

DATE: March 23, 2023

TO: Public Safety Advisory Board

FROM: Saul Jaeger, Police Captain

SUBJECT: Mountain View Police Department Recruitment and Retention Strategy

PURPOSE

Staff will provide an update regarding current Mountain View Police Department recruitment and retention strategies and seek Public Safety Advisory Board input regarding methods to improve transparency.

BACKGROUND

As part of its Council-approved work plan for Fiscal Year 2022-23, the Public Safety Advisory Board (PSAB) requested an informational report about the Mountain View Police Department's (MVPD) recruiting and retention strategies. While the City employs staff in various capacities in the MVPD, recruiting and retaining staff for sworn positions (Police Officers) and Emergency Communications Center (ECC) staff (Dispatchers) has historically been a challenge in Mountain View as well as throughout the region and country and will be the focus of this memorandum.

The MVPD works in partnership with the City's Human Resources Department, which leads the recruitment function for all City departments and provides a range of programs and services that support employees and departments throughout the organization. In addition to recruitment, these programs and services include: benefits and leave administration; training and development; employee engagement and organizational culture; performance management and coaching; employee events and recognition; employee wellness; employee and labor relations; classification and compensation; and succession planning.

DISCUSSION

Staffing Levels and Vacancies

The City employs a total of 148 staff in the MVPD, of which there are 97 sworn staff.

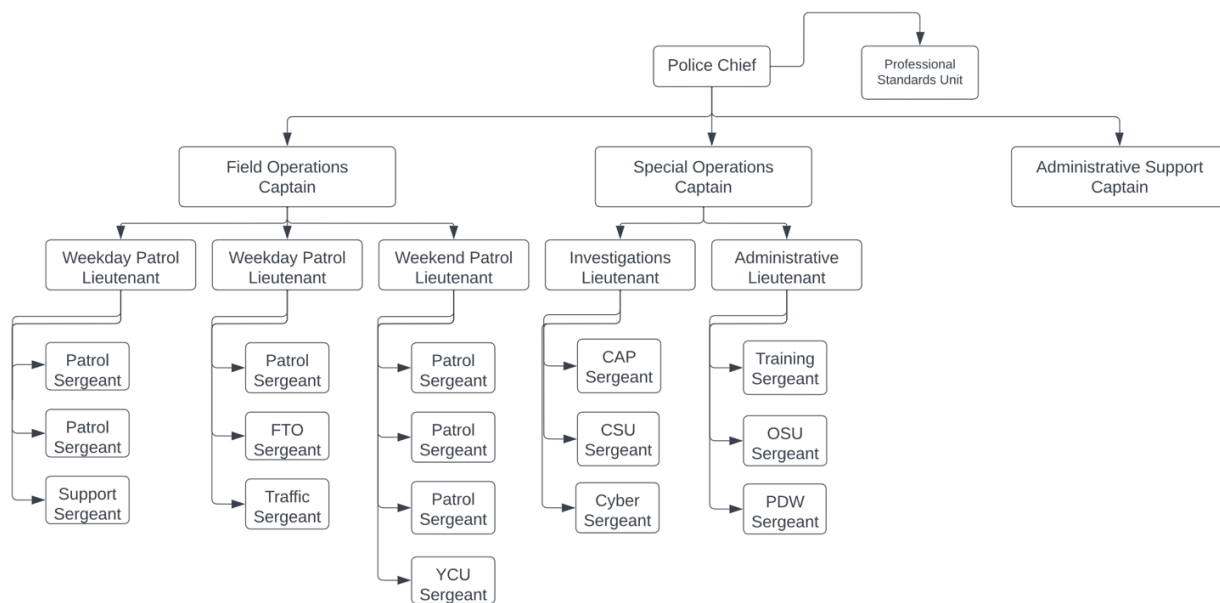
Current Sworn Position Authorized Staffing Levels

The MVPD is currently authorized 97 sworn police officers, including:

- One Police Chief
- Three Police Captains
- Five Police Lieutenants
- Sixteen (16) Police Sergeants
- Seventy-one (71) Police Officers

This authorized staffing level and structure is established to provide coverage for the shifts and functions of the department and establishes a command staff to provide oversight to the teams and leadership to the department.

