

# Council Communication

## September 19, 2016, Study Session

---

### Discussion of Ashland Police Department staffing needs

---

**FROM:**

Dave Kanner, city administrator, dave.kanner@ashland.or.us

**SUMMARY**

Police Chief Tighe O'Meara has produced a report, initially presented to the Council as part of its goals updating process, on current sworn officer staffing levels and the need for additional sworn officers based on current trends and future projections. The City's population has grown by 22% over the last 20 years and SOU enrollment is up 13%, but the number of sworn officers is essentially unchanged since 1997. This has resulted in more cases being handled by each officer and increasing response times. After receiving this report, the Council requested that it be scheduled for a study session discussion.

**BACKGROUND AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS:**

Last winter, the Council discussed a number of approaches to addressing downtown behavior issues, one of which included increasing uniformed presence in the downtown area. Police Chief Tighe O'Meara addressed this strategy by eliminating the school resource officer position and withdrawing from the regional gang enforcement team in order to create a second Central Area Patrol position. The Chief, with Council approval, also increased the number of cadets assigned to patrol downtown from four to seven. During the course of this discussion, the chief brought to the Council's attention the more general issue of police staffing levels and the difficulties involved in dedicating officers to one particular area of the City.

The Council continued this discussion of both police and fire staffing levels during its goals updating meetings in June and July of this year, for which Chief O'Meara produced the attached report. The report indicates that while Ashland's population and SOU's student census (as well as the number of visitors) has grown substantially over the last 20 years, the number of sworn police staff has remained flat. This has resulted in an increase in the number of cases handled by each officer as well as an increase in response times. As time constraints did not allow for an in-depth review of this report in July, Council requested that it be scheduled for a study session discussion at which Chief O'Meara can address Council questions and concerns.

**COUNCIL GOALS SUPPORTED**

**Public Safety**

23. *Support innovative programs that protect the community.*

**FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:**

N/A



**STAFF RECOMMENDATION AND REQUESTED ACTION:**

N/A. This item is scheduled for discussion only.

**SUGGESTED MOTION:**

N/A

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Staffing Report for APD, July 18, 2016



## Staffing report for APD

Submitted by Tighe O'Meara, Chief of Police

### Current Staffing Overview

The Ashland Police Department is made up of 28 sworn officers, as well as several non-sworn staff members.

The 28 sworn officers are assigned as follows:

1-Chief

1-Deputy Chief

1-Admin Sergeant

1-Detective Sergeant

4-Detectives

3-General crimes detectives

1-Detective assigned to the YHOP (this position is due to return to the PD in 2017)

1-Traffic Officer, responsible for all of the city's special events, traffic enforcement, major crash investigation

2-CAP officers, working opposite days downtown to allow for seven day a week uniformed presence downtown

4-Patrol Sergeants, each supervising a patrol team made up of:

Three patrol officers, giving a minimum staffing of one supervisor on duty at any given time, as well as two officers. This is the day-to-day, uniform presence, available for emergency response at any given time. Given vacations, sickness and training we often, if not usually, end up with a supervisor plus two officers as opposed to the full team, which is the supervisor and three officers.

Note: There are a total of 13 patrol officer positions in the department. Three on each of the four teams, plus one extra to help cover the busier times at night.

During the week days there are a few more resources available but this is not reliable given the admin officers' (chief, deputy chief etc.) responsibilities.

Any critical or confrontational incident requires at least two officers to cover it safely, if not more. A basic rule of law enforcement is that we need to have any potential suspect out matched by at least a 2:1 ratio, so any confrontational investigation or even moderate incident (as opposed to major incident) will require at least two thirds of the department's on duty uniformed officers. This means APD officers

## City of Ashland Police Staffing Report July 18, 2016

---

can respond safely to exactly one incident at a time given our minimum, and often in-place, staffing levels.

If multiple incidents happen at the same time, and even if the on duty team can manage to effectively handle both incidents, it often results in the sergeant being left in the city alone, as the lone police presence able to respond to incidents. (It should also be noted that often the decision must be made to cite someone who would otherwise go to jail, in lieu of arrest, due to staffing levels being insufficient.)

