compensation in training.

The following chart illustrates RPD sworn personnel new hires versus separations from 2020 through 2024

Year	Hired	Separated	Change
2020	7	15	-8
2021	5	26	-21
2022	10	27	-7
2023	16	5	+11
2024	17	11	+6

The Richmond Police Department is currently authorized to employ 146 sworn personnel, for a total of 121. Nine trainees are either attending or will start the police academy soon. These staffing numbers do not reflect sworn personnel on any form of injury or administrative leave.

To enhance our recruitment efforts and compete meaningfully with other Bay Area jurisdictions, the Police Department proposes that the City Council consider establishing a special recruitment incentive program to attract up to approximately ten (10) lateral police officers to the Richmond Police Department. This proposal will target officers with at least three years of consecutive service who possess the necessary experience and stability in their professional careers and have a demonstrated work product that can be evaluated for suitability with the Richmond Police Department. This bonus structure would incentivize prospective lateral officers and current Police Department employees who successfully recruit a lateral police officer.

In addition to the challenges associated with recruiting Lateral Police Officers, the Richmond Police Department has faced significant challenges with officer retention. Unfortunately, over the past five years, tenured officers have been leaving the City of Richmond for positions in other jurisdictions, straining our staffing levels, increasing

training costs, and necessitating the implementation of mandatory overtime for existing personnel. In response, the Police Department Administration aims to highlight promising practices to increase retention for our existing sworn personnel to incentivize our sworn staff to remain employed with the City of Richmond to reward long-term commitment to our city and department.

Recruiting experienced lateral Police Officers is a strategic priority for the Richmond Police Department. Lateral candidates often face significant challenges when considering transfers to another jurisdiction, including:

- Loss of accumulated years of service affecting vacation accrual rates, longevity pay incentives, and civil service rights.
- Sacrifices in salary progression and related benefits.
- Loss of working in a specialty assignment.

The costs associated with hiring a new police officer are substantial, encompassing both time and financial resources. The process includes staff hours administering written and physical agility tests, conducting extensive background investigations, facilitating medical and polygraph exams, completing other necessary evaluations, and paying for selected applicants to attend the police academy. The cost associated with recruiting and hiring one (1) new officer is approximately \$58,122.80. These steps, critical to ensuring only qualified and trustworthy candidates are selected to service our citizens, can take up to six (6) months to complete, with an additional six (6) months until they graduate from the police academy. This prolonged timeline adds to the expense, making recruitment significantly costlier than recruiting a lateral police officer who can immediately enter the training program and begin serving the community within just a few months and retaining current staff who already possess the training, institutional knowledge, and experience required to provide service to our community.

Recognizing the operational and community benefits of maintaining a fully staffed police force, the Richmond Police Department proposes implementing an incentive program to address these challenges and attract qualified lateral applicants. The following hiring incentives are proposed to be offered to Lateral Police Officer candidates who complete the hiring process:

DRAFT Recruitment & Hiring Incentive:

1. Consider a monetary incentive of up to \$45,000, paid in three installments:
 - \$15,000 upon successful completion of the hiring process and start of employment.
 - \$15,000 upon successful completion of the field training program.
 - \$15,000 upon successful completion of the probationary period.To qualify, candidates must have at least 3 years of experience as full-time police officers and a demonstrated work product that complies with RPD standards.

2. **Vacation Accrual Rates:** Consider starting vacation accrual rates based on years of service at their existing agency, with incremental increases as outlined in the Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) for the Richmond Police Officers Association.
3. **Employee Referral Incentive:** Consider a \$5,000 to be paid to any current Richmond Police Department employee who successfully recruits a qualifying lateral officer hired by the department. The \$5,000 will be paid upon the lateral officer's first day of employment with the Richmond Police Department.

DRAFT Employee Retention:

1. Consider Retention compensation for sworn officers on their anniversary date, contingent on a satisfactory employee performance evaluation.

Expected Benefits

- **Reduced Turnover:** The retention bonus rewards officers for their continued service, reducing the likelihood of officers leaving for other jurisdictions.
- **Lower Recruitment and Training Costs:** Retaining experienced officers will minimize the need for costly recruitment and training programs required to replace those who leave.
- **Increased Morale:** Financial incentives tied to an officer's anniversary and satisfactory performance reinforce their importance to the department and will boost overall morale.

Reduced Overtime Expenses: For the past three consecutive years, officers have been mandated to work extensive monthly overtime to maintain minimum staffing levels and required public safety services to the community. With the net addition of ten lateral officers, the department would anticipate eliminating mandatory overtime.

All of the proposed incentives above require Council ratification before implementation. The effective date will be determined by the City Council, as deemed appropriate.

Summary: Bay Area Lateral Officer Incentive Programs (Attachments 1-5)

- City of Alameda: \$75,000 per lateral applicant hired
- City of Concord: \$20,000 per lateral applicant hired
- City of Berkeley: \$25,000 per later applicant hired
- City of Antioch: \$30,000 per lateral applicant hired
- Contra Costa County Sheriff: \$15,000 per lateral applicant hired

Summary: Current Academy Recruit Expenses

New Hire Officer Costs

Program	Average Cost
Pysch Eval	\$350.00
Physical Eval	\$263.80
Polygraph Eval	\$625.00
Academy	\$4,385.00
Academy Misc. Costs	\$500.00
Uniform	\$1,200.00
Salary - CoR	
Police Officer Trainee	\$7,257.00
Six Months	\$43,542.00
Seven Months	\$50,799.00
Eight Months	\$58,056.00
	\$50,799.00 1 month wait/clearance
	\$58,122.80 (average per recruit)
	\$581,228.00 10 recruit cost

DOCUMENTS ATTACHED:

- Attachment 1 – City of Alameda, California
- Attachment 2 – City of Berkeley, California
- Attachment 3 – City of Concord, California
- Attachment 4 – City of Antioch, California
- Attachment 5 – Contra Costa County, California