MVPD Organizational Chart, Sworn Staff



Each patrol team’s minimum staffing levels are based on historic service level needs (calls for service) and levels agreed upon with input from the Police Officer’s Association and department management. A minimum number of Officers on duty ensures enough personnel to respond to emergencies and provide adequate coverage throughout the City. It also helps prevent Officer fatigue and burnout by ensuring that the workload is distributed fairly and ensures Officers have access to the necessary resources and support to perform their duties effectively and safely.

Current Sworn Position Vacancies

As of March 2023, the MVPD has the following open sworn positions:

- One Police Chief
- One Police Lieutenant
- One Police Sergeant
- Five Police Officers
- Three limited-period/overhire Police Officers

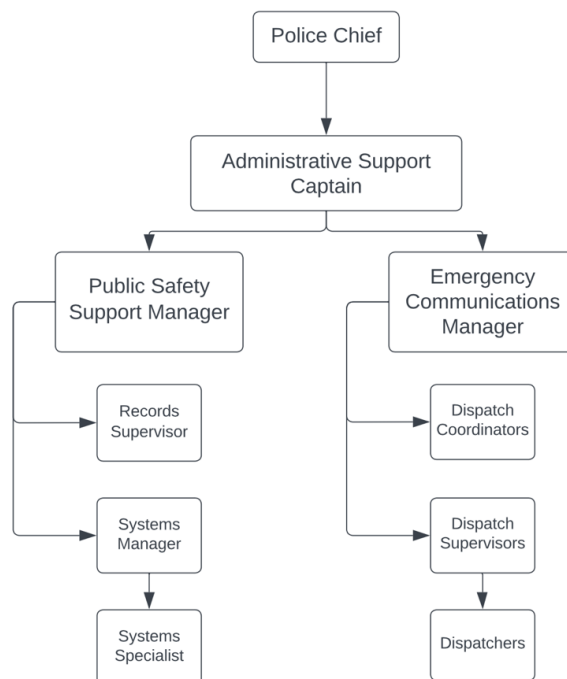
Current Emergency Communications Center Authorized Staffing Levels

The ECC is currently authorized 17 Public Safety Dispatchers. This total includes:

- One Emergency Communications Manager
- Two Public Safety Dispatch Coordinators
- Four Public Safety Dispatcher III
- Ten (10) Public Safety Dispatcher I/II

The ECC also hires hourly, per diem dispatch staff positions to assist with maintaining staffing levels as needed. Currently, there are three per diem Public Safety Dispatchers.

MVPD Organizational Chart, Emergency Communications Center Staff



Current Emergency Communications Center Vacancies

As of March 2023, MVPD has the following vacancies in the ECC:

- Two Public Safety Dispatcher I/II
- One Public Safety Dispatch Coordinator

Hiring Processes and Challenges

Recruitment and Selection Process—Officers

The City regularly conducts recruitments throughout each year for Lateral Police Officers (those currently employed as police officers in other agencies) and entry-level or police academy graduates. Generally, recruitments for Lateral Police Officers are open to applications on a continuous basis with multiple rounds of interviews scheduled when qualified applications are received. Recruitments for Police Officer Trainee positions are typically initiated twice per year with a firm closing date to ensure candidates are onboarded in accordance with California Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) academy start dates. POST was established by the Legislature in 1959 to set minimum selection and training standards for California law enforcement.

All recruitments are posted on the City's applicant tracking software site, CalOpps, which applicants can also access on the City's website. The City also advertises MVPD employment opportunities through LinkedIn, Governmentjobs.com, the POST website, PoliceOne.com, and JoinMVPD.com. In addition, the MVPD recruiting team may attend special events or recruiting fairs to promote the opportunities; however, this in-person practice was impacted during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The hiring process for Police Officers is of paramount importance as it plays a crucial role in determining the quality of law enforcement in a community. Police Officers are entrusted with the responsibility of maintaining law and order, protecting the public, and upholding the rule of law. A rigorous and comprehensive hiring process helps ensure that the individuals selected for these positions possess the necessary qualities, skills, and traits to carry out these duties effectively and fairly. This can include a range of factors, such as physical fitness, psychological and emotional stability, sound judgement, excellent communication skills, and a commitment to upholding ethical and professional standards. An effective hiring process can also help to promote diversity and inclusivity with the police force, which can enhance public trust and confidence in the MVPD. Ultimately, a well-designed and thorough hiring process can help to build and maintain a capable, professional, and trusted police department.