*In the last four weeks officers or sergeants have been left in the city as the sole police presence on at least nine occasions. That's one uniformed officer/sergeant in the city to answer calls for service.*

The situation described above, as well as large fights and disturbances, often bring outside agencies into Ashland to assist the APD. It is common for Talent and Phoenix PD to both come down to assist.

However, they have their own areas of responsibility, and while APD maintains an excellent partnership with TPD, PPD and other agencies, APD can't assume that they are available to help handle Ashland's police business.

JCSO typically has two deputies on patrol in the south county area. Just as Talent and Phoenix have their own responsibilities, the deputies do as well, covering approximately 1,400 square miles (the south half of the county). There can't be any assumption that they can assist us.

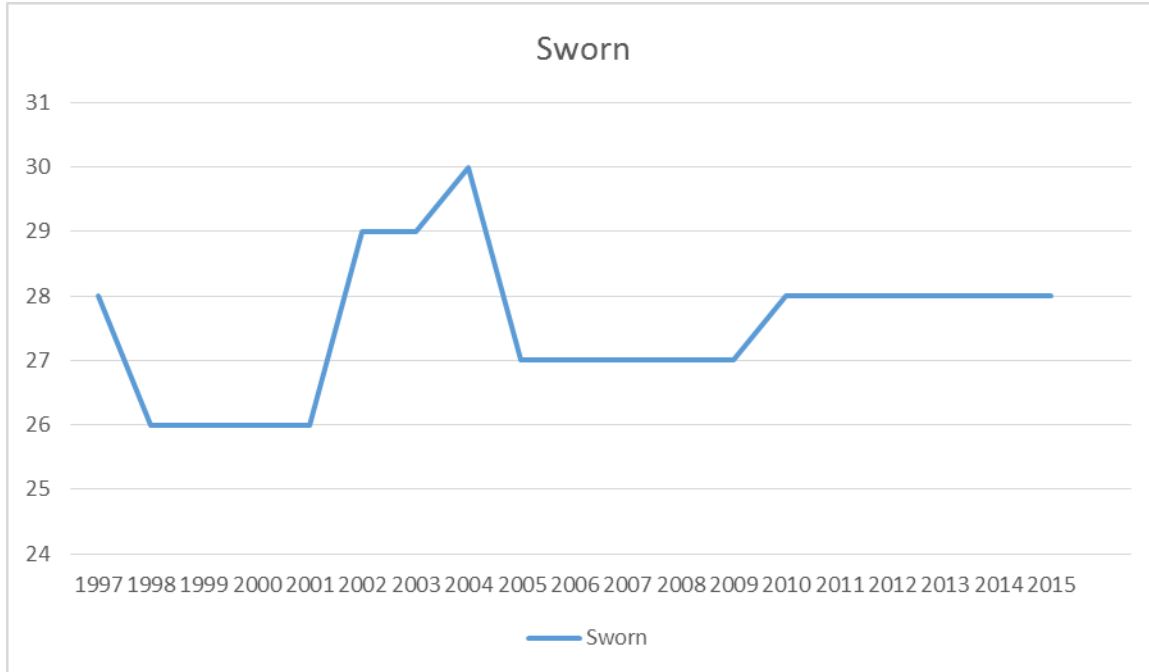
### Additional Cadets

For the last several years the department has employed cadets to perform low level enforcement duties downtown. This has been a very successful program and has recently been expanded. One of the peripheral results of this is that the officers see an increased workload due to increased cadet-initiated contacts. For example, more cadets stopping more people results in more warrants being discovered which results in more demands on the officers' time.

