


Date: August 29, 2023

To: Thomas B. Modica, City Manager 

From: Wally Hebeish, Chief of Police 

For: Mayor and Members of the City Council

Subject: **Long Beach Police Department Recruitment and Retention Update and Recommendations**

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Across the country, the Law Enforcement profession is facing unprecedented recruitment and retention challenges. The Long Beach Police Department (LBPD) is no exception and has been working on ways to mitigate this staffing crisis, while continuing to provide the highest level of police service to our entire Long Beach community. This memorandum serves as a response to numerous inquiries, and illustrates the current staffing situation, potential implications for community safety, and the pressing necessity to enhance both recruitment and retention strategies.

The LBPD is a cornerstone of safety, law enforcement, and community support in our city. The persistent and severe staffing shortage of law enforcement officers' impacts services developed to provide law enforcement services efficiently and effectively to our community. National data indicate that the implications of these shortages can range from reduced community policing efforts, increased crime rates and response times, and the overburdening of existing officers. The wellness of the community is tied directly to the wellness of our workforce and ability to provide optimal levels of public safety service to those that live, work, and visit Long Beach.

### **Current LBPD Staffing and Projections**

There are many factors contributing to this staffing crisis, including the changing societal perceptions about policing, an aging workforce, and competitive labor markets. Drastic declines in police recruit applications have created fierce competition to attract and secure the best candidates. Agencies regionally, statewide, and nationwide are all competing for the same candidate pool. For example, our applicant pool has declined significantly from an average of 2,589 for the five academy classes prior to 2021 to 954 for the two classes starting in 2022 equating to a 63 percent decrease in applications. Additionally, the number of applicants certified as eligible by the Civil Service Commission has decreased by over 18 percent and many of the eligible do not pass the rigorous screening process to become a police recruit.

#### Police Officer Staffing

Presently, LBPD is confronted with significant vacancies which makes it increasingly difficult to fill daily patrol officer vacancies required to respond to calls for service (CFS). However, we have made several temporary modifications and implemented solutions to ensure we are filling these vacancies each day and on every shift in order to maintain our staffing levels and respond

to calls for service throughout the city. Ensuring that there are available officers to respond to calls for service now requires pulling officers from other areas or filling patrol calls for service positions through overtime from a declining pool of available officers.

This critical vacancy level and subsequent operational modifications has resulted in the denial of time off requests for officers, including planned sick and vacation days, delays and rescheduling of state required training, and mandating up to 50 officers to work back-to-back shifts each month based on inverse seniority. Additionally, our current staffing challenge has forced us to temporarily suspend supplemental one-time operations focused on specific crime trends.

Additionally, we are competing with other agencies and professions which are attracting and hiring current LBPD officers due to more attractive working conditions and benefits, underlining the critical need to redouble our efforts to bolster officer retention and improve workplace satisfaction.

### Civilian Employee Staffing

While the Police Department is focused on retaining our current police officers and recruiting new ones, we are cognizant that our operations rely as much on civilian employees as sworn officers. Civilian staff are responsible for conducting critical operations including forensic services, crime analysis, field operation support, records reporting and Jail operations. The civilian vacancy rate currently stands at 19 percent (77 vacancies departmentwide), this is a 5 percent reduction from January 1, 2023, and demonstrates that the implementation of recruitment efforts is making some impact, but there is still much work to be done.

### Sworn Projections

At this moment, LBPD is operating with 113 unfilled sworn positions departmentwide, representing a 14 percent vacancy rate. The Department also currently has 130 officers who are eligible for retirement, 84 of whom have 25+ years of service – the demographic most likely to retire. If those officers with 25 + years of service retire by the end of 2023, it will significantly increase the vacancy rate.

### **Actions and Initiatives to Mitigate Staffing Issues**

In November 2022, the Department Operations Center (DOC) was activated to assist in identifying and deploying the relief that was needed throughout the Department. The mission of the DOC is to help leverage all available resources in a way that lessens the impact of staffing shortages on any one area of the Department, specifically patrol. After weeks of thorough analysis, the DOC identified base staffing needed to implement a temporary solution of mandatory overtime to aid this staffing crisis and maintain effective police service levels for our community.