The application and hiring process follows the same general steps for lateral, entry-level, and academy graduates/enrollee applicants and is outlined as follows:

1. Submission of an application with any required certifications attached.
2. Completion of a Personal History Questionnaire (PHQ) to evaluate and eliminate candidates based on objective disqualification criteria prior to interview.
3. Panel interview consisting generally of three panel members.
4. Executive interview by Police Captain(s) and the Police Chief of candidates who were rated as qualified through the panel interview process.
5. Background investigation, including employment and education verification.
6. Polygraph examination.
7. Fingerprinting.
8. Conditional job offer.
9. Medical examination.
10. Psychological examination.
11. Final job offer.

The number of applicants varies in each recruitment; however, candidate pools for lateral recruitments are smaller, while candidate pools for trainee recruitments are larger.

Onboarding and Training Process—Officers

Upon completion of the recruitment and selection process and acceptance of the final job offer, Lateral Officers and Academy Graduates start the Field Training Officer (FTO) program. This begins with an in-house training phase and orientation and concludes with a minimum of eight weeks of FTO training, during which trainees are supervised and evaluated. This training may be extended in the event it is determined that a new Officer would benefit from additional or specific training prior to assignment to work as a solo beat Officer. Lateral Officers and academy graduates start an 18-month probationary period upon their first day of employment and must successfully complete training in order to pass probation.

Police Officer Trainees who do not come to the City as a Lateral Officer are enrolled to attend a California POST Police Academy, which is approximately six months in duration. Upon successful completion and graduation from the police academy, Police Officer Trainees are reclassified as Police Officers and start an in-house training phase and orientation, and then begin an FTO process. Since these Police Officers do not have prior law enforcement experience, this training process is longer than the process for lateral hires. The FTO process for trainees is generally completed in four months but may be extended in the event it is determined that a new Officer would benefit from additional or specific training prior to assignment to work as a solo beat Officer. Police Officer Trainees start an 18-month probationary period upon the day of reclassification to Police Officer.

Police Officer training is important to ensure Officers have the necessary skills and knowledge to carry out their duties fairly, safely, and effectively. The City of Mountain View has a very diverse population. It is crucial that MVPD officers are trained to work with a broad range of communities and cultures. In recent years, there has been an increased focus on the need for police training to emphasize deescalation techniques, community-focused programming, and cultural competency. Additionally, MVPD has taken steps to implement training on issues, such as implicit bias and use-of-force, which can reduce the risk of incidents of excessive force and misconduct. By prioritizing comprehensive and ongoing training, MVPD can help to promote public safety, build trust and legitimacy within the community, and ensure that Officers are properly equipped to handle the complex and dynamic situations they may encounter.

Recruitment and Selection Process—Dispatchers

The City conducts recruitment for Public Safety Dispatcher positions as needed throughout the year. The number and duration of recruitments depends on the number of open positions and the availability of staff to conduct dispatch training. Recruitments can either be for lateral or entry-level dispatchers and often are open continuously with multiple rounds of interviews to enable the City to address staffing needs on an ongoing basis.

ECC recruitment postings are consistent with the advertising and marketing methods previously outlined for Officer recruitments. The application and hiring process follows the same general steps for lateral and entry-level Police Officer applicants as outlined above.

Onboarding and Training Process—Dispatchers

Upon completion of the recruitment and selection process and acceptance of the final job offer, whether an entry-level or experienced applicant, new hires start a training program with three modules: call-taking and 9-1-1, Fire services dispatch, and Police dispatch. Because MVPD's ECC provides service for 9-1-1, the Fire Department, and the Police Department, the training process is extended and can take as long as 18 months before the dispatcher is assigned to a shift to work solo.

Police Officer and Dispatch Recruiting Challenges

Attracting quality entry-level applicants has been, and continues to be, a challenge for policing across the country. Reasons for this vary from candidate interest in higher pay and benefits compared to the cost of living in a specific area to a general attraction challenge due to critical public sentiment in reaction to police misconduct.