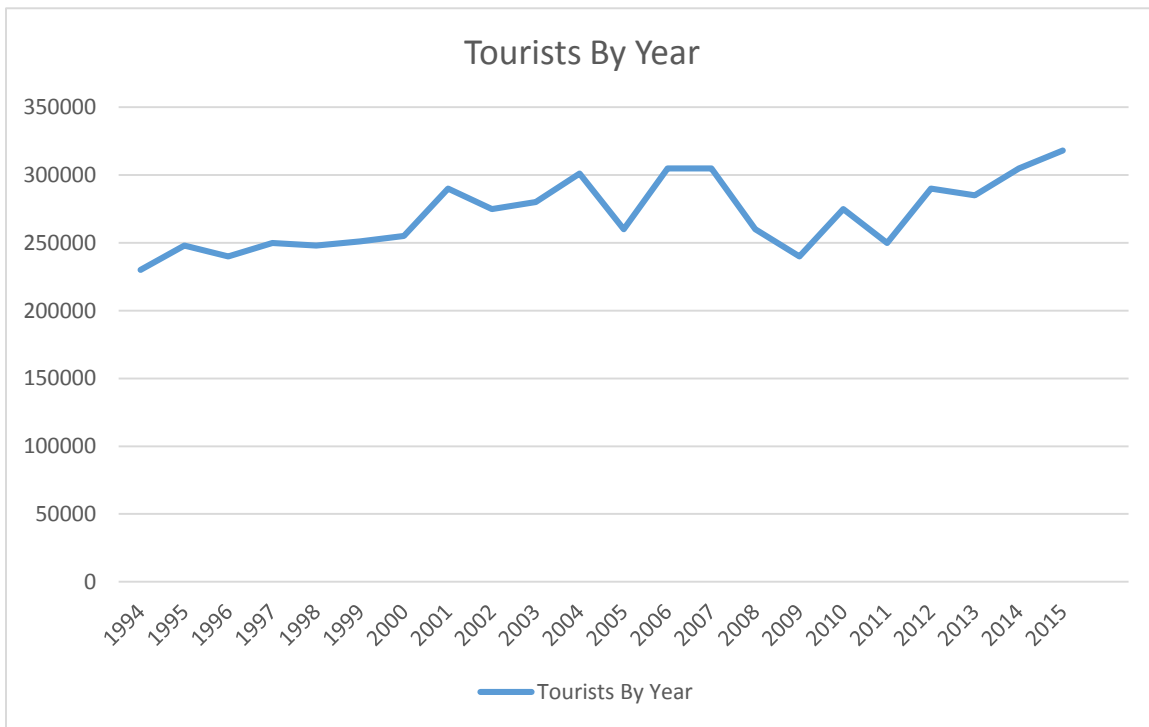
### **Historical Staffing Levels**

In the last twenty years Ashland has seen an increase in population of approximately 22% to our current level of approximately 21,000. Similarly, the tourist population has increased from approximately 235,000 in 1994 to 318,000 in 2015. Also, the SOU student population has increased by 13%, from 5,430 in 1990 to approximately 6,243 today. However, since 1997 APD staffing levels for sworn police have remained essentially the same, vacillating between a low of 26 in 1998 to a high of 31 in 2002. Even at the high point of 31 in 2002 the department was understaffed per Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) averages, which indicate that the full time sworn strength should have been 34 officers (see below for further on this).

