PSFSS COMMITTEE AGENDA: 10/16/25 ITEM: (d)2



Memorandum

TO: PUBLIC SAFETY, FINANCE

AND STRATEGIC SUPPORT

COMMITEE

FROM: Paul Joseph

Chief of Police

SUBJECT: Police Department

Recruitment and Hiring Activity Annual Report

DATE: September 26, 2025

Approved

Rchemtri

Date:

10/6/2025

RECOMMENDATION

Accept the annual report on the Police Department sworn and Communications personnel recruitment hiring activities for Fiscal Year 2024-2025.

BACKGROUND

On December 1, 2015, as part of their review of the Police Department Hiring Audit, the City Council directed the City Manager to report to the Public Safety, Finance and Strategic Support Committee (PSFSS) on the Police Academy recruitment cycle with a Recruitment Activity Report, beginning in spring 2016. As part of considering the October 18, 2018, Recruitment Activity Report, the Public Safety, Finance and Strategic Support Committee (PSFSS) directed that future reports be provided annually. This is the seventh annual report, covering Fiscal Year (FY) 2024-2025.

On February 18, 2021, the San José Police Department (Department) Operations and Performance Bi-Monthly Status Report began including statistics on the gender identity and ethnicity of the Department, at the request of the Public Safety, Finance and Strategic Support Committee (PSFSS). The Committee further requested that the Department provide demographic information annually as part of the Recruitment Activity Annual Report. This is the fifth report containing that demographic information.

This FY 2024-2025 report provides information on recruiting efforts for sworn personnel, Recruiting Unit budget and activities, communication and marketing efforts, applicant pool diversity, sworn demographic data by rank, resignation trends, and recruitment and hiring activity for the Communications Division.

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ANALYSIS

Recruiting Climate

In late 2024, the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) released the results of a nationwide survey of U.S. law enforcement agencies¹ to assess the ongoing crisis in police recruitment and retention. With a total of 1,158 agencies responding, the results highlight significant staffing challenges that continue to impact law enforcement and public safety operations. Recruitment and retention issues remain a serious challenge in law enforcement. Police agencies must rethink hiring strategies, workplace culture, and officer well-being. Agencies that prioritize long-term retention efforts, mentorship programs, and wellness initiatives are experiencing the most success.

The San José Police Department Recruiting Unit currently accepts Police Officer applications year-round. Three academy classes are held per fiscal year in October, February, and June. On February 20, 2024, Academy Class SJ49 began with 38 recruits and graduated 24. Academy Class SJ-50 started on June 24, 2024, with 34 recruits and graduated 21 recruits. On October 15, 2024, SJ51 began with 28 recruits and graduated 16 recruits. On February 18, 2025, SJ52 began with 32 recruits and graduated 15 recruits. The current Academy Class, SJ53, began on June 23, 2025, with 42 recruits and is currently at 34 recruits, with a graduation date of January 31, 2026.

Staffing for officers within the Department fluctuates between authorized staffing numbers and the number of "street-ready" officers. On June 27, 2025, the Department was budgeted for 1,172 sworn positions. There were 1,067 filled positions and 105 vacancies. Of the 1,067 filled positions, 38 were in the Field Training Program, 60 were recruits in Academy Classes SJ52 and SJ53, 22 were on disability, 36 were on modified duty, and 24 officers were on other types of leave. Therefore, the total number of "street-ready" officers as of June 27, 2025, was 887 officers.

Lateral & Rehires

The Department is experiencing an uptick in lateral and rehire interest. This uptick is primarily attributable to referrals. Some of these individuals were employed by agencies where retired or former San José Police Department (SJPD) officers were also employed, while others were originally from San José and wanted to return to the area. For FY 2024-2025, nine lateral officers from other agencies and five lateral rehires joined the Department. As of early July 2025, seven lateral officers were in the hiring process, two of whom were rehires in the process of returning. By comparison, the

¹ International Association of Chiefs of Police – Survey (2024) <u>The State of Police Recruitment and Retention: A Continuing Concern</u> -

https://www.lexipol.com/resources/blog/the-state-of-police-recruitment-and-retention-a-continuing-concern/#:~:text=Reduced%20Services%20and%20Specialized%20Units,community%2C%E2%80%9D%20one%20respondent%20said

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Department hired six laterals in FY 2023-2024, three of whom were rehires from the Department.