To reduce the number of patrol officers forced to work frequent extended shifts, we implemented department-wide mandatory overtime, requiring the majority of sworn officers to

work one monthly patrol overtime shift, providing much needed relief in the field. Mandating overtime patrol shifts has eased the burden on those patrol officers that were most impacted by the vacancies, but this is not a sustainable solution.

Many different scenarios to mitigate the staffing shortfall in calls for service were also considered. For example, instead of eliminating entire teams in investigations or community facing details, staffing was evaluated departmentwide for temporary reassignment to patrol. The Department will also continue to analyze alternate scheduling and deployments models which may provide enhanced citywide coverage based on current and projected staffing levels.

The Department has also proposed co-locating some detectives to the four patrol divisions, to allow for greater collaboration and assistance. Detectives would work closely with the patrol officers in the field to share information and coordinate investigations. This will support more timely and in-depth attention to cases, as well as increased contact with community members.

#### Changes to Response for Report Taking Calls

LBPDP is also currently reviewing the number and types of calls being responded to by patrol officers. To create efficiencies and reduce the workload for officers, LBPDP will be expanding the types of reporting that can be completed on-line. Moving forward, reports for an expanded list of call types will be directed to the CopLogic online reporting system. In addition, the Business Desk in the Public Safety Building will remain available to the public for filing reports.

#### Community Services Assistants

The first nine Community Services Assistants (CSA) have completed classroom training and are currently in field training. CSAs will perform routine civilian law enforcement-related service and support that does not require a peace officer's authority, allowing police officers to focus on higher priority police responses. CSAs are approved to respond to 27 call types. Once fully implemented, it is expected that the work of the CSAs will reduce some of the workload on patrol officers. It is important to note that while a portion of the workload will be shifted to the CSAs, the base staffing number of calls for service officers each shift does not decrease.

#### Neighborhood Safety Bike Team

The Neighborhood Safety Bike Team (NSBT) is building on the relationship-based policing model for those neighborhoods with immediate public safety needs. To date, eight (8) NSBT officers have been deployed, two per patrol division. NSBT officers are also dispatched to calls for service in parks, libraries, and business corridors within their designated area. As the program becomes more established, we anticipate a reduction in the number of calls for service in these areas due to their visibility and level of engagement with community members and businesses.

#### **Longer-Term Initiatives**

Thanks to the City Council adopted budget, LBPDP is approved to hold back-to-back academies in FY 23, 24, and ideally FY 25. While academy classes can be as large as 60 recruits, with

the construction at the current training academy set to begin this Fall, we are limited by space to 40 recruits per class. We anticipate being back to a class size of 60 by 2026. While our ability to hire and place new officers on the street is currently insufficient to keep up with the total number of officers who are expected to retire in the next few years, the active recruitment and training of police recruits and the proposed retention incentives described below put us on a track towards steadily lowering the vacancy rate.

Staffing Forecast After Incentives	Current 6/23	2023 YE	2024 YE	2025 YE
Sworn ( <i>budget 824 FTE</i> ) - retirements	711	(84)	(30)	(33)
Est. New Academy Graduates		32	28	33
Operational Modifications			30	-
New Lateral Officers			10	10
Delayed Retirements		15	10	5
<b>Vacancies (proj.)</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>Total Sworn Staffing</b>	<b>711</b>	<b>674</b>	<b>722</b>	<b>737</b>
<b>Vacancy Rate (proj.)</b>	<b>-14%</b>	<b>-18%</b>	<b>-12%</b>	<b>-11%</b>

### Police Officer Laterals

As the pool of worthy candidates who are interested in careers in law enforcement has receded in recent years, and the number of retirees continues to increase, police departments have begun to actively look for experienced officers who may be seeking a change. There are many benefits to hiring lateral officers. They are fully trained, have employment records that attest to their work, and have been vetted elsewhere. They also have the potential to begin responding to calls for service in a matter of weeks. Recruiting lateral police officers remains a challenge based on the current need for officers throughout the region, and we are seeking to find ways to ensure lateral police officers view LBPD as a destination organization.

### **Recruitment and Retention Taskforce**

To address the historic recruitment and retention crisis, the Recruitment and Retention Task Force (RRTF) was launched. The RRTF is comprised of both sworn and civilian employees from throughout the Department, and representatives from Civil Service and Human Resources, working on a wide range of activities to expedite the recruitment, selection, and hiring processes, as well as the development of retention and wellness initiatives for current staff. In conjunction with the RRTF efforts, the Office of Constitutional Policing (OCP) is diligently reviewing and updating our policies, and looking at best practices, as they relate to retention.