# City of Ashland Police Staffing Report July 18, 2016

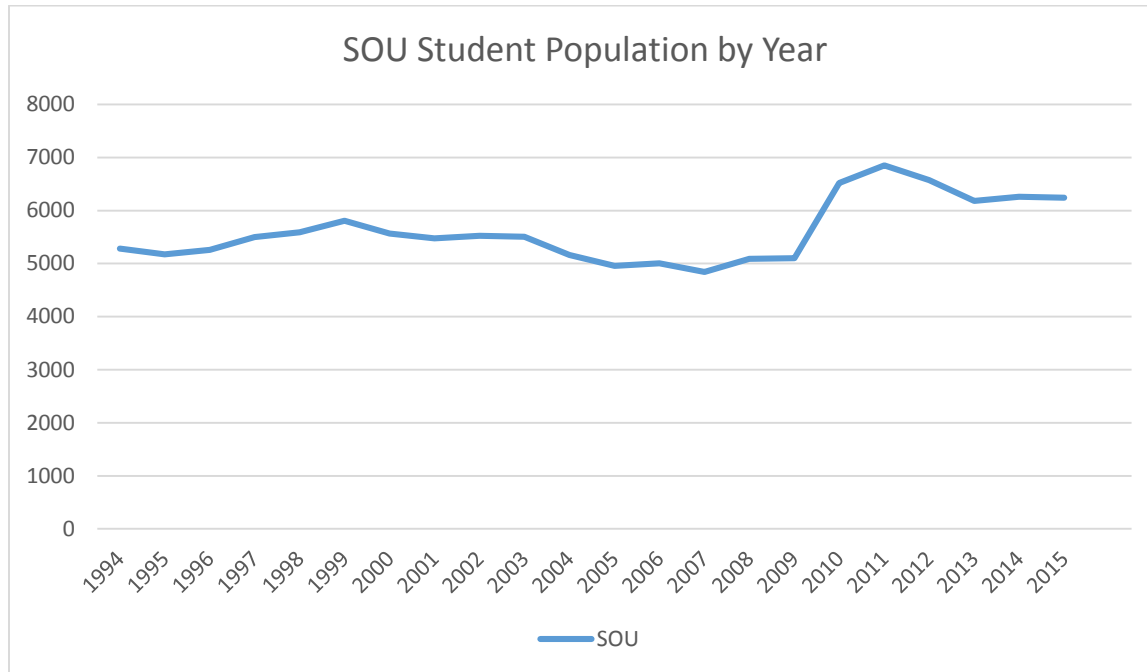


## Visitors Each Year



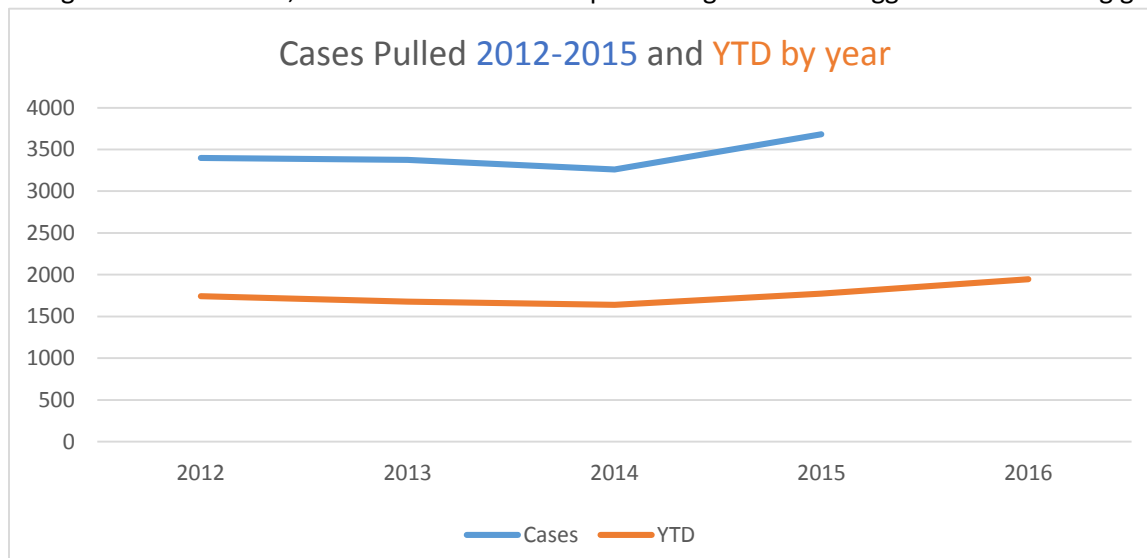
# City of Ashland Police Staffing Report July 18, 2016

## SOU Students by Year



## Current Case Load Levels

How many cases the department pulls is one of the greatest indicators of how much work the officers are being asked to do. Not every call for service (CFS) results in a case being pulled. The fact that caseloads are going up shows us that more CFS (which have remained somewhat flat at about 20,000 CFS per year over the last few years) are resulting in enforcement, crimes being reported, property being turned over to us, or some other situation presenting itself that triggers the case being generated.