Police Recruit Numbers

During FY 2024-2025, the San José Police Department hired a total of 115 police recruits and laterals. Last FY 2023-2024, 107 officers joined the Department, which is an increase of 7%.

The total number of applications received during FY 2024-2025 was 1,998 compared to 2,346 applications received during FY 2023-2024. This resulted in a decrease of 348 applications, which represents a 15% decrease overall. Application numbers are still significantly down from FY 2017-2018 and FY 2018-2019, where the Department received 10,063 and 6,496 applications, respectively. A survey from the Police Executive Research Forum² documents the decline in applications as a national trend.

The data for Academy Classes SJ33 to SJ53 reveal that the number of applications does not guarantee a successful hiring outcome. For example, SJ33 received 3,025 applications with a hiring rate of 2%, and similarly, SJ34 saw 3,758 applications but with a lower hiring rate of 1.5%. In contrast, SJ49, with only 927 applications, achieved a 4% hiring rate, surpassing the 1.5% hiring rate observed in SJ35, which had 2,898 applications. This pattern emphasizes that factors beyond the volume of applications, such as the quality of applicants and the effectiveness of the Recruiting Unit, play crucial roles in determining hiring success.

SJ33 SJ34 SJ35 SJ36 SJ37 SJ38 SJ39 SJ40 SJ41 SJ42 SJ43 SJ44 SJ45

Applications	3025	3758	2898	1940	2369	1666	2178	1401	1527	1651	899	647	666
Hired	59	56	43	53	49	55	51	42	32	38	37	28	26
Percent Hired	2%	1.5%	1.5%	2.7%	2%	2.5%	2%	3%	2.4%	2.4%	4%	4%	4%

SJ46 SJ47 SJ48 SJ49 SJ50 SJ51 SJ52 SJ53

Applications	810	671	602	927	817	827	585	586
Hired	19	27	29	38	34	28	32	42
Percent Hired	2.4%	4%	5%	4%	4%	3.4%	5.4%	7.1%

The San José Police Department Recruiting Unit has refined its hiring approach by implementing earlier and more effective applicant screening. This strategy reduced the

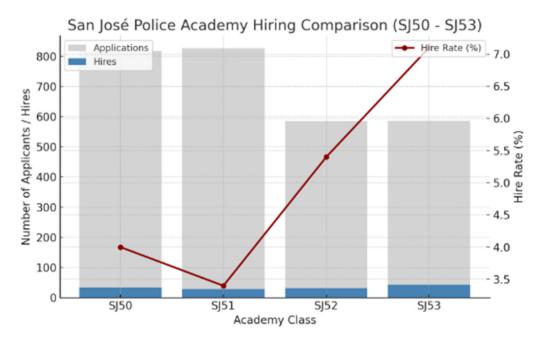
² Police Executive Research Forum - Survey (2023) - https://www.policeforum.org/staffing2023

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overall number of applications and background investigations while allowing recruiters and backgrounders to focus on candidates who were better qualified and more likely to succeed. As a result, the process became more efficient, the selection timeline shortened, and the percentage of hires increased.

Hiring Comparison by Academy Class:



This progression demonstrates that while the number of applications has decreased, the Recruiting Unit has significantly improved its efficiency by concentrating efforts on well-prepared applicants. The result is a stronger pool of recruits, higher hire percentages, and a more sustainable academy pipeline.

The Department will continue to emphasize this strategy in its recruiting efforts in FY 2025-2026. To increase the candidate pool, the recruiting and hiring process is being constantly streamlined to increase applicant workflow. For example, the Recruiting Unit has combined the first two steps in the application process to streamline the initial application stage. The Recruiting Unit implemented the following creative strategies to increase hiring:

- Recruitment billboards
- Commercials
- Advertising on the San José Giants stadium
- · Recruiting signs at PAL stadium
- Cadet participation at hiring events
- Lateral officer incentive program
- Outreach and advertisement via social media

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- The creation of a new recruitment website (sipdyou.com)
- Providing free testing (written, physical, and oral board) for applicants
- Providing mentorship opportunities via fitness and testing preparation classes
- Ride-a-long program
- Implementation of the Department of Defense SkillBridge program (an opportunity for active-duty service members to participate in training and development with potential employers)
- Continued community college and university outreach
- Continued community-based recruiting efforts
- Continued Mentorship opportunities with youth
- Hosting career fairs and informational workshops at the substation

The 2024 International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) survey also outlined some possible solutions to the hiring difficulties being experienced nationwide by law enforcement agencies. Below are seven of these possible solutions, which may inform the Department's future recruiting strategies.