A partial list of the Recruitment and Retention Taskforce efforts and recommended staffing solutions are listed below.

### Staffing and Technology

- Implementing a software system that will reduce the length of the background process, facilitate communication with applicants, and access to credit and social media reports.
- Revamping the JoinLBPD website for sworn and civilian recruitments listed.

### Civil Service/ Hiring

- Collaborated with the Civil Service Department to expand the police officer candidate pool, to POST Basic Academy programs via newly approved Recruit-Academy Enrolled and Police Officer – Pre-Service Academy Graduate classifications.
- Expanded NTN test fee waivers and increased the frequency of Pellet B exams.
- Streamlined the hiring process by encouraging unsuccessful police recruit applicants to apply for special services officer positions, and implemented same day hiring events for civilian roles, which include of interviews, job offers, and initial onboarding activities.
- Broadened the candidate pool for hard-to-fill clerk typist positions via a selective certification process that leverages the Police Records Technician title in a specialized recruitment.

### Policy/ Guidelines

- Revising drug usage standards to provide more discretion on disqualifications and to better align with State law, best practices, and community norms.

### Outreach

- Expanded outreach efforts to community colleges, universities, and institutions serving minority communities.
- Conducted recruitment workshops for female applicants, career day events, job fairs, and outreached to veterans through Work for Warriors.
- Survey officers that lateraled to LBPD to gain insights into their motivation to join LBPD and gather recommendations to improve our recruitment process.
- Participated in Career Day at local POST Academies to recruit non-sponsored recruits.

### Media/Advertising

- Leveraged the power of media and advertising by developing a 30-second commercial for an Historically Black Serving Universities (HBCU) campaign, with plans to broadcast on ESPN+ and Fan365.

- Enhanced LBPD's social media reach with Q&A events featuring the LBPD Recruitment team, advertising at California State University (CSU) games and exploring a LBPD branding initiative.

#### Police Recruit Experience

- Enhanced recruit training experience and instituted an officer mentor program to assist recruits navigate the academy experience.
- Conducted exit interviews for all resigning recruits to gain insight into the factors influencing their decision.

#### Investing in Current Employees

- Creating a Professional Development Academy for the sergeant rank with facilitated leadership and supervisor workshops to prepare officers for the promotional process and ensure opportunities for advancement are provided to all employees.
- Developing test prep guide for promotional exams.

#### **Recommendations to Recruit and Retain Staff**

The LBPD RRTF is undertaking multi-faceted evaluations of factors that impact recruitment and retention, turning over old models and embracing innovative strategies that benefit both officers and the community. Retention is both cost-effective and an immediate approach to bridge the gap left by vacancies and anticipated retirements and to ensure the continuity of essential public safety services. By holding onto our experienced officers for a few more years, we can preserve invaluable institutional knowledge and provide mentorship for incoming officers, while ensuring we have enough officers to balance the workload and mitigate the stress and fatigue from perpetual mandatory overtime.

In 2022, the City Council approved offering bonuses for recruitment, lateral hires, and negotiated retention bonuses that are effective in October 2023. Current hiring incentives for eligible civilian and police recruit candidates are \$6,000 and \$15,000 for lateral officers, paid over an 18-month period. Despite these measures, recruitment efforts have not reached the levels necessary to optimally staff a 24/7 operation.

To bolster retention and attract new officers and civilian personnel, LBPD recommends additional incentives to boost recruitment and retention rates, to be funded by Department salary savings for the FY 23 and FY 24. These would be limited to these two fiscal years, and be fully covered through anticipated vacancy savings, and then would be reassessed in future years.

Below is a list of incentives recommended for immediate implementation.

### Expanded Recruitment Incentives

- *Lateral Incentive* – Double the lateral incentive to \$30,000. This amount was selected to help compete with many other cities in the region and State with similar or higher incentives such as Inglewood, Palm Springs, Pomona, Manhattan Beach, among others. This increase in the lateral incentive would make LBPD more attractive to officers considering transferring to a different agency.
- *Housing/Childcare Incentive* – Pilot program that is designed to incentivize police recruits and early career officers to live in the Long Beach community. Living in the community during the training phase of their career will enhance the connection between LBPD officers and the community they serve. The incentive would provide those recruits who choose to live in Long Beach \$1,000 each month towards housing, in addition to a \$1,000 each month towards childcare for the first two-years of employment or alternatively a down payment assistance program for those looking to purchase a house. This recommendation is included in the City Manager's FY 24 Proposed Budget.