## City of Ashland Police Staffing Report July 18, 2016

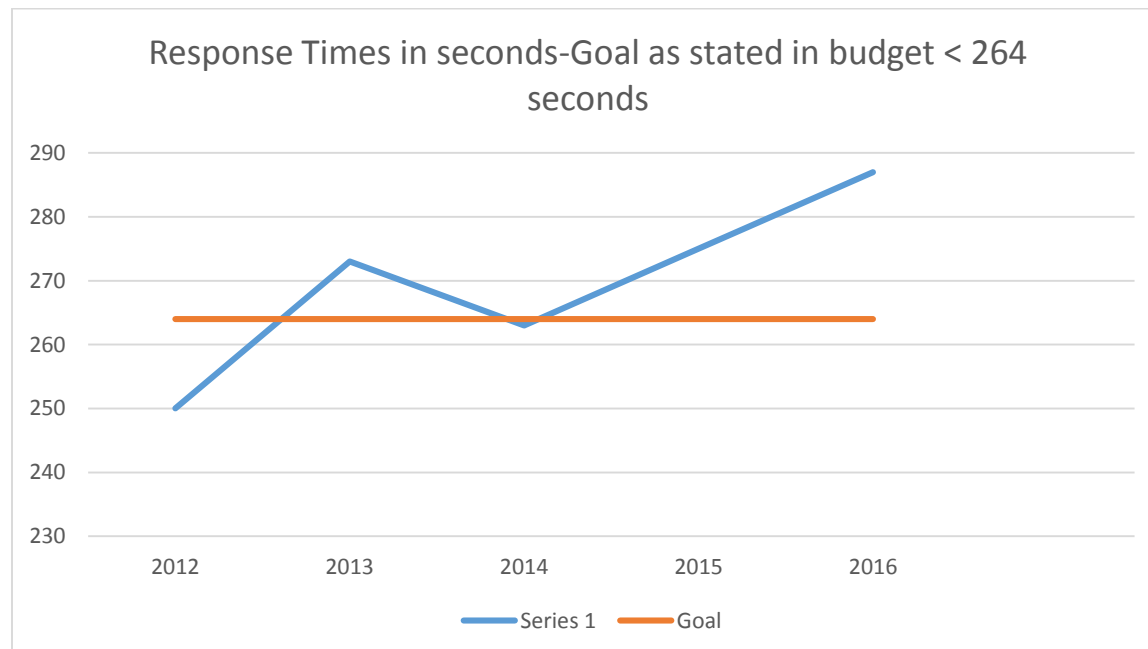
---

Case load increasing	Case load YTD (July 7 <sup>th</sup> ) compared to previous
2015 3684	1947
2014 3259	1773
2013 3375	1640
2012 3398	1677
2011 3441	1744

### Response times

One measurement police departments have consistently used is response time to emergency situations. The APD has made it a stated goal in each budget for the last several years to have a response time less than 4 minutes 24 seconds. This is the department's measure of how quickly officers can get to community members who are reporting emergency situations such as crimes of violence, serious motor vehicle crashes, and burglaries in progress, etc. This is an important metric that the department wants very much to keep flat, or better yet to send in a downward direction.

APD response times for the last few years having been trending up:

