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69th KZGN News Talking Points Editorial
By: Tom Wiknich

Should the city council reduce the police force from 32 to 28 sworn officers?

First, a couple comments about the last editorial titled: Is the road ending for Hillary Clinton’s run for president because of email gate? Harry wrote, “The FBI has Hillary’s server, and it has been wiped clean - no surprise. She is digging a deep hole and will eventually be buried in it - she is done...” Sharon wrote, “And yet Clinton acts like she is above the basic rules and laws of handling classified documents and sensitive information. I feel that she has violated the same law that makes keeping classified documents at an ‘unauthorized location’ a misdemeanor and failed to maintain a complete archive of her emails while in office. If the DOJ finds violations and U.S. attorney general does not prosecute.....the American people will know a Clinton is again getting special treatment.” I couldn’t agree more. What’s interesting is we received no comments supporting her.

I’m hearing other pundits using the email gate term, and even comparing this to Nixon’s Watergate saga.

On to today’s topic: Should the city council reduce the police force from 32 to 28 sworn officers? Well, I’ll start right off commenting this would be a big mistake. I would like to mention that these comments are my own. I did not confer with the chief or any officers in making this editorial. My comments are based on my actual observation, and my training in police procedures. This proposed reduction is bad for a number of reasons. Here are just a few of those reasons:

1.  This will reduce response time.

2.  This could reduce actual officers available at one time to maybe 2 officers. And since most dangerous calls for service requires one lead officer and one backup officer, then they will only be able to handle one call at a time. I have seen times where they are handling 3 or more calls at the same time.

3.  Like I just said, their ability to handle more than one call at a time could suffer greatly.

4.  There will be no effort to prevent crime.

5.  All time will be reacting to crime, vs trying to prevent crime.

6.  Overtime costs will sky rocket.

7.  Coverage for sick and vacation leave will reduce available officers.

8.  Attrition and recruitment time will ultimately actually reduce the available force even more.

9.  Officers may be more inclined to look for work at a more stable department.

10. Right now, there are some categories of crime that is going up.

Now would be the worst time to reduce the work force. Right now, day to day, there are many things that reduce available officers for the calls for service. I am a volunteer, and see how many calls they have to respond to daily. There are times when even with the current staff, calls for service back up. There are times when calls that would normally be appropriate for a back-up officer to be there, that there isn’t back up available because of the need to respond to another priority call. Oftentimes, officers are out of service because they are in court. Sometimes they are transporting prisoners to Bakersfield. Calls to handle family disputes involving children and child protective services can take a very long time to handle. Handling large traffic accidents can require many officers for traffic control. There may be more of a tendency to cite and release low level criminals, instead of taking them into custody. The use of volunteers and the reserve officers may become more necessary.

As being a volunteer for over 4 years, I have seen a lot. I see how hard these officers already work. Put yourself out there in their shoes. Be out in this relentless heat we have during the summer. When you add the 25 lbs. of gear they normally wear on duty, these officers go home hot and tired every day. A shortage of officers will most likely result in officers working a lot of overtime. Again, the extra hours will wear them down and possibly affect their effectiveness as a person sworn to protect and serve us. A mentally and physically tired officer is not a good officer. It’s not good for us, and it’s not good for them. When an officer is on the street, they need to be acutely aware of everything going on around them at all times. A seemingly routine call can turn into a serious call in an instant. The officer needs to be mentally and physically on the top of their game for the whole shift. To reduce the sworn work force by 4 officers, or 13% of the work force, is a huge reduction. I know the budget needs to be cut to have a city balanced budget. Find another way to balance the budget. Balancing the budget by putting the public at risk, it not acceptable.

In conclusion, I think we are already at the absolute minimum. Any further reduction would be a huge mistake. I implore the city council to not reduce the force by 13%, which is from 32 to 28 sworn officers.

I’m Tom Wiknich, and that’s what I think. I’d like to know what you think. If you have any comments about this editorial, or would like to discuss or recommend a topic, I’d like to hear from you. Please email them to info@kzgn.net.