The MVPD has intentionally positioned itself as a leader in innovation, community engagement, and employee wellness, resulting in the ability to weather the recruiting challenges better than most agencies. Regarding pay and benefits, the City sets pay and benefits for officers and dispatchers that is at or are above that of neighboring agencies, further enhancing our ability to attract and retain top talent. In addition, the City has authorized hiring bonuses, referral incentives, and consideration of sick leave banks for lateral candidates to recognize prior public service. The City's commitment to wellness includes enhancements to the Employee Assistance Program for first responders, a paid workout hour for officers, sleeping quarters utilized by Officer and Dispatch staff with long commutes when working long shifts, and the establishment of a Sergeant position responsible for overseeing employee wellness programs.

Even so, the MVPD continues to be challenged with finding and hiring Police and Dispatch staff to fill all current and anticipated vacancies. Over the past four years, through various Officer lateral and trainee recruitments, the MVPD was able to hire 25 officers from a field of over 620 applicants, of which over 200 were interviewed.

As seen in Figure 1 below, the MVPD has experienced a downward trend in the number of applicants per recruitment during this time frame.

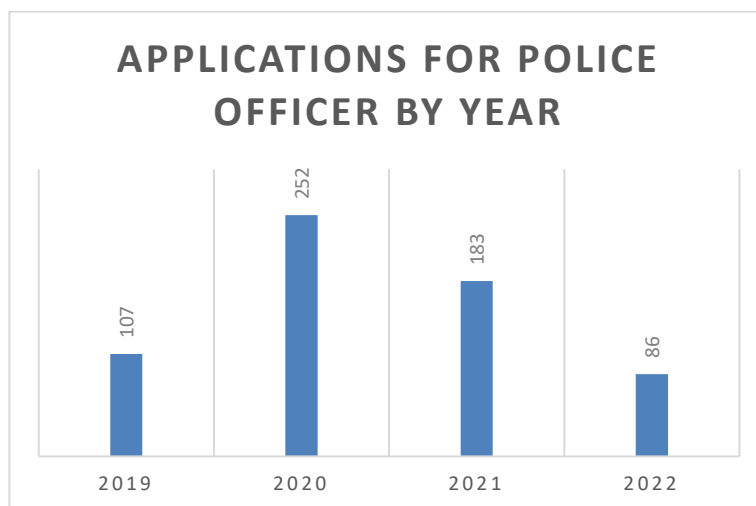


Figure 1: Applications for Police Officer from 2019 to 2022

Simultaneously, we have seen an increase in the number of Lateral Police Officers applying and being hired, even attracting several candidates who held Sergeant rank in their prior agency and applied to be Police Officers with the MVPD. As illustrated in Figure 2, despite the smaller candidate pools in lateral recruitments, these recruitments have a higher ratio of hires in comparison to trainee recruitments and other recruitment processes, which includes a combination of those currently enrolled in and/or graduated from a POST academy.

