

CITY COUNCIL REGULAR SESSION

Resolution authorizing the payment of a hiring bonus of \$16,000 to new hire lateral police officers of the Bellevue Police Department to remain competitive with other jurisdictions that are seeking to fill these hard-to-fill vacancies.

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Police Department

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Resolution will authorize the adjustment to employee compensation and/or benefits to allow for a \$16,000 hiring bonus to be offered to new hire lateral police officers of the Bellevue Police Department to remain competitive with other jurisdictions that are seeking to fill these hard-to-fill vacancies. The Bellevue Police Department is facing a high number of police officer vacancies in the patrol unit. Lateral police officers require less training than entry level police officers since they are commissioned officers with at least two consecutive years of experience as a full-time law enforcement officer and are typically able to assume solo-patrol status in less than half the time it takes an entry-level recruit to attain that status.

RECOMMENDATION

Move to adopt Resolution No. 9486.

If approved, effective date: 11/05/2018

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

Per Human Resources Policies & Procedures Manual (HRPPM) 3.5.3, at the discretion of the City Manager, a hiring bonus may be offered to a new hire for hard-to-fill vacancies. The department director must provide justification for the hiring bonus and obtain approval from the City Manager regarding the actual amount.

In 2017, City Manager Miyake authorized the issuance of a \$5,000 hiring bonus to be offered to only new hire *lateral* police officers for the 2017-2018 year period. Under this approved hiring bonus program, new hire lateral police officers receive half of the bonus at the time of hire (\$2,500), and the remainder (\$2,500) after successfully completing a one-year probationary period with the Bellevue Police Department. The justification for the hiring bonus was that (1) lateral police officers are classified as “hard-to-fill” vacancies; (2) there is a need for qualified, trained police officers to fill the numerous vacant positions within the Police Department; and (3) the need to remain competitive in the current job market.

Commissioned lateral police officers are skilled workers who have already completed the required training at their previous agency and meet the qualifications to be a law enforcement officer, so the skills they bring make them highly sought-after candidates. Nine out of ten lateral police officers hired between years 2013 and 2016 are still with the Department and have all been promoted or moved to a

specialty unit position. By hiring more laterals, this balances the experience levels on the patrol squads as the majority of patrol officers are new entry-level hires within the last 5 years. It is also more affordable to hire a lateral police officer than an entry-level student officer as they do not require Basic Law Enforcement Academy training.

At the time of the Police Department's request for approval for the \$5,000 lateral hiring bonus, it had ten commissioned personnel vacancies. After the bonus approval, it began advertising the lateral hiring bonus in its recruitment materials. In 2017, the Department hired eight lateral police officers. Thus far in 2018, it has hired four lateral police officers. This is an increase from previous years when the Department hired laterals: one in 2016, seven in 2015, and four in 2014.

Since 2017, other local jurisdictions have increased their lateral hiring bonuses. Everett Police Department has been advertising the highest lateral hiring bonus in the state, \$15,000. Kent and Renton both offer \$10,000 lateral hiring bonuses and Federal Way offers \$7,500. The lateral hiring bonus is not the only incentive that other local departments provide their lateral officers. Some competing local jurisdictions offer higher starting salaries than Bellevue for lateral officers, additional leave days added to the employee's leave balance upon hire, and/or take home vehicles. Although these incentives are only components of an officer's total compensation package, the published figures are illustrative of the high demand for lateral police officers in Washington State.

In September 2018, the Department evaluated the effectiveness of offering hiring bonuses to lateral police officers in 2017 and 2018, the Department made a recommendation to the City Manager to continue offering hiring bonuses to new hire lateral police officers. The Department currently has a vacancy of 14 police officers with an additional four anticipated vacancies in 2018 due to pending retirements, two entry level hires waiting to attend the Washington State training academy, and 15 new hire officers currently in the field training program or awaiting to finish the academy. These numbers paired with the number of patrol squad officers on light duty or on leave equals 37 unfilled patrol squad positions. In order to remain competitive with the recruitment efforts of other local police agencies, the Department wishes to offer an increased \$16,000 lateral hiring bonus to incentivize working for the City of Bellevue.