1. Expanded outreach efforts

Agencies can boost their recruitment activities by appealing to younger candidates through cadet programs and internships. The Department is continuously seeking innovative ways to attract new recruits and expand community engagement. The Department recognizes the critical importance of engaging with local youth to cultivate a future workforce that embodies the values and diversity of the community. By investing in mentorship programs, the Department aims to guide young individuals towards fulfilling careers in law enforcement, ensuring a continuous pipeline of dedicated and qualified personnel committed to serving San José.

The Department has established a robust Cadet program designed to mentor local youth aspiring to seek careers in law enforcement. This initiative aims to cultivate a well-prepared and community-focused future police force by leveraging training, education, and active involvement within the Department. The program has grown to over 50 Cadets in FY 2024-2025 and is currently experiencing an overwhelming amount of interest for membership. The Cadet program has also evolved, where the Department has successfully hired five Cadets on a part-time, paid basis who strive to become peace officers once they meet all requirements. The Department is in the process of including the requirement that Cadets who receive stipends be enrolled in college in pursuit of a career in law enforcement.

Additionally, the program will identify other avenues of youth recruitment and mentorship opportunities by building relationships with high schools,

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trade/vocational programs, and teen recreational programs through the Department of Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services.

2. Educational partnerships

Collaborating with colleges and universities to develop policing degree programs can help create and fill an academic pipeline for future recruits. The San José Police Department is currently looking at revamping the VOLT program for college-aged volunteers to build a pool of interested candidates who are closer to fulfilling the requirements to be hired as a peace officer. The recruiting unit has conducted community college and university outreach by attending Santa Clara County and University Police Chiefs Association (SCCCUSPC) meetings to build positive relationships with the goal of recruiting from their respective campuses. As a result, the Department has built relationships that have opened recruitment opportunities via college career fairs and in-class presentations conducted by the Recruiting Unit.

3. Modernized recruitment strategies

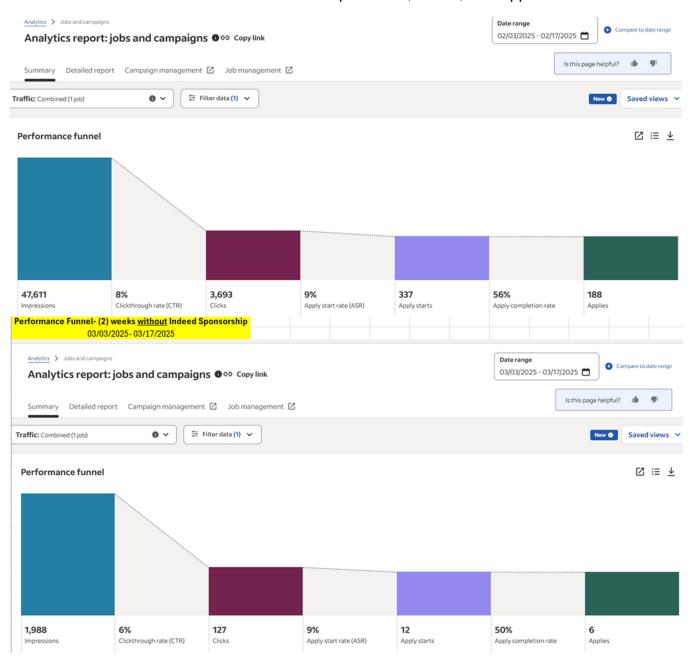
While some agencies have had success with basic social media campaigns, more advanced tactics such as data-driven advertising and geotargeting may also be effective in some areas. The Recruiting Unit secured funding and hired EPIC Productions to research current hiring trends, create an outreach strategy, and develop the concepts for the recruiting advertising campaigns. In addition, EPIC Production and the Recruiting Unit hold monthly meetings to evaluate the effectiveness of the campaigns and create alternative strategies to maintain and improve hiring goals. The Department is entering the second year of its contract with EPIC Productions in FY 2025-2026. In FY 2024-2025, EPIC Productions produced new video and photo content that has been used to advertise via a variety of media outlets to include: Hulu, Instagram, Google Ads, Meta, Indeed, and Facebook. EPIC Productions also created the new recruitment website www.sipdyou.com, utilizing the video and photo content created as part of the initial recruiting campaign. The Department has seen an increase in applications being submitted via this advertisement, particularly with Indeed.com.