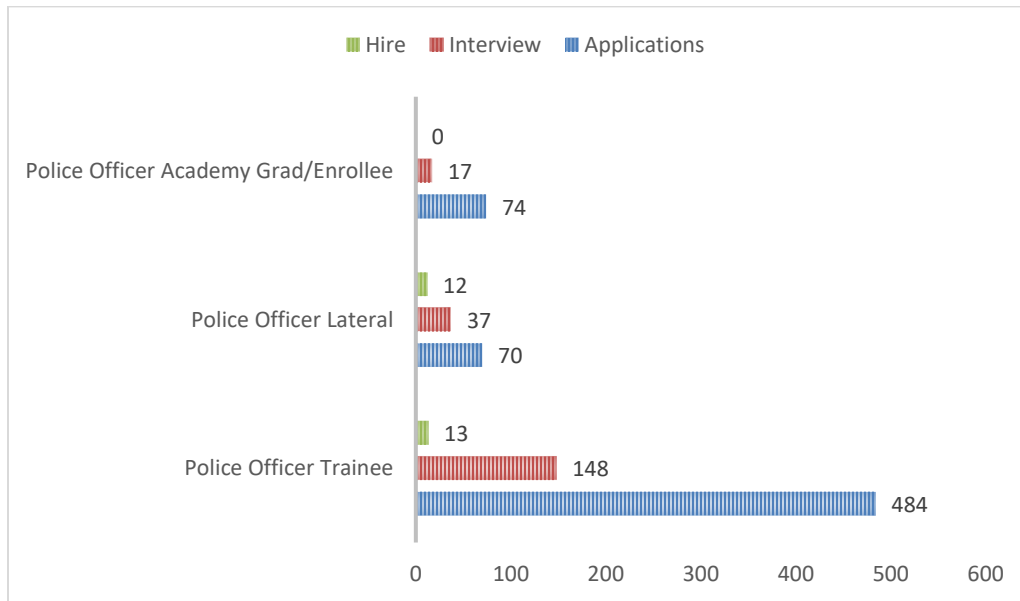


Figure 2: Total Applications Received for Officer Recruitments Posted from 2019 to 2022

Forecasting and Planning

Although MVPD works to forecast vacancies and conduct succession planning, this can be difficult due to the unpredictability of retirements and resignations. This, combined with the limited pool of eligible candidates and the time needed to hire and onboard new officers, can make succession planning difficult. While the MVPD can, and does, stay apprised of the staff who are eligible to retire, they often elect to continue working, which is beneficial for maintaining staffing levels but creates unpredictability. In addition, staff may be hesitant to announce or commit to a retirement date for various reasons. As a result, it is often not possible to extend job offers proactively. Additionally, injuries and illness can result in prolonged periods of leave and low staffing that is addressed through overtime since the positions are still filled and cannot be recruited for. As of the writing of this report, there are six officers on leave.

Another factor in forecasting vacancies is the commitment in the MVPD and the City as a whole to promote qualified candidates from within to fill vacancies. This practice has many benefits related to training, development, engagement, and performance. However, promotions have a

trickle-down effect, creating vacancies and recruitment needs at other levels. For example, an internal promotion into the position of Captain creates a Lieutenant vacancy. Promotion into this position creates a Sergeant vacancy. Promotion into the Sergeant position creates a vacancy at the Officer level.

The time it takes to hire and train staff is another challenge. Table 1 below outlines the timelines from application to hire and from hire to ability to work independently without a trainer.

Table 1: Recruitment and Onboarding Timeline

Position	Recruitment Timeline (Posting Date to Final Offer)	Onboarding and Training Timeline	Total Timeline from Application to Solo Work
Police Officer Lateral	3 months minimum	2 months	5 to 7 months
Police Officer Trainee	5 months	10 months (6 months academy and 4 months FTO)	14 to 16 months
Public Safety Dispatcher I/II	6 months	12 to 18 months	18 to 24 months

Throughout the hiring and training processes for both Dispatch and Police staff, candidates are lost due to many factors that can occur in each stage of the process. During the hiring process, for example, candidates may not meet standards in the PHQ, interviews, background, polygraph, fingerprinting, medical, or psychological exams and, as a result, they are eliminated from consideration. In addition, some candidates voluntarily withdraw from the process due to hesitations regarding the career in general or the choice to pursue other employment opportunities.

Once hired, MVPD has seen trainees resign from the academy because of the rigors of the academy itself or because they have failed testing processes or scenarios and not responded to remediation. Trainees who do not meet standards during the FTO program may be released from the program. Common issues include, but are not limited to, navigation and familiarity with the City, Officer safety issues, driving problems, report writing, and not treating people with respect.

During the Dispatcher training program, candidates have been released or have left the program for reasons including, but not limited to, feeling overwhelmed with the multi-tasking environment and pace of the center itself and not responding to training or inputting incorrect information.

This turnover during the probationary period sets the MVPD back on succession planning. Table 2 below displays the full department turnover during probation for the last three calendar years.

Table 2: Police Department Turnover While on Probation

Division	Total Turnover While on Probation		
	2020	2021	2022
PD	3	0	2
PD/ECC	1	0	2
TOTALS	4	0	4

Finally, retention in general is a key component in succession planning. This includes reviewing all turnover trends. The following figure outlines the Police Officer separations by year and type.

