



Visalia City Council

Visalia City Council
707 W. Acequia
Visalia, CA 93291

Staff Report

File #: 23-0147

Agenda Date: 5/1/2023

Agenda #: 3.

Agenda Item Wording:

Authorize City staff to initiate Measure N amendment process to convert one (1) FY 23/24 Measure N Police Officer allocation to two (2) Community Service Officer (CSO) allocations.

Deadline for Action: 5/1/2022

Submitting Department: Police Department

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Department Recommendation:

Authorize City staff to initiate Measure N amendment process to convert one (1) FY23/24 Measure N Police Officer allocation to two (2) Community Service Officer (CSO) allocations.

Summary:

Community Service Officers (CSOs) have been an important resource for the Police Department for several decades. CSOs are responsible for mitigating the number of non-emergency calls for service that police officers respond to, freeing those police officers to be available for higher priority calls for service and reducing response times. CSOs accomplish this goal by handling non-emergency calls for service such as, traffic collision investigations, abandoned vehicle abatements, parking concerns, and taking reports for minor cold crimes. In addition to minimizing the number of lower priority calls for service handled by police officers, CSO responses also free up police officers to handle higher priority incidents, calls that present a threat to public safety, reduce police officer response times, engage in community outreach events, and conduct proactive enforcement. Staff have concluded that converting one police officer position into two CSO positions will provide a higher level of service to the community by improving response times, allowing for more effective deployment of police officers, and providing a cost savings.

Background Discussion:

In 2016, the citizens of Visalia approved a tax measure (Measure N) that provided additional staffing for the Police Department. This increased staffing allocations for police officer, administrative, and support positions. The City is currently in year seven of the 10-year Measure N spending plan, and will enter year eight at the beginning of the FY2023/24 budget cycle. Through Measure N, the Department is slated to receive one police officer position, which includes a patrol vehicle and all associated equipment for the police officer. The total cost (salary/benefits + vehicle + equipment) to staff this position is estimated at \$267,000.

CSOs are an important support function for patrol officers. CSOs respond to a wide array of calls for

service and significantly reduce the response burden for police officers, reduce response times for the Department, and reduce wait times for citizens of Visalia. CSOs are also trained to handle most traffic accident investigations, conduct traffic control for small and large scenes, and conduct abandoned vehicle abatement. Because CSOs are able to handle non-emergency calls for service and take reports for a large range of cold or minor crime offenses, police officers are able to focus on higher priority calls, with active criminal and public safety threats. Police officers are also able to better address concerns related to public safety and quality of life by being available to conduct proactive enforcement.

Finally, CSOs often gain a lot of experience through their day-to-day activities and observations, and are able to be observed by members of the Department. CSOs often become excellent candidates for police recruit positions and eventual police officer positions. The Department has a significant number of members that began their career with the Department as a CSO and have become very successful within the Department (including Chief Jason Salazar and Captain Luma Fahoum). In a time when law enforcement organizations are struggling to fill police officer positions and competing from the same pool of officer candidates, the addition of CSOs provides the Department with an edge in recruitment, development of quality candidates, and multiple benefits from a public safety and community outreach perspective.

Fiscal Impact:

By converting this police officer position, the Department would be able to fund two (2) CSO positions and still have a cost savings. CSO salaries and benefits are nearly half of a police officer. The total salary and benefits for one police officer is \$171,000 compared to \$91,100 for a CSO. For two CSO positions, the total salary and benefits would be \$182,200. Despite a salary & benefits cost increase of \$11,200 through this conversion, the Department is able to obtain cost savings of \$5,900 for equipment cost, and an estimated \$20,000 in cost savings for a vehicle. This provides a total overall cost savings of \$14,700 as shown in the table below.

Cost Comparison for One Police Officer to Two Community Service Officers				
Position	Salary & Benefits	Vehicle	Equipment	Total
One Police Officer	\$ 171,000	\$ 80,000	\$ 16,000	\$ 267,000
Two CSOs	\$ 182,200	\$ 60,000	\$ 10,100	\$ 252,300
			Cost Savings	\$ 14,700

Prior Council Action: N/A

Other: N/A

Alternatives: Deny the motion to direct staff to move forward with the Measure N amendment process.

Recommended Motion (and Alternative Motions if expected):

Authorize City staff to initiate the Measure N amendment process to convert one (1) FY 23/24 Measure N Police Officer allocation to two (2) Community Service Officer (CSO) positions with associated equipment.

Environmental Assessment Status: N/A

CEQA Review: N/A

Attachments: N/A