During the Third Quarter of FY 2024-2025, funding ran out, and the Department lost the ability to utilize Indeed.com as a recruiting tool, negatively impacting the number of applications coming in. The following was the impact observed:

- 212,122 total "Impressions" within the 3-month timeframe (potential job candidates visiting the site)
- Out of those impressions, there were 16,776 "Clicks" to view the application process.
- 1,838 out of the 16,776 started the application process.
- 1,096 of the 1,838 completed and submitted the application through Indeed.

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The Recruiting Unit also created the following analytics for a 2-week period with Indeed (February 3, 2025 through February 17, 2025) compared to a 2-week period without their services (March 3, 2025 through March 17, 2025). Refer to the following graphs, which illustrate the decline in the number of Impressions, Clicks, and Applications:



As a result, the Recruiting Unit directed EPIC Productions to utilize a portion of the internet advertisement budget to fund the Indeed account. Application numbers increased once Indeed services were reacquired.

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4. Accelerated hiring processes

Since the current office recruitment climate maintains a smaller pool of candidates sought by more departments, agencies can streamline interview and background check processes to ensure they do not lose top candidates to competing agencies with faster hiring timelines. The Recruiting Unit has been actively looking at ways to streamline the hiring and background process to ensure the Department does not lose qualified applicants to other departments. The Department has streamlined the initial stages of the application process to combine the application submission with the Personal History Questionnaire (PHQ). The Recruiting Unit collects feedback from candidates who have been in the process with other departments, who have chosen San José citing several reasons. Based upon feedback, the primary reason applicants choose San José Police Department (SJPD) is due to the close and personal involvement from the programs the Recruiting Unit offers to applicants. These include Wednesday night fitness sessions, oral board preparation workshops, a ride-along program, physical agility test practices, and quick communication from recruiters whenever they have issues or questions.

5. Competitive incentives

Departments can make positions more appealing by offering tuition reimbursement, relocation assistance, sign-on bonuses, and other incentives. At the moment, the Department has a lateral incentive offering \$20,000 for lateral officers who get hired with the Department. This program was recently expanded to include a \$10,000 bonus for federal police officers and state troopers who are hired by the Department.

6. Targeted community engagement

Agencies that engage directly with their local communities have reported better success in recruiting qualified candidates, particularly among women and minority demographics. The Recruitment Unit started a pilot program aimed at community-based recruitment. The objective is to enhance the recruitment of qualified applicants into the hiring process by leveraging partnerships with City entities and community groups, thereby fostering a police force that reflects the community it serves. Focusing on a community-based recruiting approach by collaborating with community groups throughout the City will foster applicants who have a connection and commitment to the City in which they live. Engaging with community organizations and leaders, the Department can identify and attract candidates who possess a deep understanding of San José's unique cultural and social dynamics. This approach not only fosters trust and collaboration between law enforcement and the community but also ensures that the Department reflects the population it serves. The program has conducted outreach to City Hall personnel to disseminate recruitment information through

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municipal channels and community events. Collaboration with the Bureau of Field Operations Captains also allows the Recruiting Unit to identify and engage active community groups across the four patrol divisions to promote recruitment efforts and identify potential candidates from within community groups across the City.

7. Mental health and wellness programs

Investing in stress management, therapy services, and physical wellness initiatives can help prevent officer burnout. When employees see that their agency cares about their well-being, they are more likely to be retained. As part of recruitment efforts, the Department disseminates information to potential applicants regarding programs that make it unique compared to other police agencies. Examples of this include the Department's mental health and wellness programs. We provide information regarding the Department's Wellness and Employee Support Team (WEST), the Department's therapy dog, clubs that officers can join within the Department, and the ability to play sports to represent the Department in tournaments throughout the United States. The Department's men's soccer team has been instrumental in recruitment efforts, as they regularly participate in mentorship and recruitment activities throughout the City, promoting a healthy lifestyle and an outlet from daily police work that fosters camaraderie.