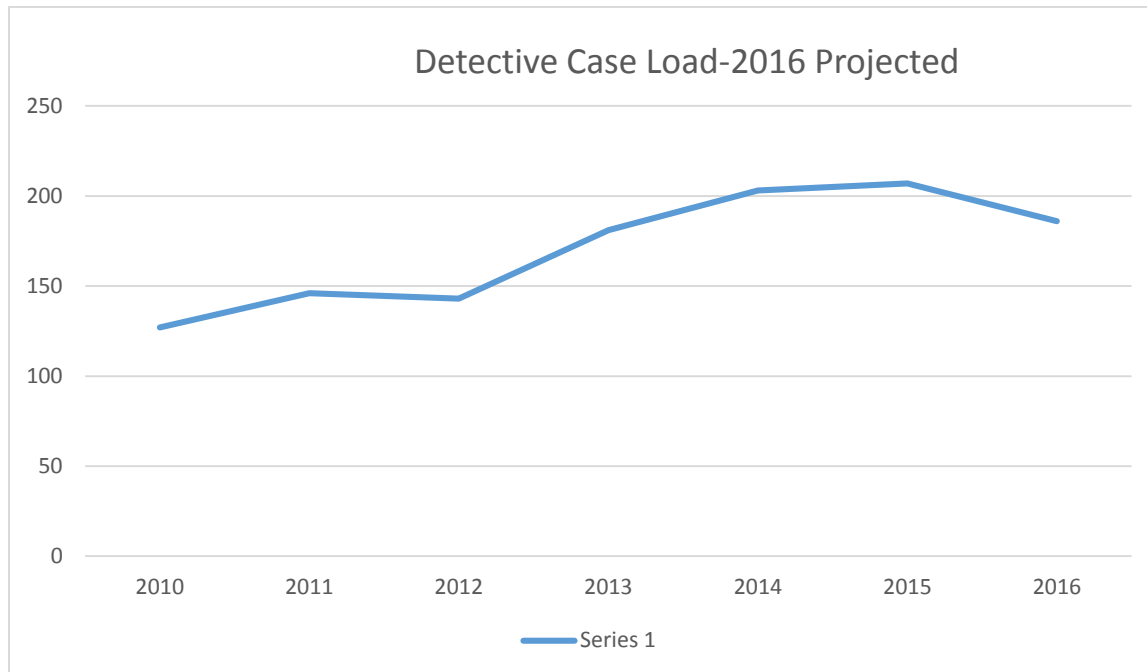


# City of Ashland Police Staffing Report July 18, 2016

---

## **Detectives Case Load**

Detectives in APD handle longer-term investigations, as well as the acute, but more serious investigations. Another metric that has been spelled out in several years' worth of budgets is the amount of time it takes to close out these cases. In the past the detective unit has attempted to take every case referred by patrol. However, due to work load the detectives have had to refer some cases back to patrol.



## **How new policing strategies effect our staffing**

APD has always wanted, and expected, its officers to act professionally and compassionately with all members of the public. The department has always strived for engagement and education before enforcement. While these approaches have long been a part of community policing, they are very specifically integral parts of procedural justice. Procedural justice is a philosophy that is being embraced and encouraged nationally as a better way to engage the community. The fundamentals of procedural justice are that everyone needs to be given respect, needs to be treated with dignity, needs to be given voice, and needs neutrality in decision making. This is specifically important to staffing because the department is encouraging its officers to spend more time with investigating each incident, and to spend more time listening and allowing all to be heard. As has been shown in this report, the officers are seeing an increased case load and an increased response time to emergencies. Furthermore, the population the department is servicing (resident, tourist and student) is increasing. Combine all of this with a mandate to engage all community levels on a deeper level, and the need for additional resources is clear.



# City of Ashland Police Staffing Report July 18, 2016

## Regional/City Partnerships

Due to the acute staffing crisis of the last year, along with increased demand in the city in general, and specifically downtown, the department has had to temporarily step back from city and regional partnerships. Specifically, the department no longer participates in MADGE, the Southern Oregon High Tech Crimes Task Force and the school resource officer program. Also the APD problem solving unit (PSU) has been put on hold due to staffing and military deployment needs.