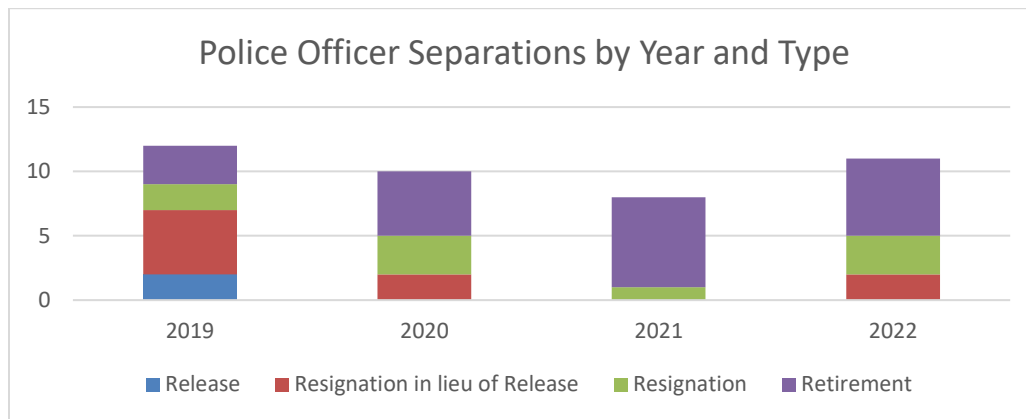


Figure 3: Police Officer Separations by Year and Type

Recruiting Strategy

In the past, because of the high number of candidates interested in a career in policing, agencies minimally advertised and opened processes with hundreds of candidates. As interest in a policing career has dwindled, agencies, including the MVPD, have adjusted their strategies, recognizing the need to do things differently.

The MVPD’s recruiting strategy uses a “concierge” service model. In this model, applicants feel connected and part of the program. Applicants passing the first phase (the application and personal history questionnaire) are contacted by our Personnel and Training Sergeant and the City’s Human Resources Department and are encouraged to stay in direct contact with the Sergeant with any questions or needs for assistance throughout the process. Lateral candidates are assigned to an internal recruiter who helps the candidate navigate the process, answers questions, arranges ride-alongs, etc. This has proven extremely effective in attracting highly sought-after candidates.

Staff also recently started to advertise lateral openings in the Police Officer Research Association of California (PORAC), reaching a large distribution of potential candidates throughout the State.

Retention Strategy

The MVPD's retention strategy is focused on employees and their safety. The City provides excellent training, top-of-the-line equipment, support, and highly competitive pay and benefits. Additionally, the MVPD is a people-focused organization, which starts from the beginning of a new hire's career. When entry-level Officers enter the police academy, they are assigned a Peer Mentor who maintains contact with the trainee throughout their academy journey. The Peer Mentor assists with any issues or problems during the academy and acts as a sounding board and trusted partner.

The MVPD recently started the Professional Development and Wellness Unit, managed by a dedicated Sergeant. This unit focuses on professional and personal growth as well as the intentional building of connection opportunities among staff and between staff and the Mountain View community. This is accomplished through the development of working groups focused on five pillars for MVPD employees: physical fitness and nutrition, mental wellness and resiliency, financial wellness, spiritual wellness, and enrichment activities.

Additionally, the MVPD prides itself on being a learning organization. The City encourages and funds professional training and education. There are also less formal yet highly attended activities, such as a book club and an internal Leadership Development Program designed to stretch perspective and grow staff.

The deep and historical connection with the Mountain View community is another piece of the MVPD's retention strategy. Through participation in programs and events, such as Coffee with a Cop, Cops and Gobblers, Cops that Care, and the Police Activities League events, Officers can further connect with their communities.

Lastly, there are opportunities for staff to work in various specialties, regional task forces, and supervisory positions throughout their careers. The MVPD is proud that no matter what path an employee takes, they can feel proud of their decision to choose a career in policing.

In addition to these MVPD-led retention efforts and the benefits and programs outlined earlier which attract applicants, the City's Human Resources Department offers programs and benefits that meet the needs of the workforce and support employee retention. These include a robust annual training program, a generous tuition reimbursement program to support employees in pursuit of a bachelor's or master's degree, pay incentives for certifications of expertise in policing and for bilingual skills, opportunities for overtime compensation, including Shoreline Amphitheatre events, and attractive employee and retiree medical benefits to retain our highly trained staff.