The terms and conditions of the proposed Lateral Police Officer Hiring Bonus Program were outlined in a proposal, containing a Memorandum of Understanding, sample offer letter and Repayment Agreement, presented to the Bellevue Police Officers' Guild (BPOG) for consideration on October 25th available in Attachment A. The BPOG waived its right to bargain on the City's proposal.

Under this proposal, a bonus of \$16,000 will be paid to new hire lateral police officers as follows:

- \$5,000 on the first paycheck following the officer's hire;
- \$5,000 on the first or second paycheck after successful completion of their field training program; and
- The remaining \$6,000 on the first or second paycheck after successful completion of their

probationary period.

In order to promote retention of lateral police officers hired under this program, the lateral police officer will be required to pay back a portion, excluding the initial \$5,000, of the hiring bonus should the lateral hire voluntarily leave employment or is terminated for cause before working three full years for the City. Repayment of the hiring bonus will follow this repayment schedule:

Date of Separation	Repayment Amount
<1 year from date of hire	100% of hiring bonus awarded over \$5,000.00
1 year to < 2 years from date of hire	67% of hiring bonus awarded over \$5,000.00
2 years to < 3 years from date of hire	33% of hiring bonus awarded over \$5,000.00

The new hire will be required to sign an agreement (see Attachment A) to this repayment schedule upon offer and acceptance of employment with the City.

The City will evaluate the effectiveness of the lateral hiring bonus program after a full year has passed since implementation of this increased hiring bonus program or after the 10th lateral officer is hired under this program, whichever occurs earlier. If after this evaluation, the City determines the program has been effective in recruiting lateral police officers and the Department is still facing a staffing shortage, at the discretion of the City Manager and Chief of Police, the program may be extended beyond the first year of implementation if continued operation of the program is within the limitations of the adopted budget.

Since the proposed Lateral Police Officer Hiring Bonus Program has the potential to increase compensation and/or benefits in excess of \$50,000 in the aggregate for the BPOG bargaining unit, Council approval is required to approve this adjustment to compensation.

POLICY & FISCAL IMPACTS

Policy Impact

BCC 3.79.130(B) provides that the City Manager may adjust employee compensation and/or benefits when this becomes necessary in order to carry out sound personnel management, and to accomplish objectives within the city's defined commitments. Council approval is required if the annual cost to the City of the increased compensation exceeds \$50,000 in the aggregate for the police officer bargaining unit.

Fiscal Impact

The Police Department expects that two lateral hires will occur in 2018, with the balance of the proposed program's initial ten lateral hires to occur in the first and second quarters of 2019. The payment of the hiring bonuses is estimated to be as shown in the table below.

	Q4 2018	Q1 2019	Q2 2019	Q3 2019	Q4 2019	Q1 2020	Q2 2020	Q3 2020	Q4 2020
Lateral Hires	2	4	4						
Initial Bonus	\$10,000	\$20,000	\$20,000						
FTO Completion Bonus			\$10,000	\$20,000	\$20,000				
Probation Bonus							\$12,000	\$24,000	\$24,000
Total Bonus	\$10,000	\$20,000	\$30,000	\$20,000	\$20,000		\$12,000	\$24,000	\$24,000

If the Department is successful at hiring ten lateral officers by the end of the 2019 second quarter, and all remain in the Department through their probationary period, the total General Fund impact will be

- \$10,000 in 2018 (plus an additional \$1,308 in variable benefits)
- \$90,000 in 2019 (plus an additional \$11,691 in variable benefits)
- \$60,000 in 2020 (plus an additional \$7,740 in variable benefits)

The Police Department can fund the expected 2018 costs out of its existing General Fund maintenance and operation budget. The Police Department 2019-2020 proposed General Fund budget does not include these costs, but the Department will commit to meeting its 2019 and 2020 fiscal obligations out of the already proposed maintenance and operation budget.

OPTIONS

1. Adopt the Resolution authorizing the payment of a hiring bonus of \$16,000 to new hire lateral police officers of the Bellevue Police Department to remain competitive with other jurisdictions that are seeking to fill these hard-to-fill vacancies.
2. Do not adopt the Resolution and provide alternative direction to staff.

ATTACHMENTS & AVAILABLE DOCUMENTS

A. Lateral Police Officer Hiring Bonus Program proposal
Proposed Resolution No. 9486

AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY

N/A