The Department has implemented a change in its hiring process regarding the Physical Agility Entry Test. In recent years, the entry standard has been lowered by removing and altering certain agility events. However, the Department has reinstated the higher standard in alignment with the California Peace Officers Standards and Training (POST) Work Sample Test Battery (WSTB). This decision came after observing that recruits were entering the academy unprepared for the physical rigors of training, which resulted in increased injuries and a higher rate of recruits failing to complete the physical portion of the academy. These challenges placed a significant burden on academy staff, as every recruit is ultimately required to pass the WSTB to graduate. By front-loading this requirement into the hiring process, the Department is ensuring that candidates are better prepared, increasing the likelihood of success, reducing injuries, and strengthening the overall quality of recruits entering the academy. To further support applicants in reaching this goal, the Recruiting Unit will continue to offer Wednesday night fitness and mentorship sessions designed to help candidates build the skills and conditioning necessary to successfully pass the Work Sample Test Battery (WSTB).

At a minimum, the Department must keep up with attrition, which can be difficult to project. While the Department projected 101 sworn personnel would retire during FY 2023-2024, a total of 112 officers retired, resigned, were terminated, or resigned in lieu of termination during that time period. This is an increase of 11 vacancies that were not projected. This trend in increasing retirements and resignations is not specific to the San José Police Department, but is being experienced across the nation.

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Funds expended to date in recruiting and hiring, and the uses of funds.

For FY 2024-2025, the Recruitment Unit personnel budget was \$2,763,937, with an allocation for overtime of \$614,820, and an expenditure of \$925,777, which exceeds the overtime budget by \$310,957.

The overtime costs are high, mainly due to the recruiting events personnel must attend. Most of these events are on weekends and/or in the evening on weekdays. Often, there are two or three events at the same time at different locations, which require additional staff (i.e., satellite recruiters). FY 2024-2025 generated overtime expenses associated with in-person and virtual recruiting events, career and job fairs, colleges and universities, military bases, unaffiliated police academies, and outside Peace Officers Standards and Training (POST) testing sites. The overtime expense fund allowed the Recruiting Unit to conduct physical agility and written testing, oral board preparation classes, cadet trainings, community event recruiting opportunities, Communications information sessions, oral board testing for sworn, Communications, Records, Community Service Officers, and San José Police Department (SJPD) Fitness series sessions.

The Recruiting Unit will continue to seek funding remedies for FY 2025-2026 to maintain billboards, youth advertising (for example, TV/Banner ads at PAL), and other local and statewide projects that have increased applications. For FY 2023-2024, the Recruiting Unit's budget allocation was approximately \$2.6 million, with expenditures and commitments for the year totaling approximately \$2.9 million as of May 31, 2024.

<u>Data describing measurements of results specific to the ethnic and gender makeup of</u> the Department, as a whole, and by rank.

Under California State law, disclosure of one's race and gender is voluntary. The Department strives for diversity within recruitment pools, which mirrors the demographics of the City. The overall ethnicity breakdown for the Department sworn members is 15% Asian, 26% Hispanic or Latino, 28% White, 3% African American, and 28% other or not specified. As of June 27, 2025, the San José Police Department was 86.79% male and 13.21% female. Compared to as of June 28, 2024, the San José Police Department was 86.6% male and 13.4% female.

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The following chart provides the breakdown of the self-reported ethnicities of the last three Police Academy classes:

	SJ50	SJ51	SJ52
Asian	4	2	5
Black or African American	2	0	1
Hispanic or Latino	21	8	10
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1	3	0
White	7	4	3
TOTALS	30*	17*	17*

^{*}Participants are allowed to make multiple choices and are voluntary.

Source: San José Police Recruiting Unit – Survey

As of June 27, 2025, each rank within the Department was made up of the following self-reported ethnicities and genders:

	Officer	Sergeant	Lieutenant
American Indian	4		
Asian	112	28	5
Black or African	21	5	2
American			
Hispanic or	193	45	7
Latino			
Native	2	1	1
Hawaiian/Pacific			
Islander			
White	199	62	13
Non-Specified	255	26	12
TOTALS	786	167	40

	Officer	Sergeant	Lieutenant
Female	118	7	4
Male	668	160	36
TOTALS	786	167	40

In recent years, the Recruiting Unit has made significant strides in its recruitment of women in law enforcement. Some of the new methods it has used are targeted outreach, mentorship, and support programs. One of the cornerstone efforts is the

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Women's Bootcamp, where potential female applicants are invited to participate in a mini academy experience hosted at the police substation. This event offers hands-on exposure to police training while building confidence and camaraderie. Additionally, the Recruiting Unit supports female applicants' physical preparedness through its longstanding "Wednesday Night" fitness sessions, which promote physical fitness in a welcoming, supportive environment.

