



County of San Mateo  
**SHERIFF'S OFFICE**  
**INTERDEPARTMENTAL MEMO**

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**DATE:** March 5 2001  
**TO:** Honorable Board of Supervisors  
**FROM:** Sheriff Don Horsley *DH*  
**SUBJECT:** Accelerated Field Training Program

**RECOMMENDATION:** That your Board a) Adopt an Ordinance amending the FY 2000-01 Salary Ordinance adding two Deputy Sheriff positions in the Sheriff's Training Unit to provide accelerated field training of newly hired Deputies in all Bureaus of the department and b) approve an Appropriation Transfer transferring \$64 722 in Public Safety Sales Tax revenues to fund these two positions as well as the cost of a dedicated law enforcement recruitment analyst (previously approved by amended Salary Ordinance) in the Employee and Public Services Department

**Hiring Environment and Update**

Across the Bay Area and in San Mateo County law enforcement agencies are facing a critical staffing situation. The strong private sector labor market which is drawing from our traditional applicant pool, combined with a lack of affordable housing for young persons entering the market, increasingly long commutes from areas where affordable housing does exist, a work force with a large number of employees at or very near retirement age and stiff competition from other Bay Area/Central Valley law enforcement agencies facing similar staffing shortages has created one of the most difficult recruitment environments ever faced in our department's long history.

Working closely with Employee and Public Services (EPS), our recruitment team was supplemented by the addition of one recruitment analyst in EPS, approved by Salary Ordinance in the Fall, who is dedicated to full time recruitment activities for the department. The joint Sheriff/EPS recruitment team has done a remarkable job in attempting to fill what often seems like an unending stream of sworn position vacancies. In developing our outcome-based management plans for the coming year, we have worked with EPS to document the workflow and candidate volume required to ultimately fill a peace officer position. For example in 1999-00 we processed 417 Correctional Officer applicants through screening, testing, oral interviews, background investigations and psychological screening in order to hire 20 officers - 6% of our starting pool. Similarly we screened 110 outside applicants for Deputy Sheriff to hire 14 officers.

These applicant-to-hire percentages are comparable throughout the law enforcement industry. We have historically experienced our highest success in filling Deputy Sheriff vacancies from within the ranks of existing San Mateo County Correctional Officers - in 1999-00 we ultimately hired 39% (12 officers) out of 31 Correctional Officers applying for Deputy positions. This is a remarkably high percentage by industry standards. We have also accomplished this hiring while essentially meeting our target of hiring 50% new female and/or minority officers for the last three consecutive years as reported to the Board in our quarterly performance measures.

### **Training Requirements and Challenges**

While we have worked closely with EPA and the County Manager's Office for the resources to maintain our initial hiring goals, we have been less successful in keeping pace with officer training requirements. There are two levels of training for new peace officers - the initial formal mandated classroom training or Academy for both Deputy Sheriff's and Correctional Officers; and the follow-up period of on-the-job 'field' training and evaluation of new cadets, which is conducted by specially trained and experienced veteran officers called Field Training Officers or, in our institutions, Jail Training Officers. The formal Academy training is State-mandated under either the Peace Officer Standards & Training (POST) program or the Standards & Training for Corrections (STC) program, depending on classification and assignment. Specific coursework and training hours are prescribed by State regulation and training expenses are partially to fully reimbursed through these State agencies.

The follow-up Field Training Program (FTP) for new Deputies is our largest concern and the area of our hiring and training continuum most impacted by a lack of adequate staffing. While not reimbursed through State agencies, side-by-side training and evaluation of rookie officers by experienced veterans is practiced by virtually all law enforcement agencies for good reason. Peace officers are granted extraordinary powers under the State Constitution and Penal Codes. While formal Academy training is vital, there is no substitute for the experienced guidance and critical evaluation of new officers under the stress of actual conditions and situations encountered in the field or in a secure detention facility. Satisfactory performance in a controlled classroom setting does not guarantee the level of situational judgement, effective communication, problem-solving ability and prioritization, investigative and report-writing skill, and control of a potentially volatile situation which are required of any officer on a regular basis, sometimes in situations of great stress where errors may have unpredictable consequences.

Our FTP program is severely impacted. While we have been graduating 18 to 22 new officers from the Academy per year and hiring an additional 12 to 14 lateral transfers under our accelerated hiring program, we can presently accommodate only about six officers at a time in our FTP program. As veteran officers retire, the pool of qualified potential FTP training officers has shrunk. Moreover, while Field Training Officers are paid a stipend equivalent to one pay step for the added training and responsibility

involved it is presently a voluntary duty taken on by officers with a regular assignment. With longer commutes home and young families, our younger officers are less motivated to seek an FTP assignment. Also, since FTP officers are essentially 'doubling up' a shift with the rookie officer, that uncovered shift assignment or beat must frequently be filled on an overtime basis. Such assignment is costly and conflicts with our established overtime reduction plan.