### Retention Incentive for Sworn with 25+ Years of Service; 50 Years of Age

- *Healthcare Subsidy* – Pilot program which would provide retirement eligible police officers who stay for an additional one or possibly two years to receive their retiree healthcare premiums paid for them for 18 months for each year they stay. This benefit would not begin until the fiscal year after the employee retires. This would be a direct benefit to staying on an additional one to two years to provide time for the new academies to bring on new positions and would be fully funded by current Police Department savings.

### Additional Incentives

- *Double Overtime Pay* - Over the last year, patrol officers have been required to work significant overtime to cover shifts for vacancies. The high number of vacancies has forced many officers to be inversed, requiring them to work back-to-back shifts (up to 20 hours). This situation has made it difficult for patrol to fill voluntary overtime shifts for special events or targeted deployment activities, known as Event Action Plans (EAP). The Department recommends paying officers double-time for overtime under the following circumstances: when involuntarily inversed, or when volunteering to work on the weekend, or graveyard shift which are the shifts experiencing the highest level of vacancies. This would only apply to the police officer rank and would not include sergeant or lieutenant ranks. It will only be in effect during times of severe vacancies in patrol to ensure call for service positions are always filled.
- *Referral Incentive Bonus* - It is understood that the LBPD has experienced noteworthy recruitment and retention issues for qualified police officers. The Department recommends increasing the Referral Incentive Bonuses for police recruit and lateral officers, approved in the current POA MOU. For every successful hire as a result of a

referral, a bonus will be given (sworn police officers only). This referral incentive program aims to further improve the City's competitiveness in hiring.

- *Childcare Incentive for Patrol Officers Assigned to Graveyard Shift* – High vacancies have made it harder for patrol officers assigned to graveyard shift to get days off, maintain work-life balance and find childcare. Some of these issues cannot be helped in a 24/7 operation. To provide support to the graveyard patrol officers with children under 16 years of age, the Department proposes a pilot program to subsidize childcare for patrol officers working this shift. The pilot program of \$750/ month would be for one year and then would be assessed to determine financial feasibility for the organization and whether the program would continue.

## **Financial Impact**

The actual impact of the proposed recommendations will be dependent on actual participation, requests and approvals, and the ability to fill overtime shifts. The Proposed FY 24 budget includes one-time funding in the amount of \$960,000 to support Hosing/Childcare Incentives. LBPDP projects the remaining recommendations to cost in a range of \$580,000 to \$1.8 million annually. The LBPDP will review its FY 23 General Fund performance for additional salary savings, which is anticipated to be available based on current projections and return to Council in the FY 23 year-end report to request to appropriate or reserve the savings for the approved incentives. Also, it is anticipated LBPDP will continue to realize salary savings into FY 24 to help support the recommended programs as the Department continues its efforts in recruitment and retention. The proposed incentives are subject to the Meet and Confer process before implementation. The proposed incentives and staffing levels will be re-evaluated each fiscal year and are only intended to be utilized during times of severe vacancies until staffing returns to more historical levels.

## **Conclusion**

Given the current situation, its impact on LBPDP operations, the Long Beach community, and the ongoing efforts to address these challenges, it is crucial that the City continues to support and invest in strategies that will attract new recruits and retain our experienced officers. Long Beach must be steadfast in its efforts to fill every vacancy, and to expanding programs and incentives focused on recruitment and retention, while prioritizing the well-being and satisfaction of our current employees to limit attrition. The Police Department must position itself for sustained onboarding and staff development as well as continued service improvement to our community. This is a long-term effort, and it will take several years to fully resolve, but the commitment to achieving these goals must be unwavering.

These bold proposals have been discussed with Financial Management, Human Resources and the City Manager, who are in full support. They are beyond anything LBPDP has implemented or considered in the past but are critical to pursue during this historic and challenging time of hiring, training and retaining officers within our City family. We will be moving ahead with these proposals for our police officer positions, unless alternative policy direction is received by the Mayor and City Council.



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