The Department is also investing in the future by mentoring aspiring female officers through the Police Cadet Program, which currently includes over 27 young women interested in law enforcement careers. These efforts have led to the successful hiring of several former female cadets as police officers, as well as the promotion of others into paid part-time cadet positions, highlighting the Department's commitment to fostering the next generation of female leaders in policing. The Department currently has a female officer assigned to the Recruiting Unit, who also mentors current female applicants within the hiring process and academies to ensure they are supported. The Department has produced and posted several videos and social media ads highlighting female officers. As part of the Mayor's March message for FY 2024-2025, the Department received an ongoing overtime allocation of \$25,000 to run a Police Women's Bootcamp, which was held last October and is supported through ongoing mentorship throughout the hiring process.

<u>Data describing the reasons officers are separating from the Department (for example, retirement, moving to another City department, resignation in lieu of termination, etc.).</u>

During the exit interview process, officers can voluntarily note their reason(s) for separating from the City. During this FY 2024-2025, 125 officers separated from the City, which is a 12% increase compared to FY 2023-2024. Of the separations, 47 resigned for other reasons, 29 service retirement, 22 resigned in lieu of termination, seven left for other agencies, six retired on disability, five resigned for personal reasons, four were terminated, three transferred to another City position, and two deceased.

Communications Division Recruiting Efforts

The Communications Division consists of Police Communications Specialists (call takers), who are the first interface when residents call 9-1-1 or police non-emergency, and Police Radio Dispatchers (dispatchers), who dispatch officers and communicate with them in the field. Recruiting and retention for call takers and dispatchers is an issue in San José and throughout the State of California. The Communications Division is budgeted for 162.5 positions. There are currently 3.5 vacancies in contrast to 22 vacancies in the prior year.

Recruitment efforts for Communications are critical and remain a high priority for the Department. Based on application volume, FY 2024-2025 was a successful year for Communications recruitment compared to the last two fiscal years. During FY 2024-

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2025, Communications received 1,329 applications compared to 958 during FY 2023-2024.

The Communications Division recruiters will continue previous recruiting strategies based on their success and will continue to attend Department recruitment events. They plan to visit local high schools and community colleges, post recruitment flyers, meet with students, and coordinate with instructors to speak during class periods. Recruiters give information about the Communications Specialist and Radio Dispatcher positions, including job duties, minimum requirements, salary and benefits, how to apply, and frequently asked questions.

CONCLUSION

In the coming year, the Department and Recruiting Unit will build on current efforts to attract and hire highly qualified candidates. Recruitment personnel will continue to engage applicants by providing meaningful opportunities to learn about the Department's operations and the rewarding career paths available as police officers, call takers, dispatchers, and in other vital positions in the Operations Support Services Division, Cadet program, and in Crime Prevention. These interactions highlight not only the professional growth opportunities within the Department, but also the deep sense of purpose and fulfillment that comes from serving the community and residents of San José.

To strengthen these efforts, the Department has secured a new advertising contract and is exploring additional marketing strategies, including the Department of Defense (DOD) SkillBridge Program. Since 2015, the Department has benefited from hiring qualified candidates who have served in the United States Military or are currently serving in the United States Military National Guard or Reserves. In 2017, the DOD instituted the SkillBridge program. This program is an internship program that serves as a figurative career bridge for members who are transitioning out of the military into civilian life. In this program, the DOD continues to pay an active-duty service members their current salary and benefits in the last 180 days or 120 days of their military contract term, while assigning them to a civilian career duty station. The Department believes the DOD SkillBridge Program will further strengthen the recruitment efforts of qualified applicants with a military background.

The stipulations of this arrangement are outlined in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that is executed with the DOD and with the employer providing the internship opportunity. Ideally, the military service member will be hired as a full-time employee with the same employer as their SkillBridge duty station upon completion of their military term. This opportunity is available to all service members in good standing (members anticipating an honorable separation from military service), including both officers and those enlisted from all branches of the United States military. The Recruiting Unit is planning to submit an application to the DOD that would expand its satellite recruiting

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program to reach a broader and more diverse pool of potential applicants. The DOD, not the City, would cover the program costs.

COORDINATION

This memorandum has been coordinated with the City Attorney's Office and the City Manager's Budget Office.

Paul Joseph Chief of Police

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For questions, please contact Recruiting Unit Lieutenant Juan J. Vallejo at <u>juan.vallejo@sanjoseca.gov</u> or (408) 277-4951.