## Additional Officers Needed-Current Staffing is Below National Averages

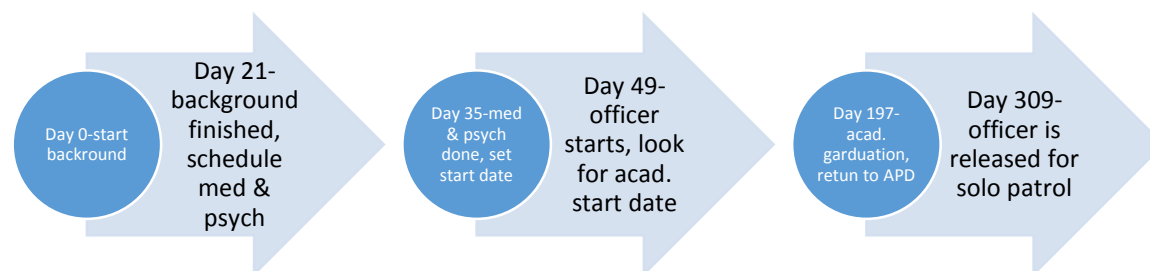
Currently Ashland has 1.3 officers for every 1,000 residents, (not including tourists and SOU students). This is significantly lower than the averages presented by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS). The BJS statistics have the lowest average officer:resident ratio as 1.8:1,000 residents (for towns between 25,000 and 100,000). Following this lowest average formula APD would employ 38 officers. The average ratio as presented by the BJS for towns between 10,000 and 24,999 residents is 2:1,000, which would have us employing 42 officers. Again, this is not taking into account that Ashland is so much more than a town of 21,000 residents. When the tourist and the student population is also factored in it makes the need for more officers even more pronounced, based purely on the numbers.

The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) does not recommend relying solely on factors such as population, but rather on more qualitative factors. The IACP suggests that communities decide what the department's and community's priorities are and what the department wants to accomplish.

If the quantitative analysis presented by the BJS serves as a foundation it is clear that the department should have several more officers than it currently does, based purely on the city population. Add on top of that the IACP recommendation (the qualitative approach) that the community provide police staffing consistent with how the community wants its police officers to engage the community members (e.g. implementing procedural justice practices) the need for additional officers is even more clear.

## Hiring Time

As has been pointed out before, it can take up to a year to get a new officer hired and deployed for solo patrol. The department can have interviews and an eligibility list established, but can't do a background until we can make a conditional job offer.



Day 0-make conditional job offer, start background

## City of Ashland Police Staffing Report July 18, 2016

---

Day 21-background finished, schedule medical and psych (medical can be done anywhere, psych is done in Portland)

Day 35-medical and psych finished, make offer and set start date, allow 2 week notice at least for exit from current job

Day 49-officer starts, but is employed as a non-sworn CSO; look for first academy the officer can get into. Using today as an example, if the department hired someone on July 18th, the next academy is on August 15th, so the officer would start on day 77 of the process. The academy lasts for 4 months, so the officer would graduate and return on day 197 of the process.

Day 197-new officer returns and enters the Patrol Training Officer (PTO) in-house program, which lasts for 16 weeks (112 days)

If all goes according to plan, a new officer can be released for solo patrol after 309 days. This is given minimal time frames for background checks, academy start dates, and assuming successful completion of the academy and the PTO process without any setbacks or remediation.

If the department were given the go ahead today to hire more officers on July 18, 2016 the first of them could be in place by next May of 2017. This is, of course, assuming that qualified candidates can be identified.

### **Funding**

An entry level officer costs the city \$77,272 (wage and benefits). A new officer costs the department approximately \$5,000 to equip. The police department cannot absorb the cost of additional officers into its budget. There is a funding shift possibility coming up in that could absorb the cost of five new officers. Currently the police department pays Emergency Communications of Southern Oregon \$421,160 a year in direct funding to cover costs of participating in a regional dispatch operation. There is a potential for a push toward ECSO becoming a special district under Oregon law, which would allow it to draw its funding directly from the property owners instead of it flowing through the city's general fund. If this were to happen but the city retained this funding level to the department the department could pay for five additional officers and the needed equipment. However, this would not be recommended, unless the city were committed to funding the new officers regardless of whether or not the special district initiative were approved.

If the Council were to authorize five new officers one would be assigned to each of the four patrol teams. This would allow the department to increase minimum staffing to a supervisor and three officers. The remaining person, along with the position that will be returning from the YHOP assignment in 2017, would be used to re-engage our regional partnerships (likely SRO and MADGE).

Furthermore, if authorized, the logical course would seem to be to bring officers on in stages, otherwise the APD's in-house training resources would be strained, and arguably unable to handle the training load.