The impacts of an inadequate FTP program are numerous. First, we have a pool of classroom-trained Deputies who have not fully completed their training, and cannot be moved into certain high-risk assignments without completion of their FTP program for safety and liability reasons. This in turn puts significant constraints on our ability to adequately schedule and staff our various facilities and field operations. Further, the new officers themselves become frustrated by their inability to rotate on a timely basis into traditional assignments such as Patrol, and thus are more likely to be recruited by other agencies who have more accommodating field training opportunities. We have lost potentially a dozen officers in the last 2-3 years whose exit interviews indicated frustration with the inability to receive an expected field assignment within a reasonable period of time. Given the time, cost and difficulty of recruiting new officers, this is an unacceptable level of attrition.

### **Field Training Requirements**

The proscribed period of field training is 16 weeks for brand new Deputy Sheriff's and 4 to 8 weeks for lateral transfers from other agencies. In an effort to streamline the process, we have already reduced these time periods several weeks in the last two years. However, there is a minimum period of time required to effectively train and evaluate a new officer under different situations in the increasingly complex and legally-driven environment of 21<sup>st</sup> century California law enforcement - and a distinct liability associated with inadequate evaluation.

Moreover, once completing side-by-side training, our officers are typically required to work alone, with regular but physically removed supervision. On patrol, we have one Deputy per vehicle, often one Deputy per beat. In the direct supervision Maguire Correctional Facility, one officer guards up to 64 inmates per pod. Except in high-risk cases or large-volume transportation, inmate transportation details are frequently conducted by one Deputy. Likewise, our Sergeants typically are working a beat or caseload themselves, without the ability to devote full time to supervision and monitoring. It is important, then, to be certain a new officer is fully ready to work alone.

### **Recommended Solution**

A practical solution discussed with the County Manager is the addition of two Deputy positions within the Sheriff's Training Unit. These would not be officers with an assigned shift or workload in another operating program, but would be specifically dedicated to the FTP program. Since the two Deputies would not be filling a specific operational

post there is no need for backfilling their position on overtime or otherwise and as dedicated FTP program officers we would also avoid the periodic recruiting issues with volunteer Field Training Officers. The two new FTP positions would naturally be filled by transfer of experienced Deputies qualified for FTP assignment, while two remaining vacancies elsewhere would be filled with new employees who could then be promptly cycled into a new field training slot.

Performance Goal Depending on whether the candidate is a brand new officer or a lateral agency transfer (thus the duration of the FTP period) each Deputy can train between 3.5 to eight new Deputies per 52-week year. With two assigned Deputies, we can thus train a total cycle of seven to 16 new Deputies per year. Added to our existing six FTP slots we can then process a total of approximately 34 Deputies through field training annually which would essentially eliminate the backlog and allow new Deputies to move promptly from either Academy (new hires) or initial hire (lateral transfers) directly into field training and evaluation.

If approved, we will report to the Board during this coming June budget hearing and annually thereafter, on our officer training status and activities.

### **Fiscal Impact**

The cost of the additional two Deputy positions is \$30,417 for the balance of this fiscal year, assuming a hiring date in mid-May and would represent an annual 12-month cost of approximately \$199,034. Additionally, the recommended Appropriation Transfer establishes an Intrafund Transfer of \$34,305 to reimburse EPS for the cost of a recruitment analyst added midyear, which would have an annual cost of \$86,851 thereafter. Funding is available from increased revenue within the Public Safety Sales Tax Fund which is transferred to offset the FY 2000-01 costs noted above, and will be included in future year budgets. There is no net cost to the County General Fund for this recommended action.

cc Mary Welch, Director of Employee and Public Services

**ORDINANCE NO. \_\_\_\_\_**

**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS COUNTY OF SAN MATEO STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

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**AN ORDINANCE AMENDING FISCAL YEAR 2000-2001 SALARY ORDINANCE  
ADOPTED AUGUST 8 2000**

The Board of Supervisors of the County of San Mateo State of California  
ordains as follows

**SECTION 1.** Part 12 of the Ordinance 03987 is amended as indicated

**ORGANIZATION 30000 SHERIFF'S OFFICE**

- 1 Item H060 Deputy Sheriff, is increased by 2 positions for a new total of 278 positions

**SECTION 2.** This Ordinance shall be effective 30 days after enactment