OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF
CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

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SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94102

PAUL M. MIYAMOTO
SHERIFF

January 26, 2022
Reference: 2022-010

The Honorable London N. Breed
Mayor
City and County of San Francisco
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear Mayor Breed:

Re: **SFSO Operational and Financial Challenges Resulting from Covid**

The San Francisco Sheriff's Office (SFSO) is experiencing critical staffing shortages resulting from Covid-related leave, ongoing administrative hiring delays, and retirements and resignations. The resulting staffing shortage has resulted in mandatory overtime simply to maintain safety in my operation. While overtime can address some of the aforementioned issues, over the long run it creates operational and financial challenges that are not sustainable. In support of a more sustainable solution, I am requesting immediate assistance with filling the more than 200 vacancies I have in the Sheriff's Office, and a supplement of resources in the form of funds for overtime and salaries.

Cause for Urgency

Following the hiring freeze from 2011 to 2015, the SFSO relied on high levels of overtime to meet established levels of service. Hiring restarted in 2016 and by the beginning of 2020, overtime had been reduced to its lowest level in over a decade. However, with the advent of Covid and the City's generous leave policies, combined with state-required staffing minimums, the SFSO once again had to rely increasingly on overtime. The financial challenges that came with high Covid leave resulted in significant scrutiny of every SHF hire to the point that my office has over 200 vacancies.

At the same time, the SFSO has been challenged with keeping Covid out of the jails. Unlike so many jurisdictions across the country, and even in the Bay Area, the SFSO saw zero Covid outbreaks in the period pre-Omicron; zero outbreaks, zero hospitalizations, zero deaths. Even post-Omicron, during which the Custody Operations Division has established an annex for Covid positives, the SFSO has an enviable Covid record with zero deaths. The SFSO was able to rise to the Covid challenge, in spite of Covid-related staff absences, with dedication, planning and significant overtime. However, with mandatory overtime necessary, staff fatigue is placing both the deputy and the incarcerated populations at risk.

To ensure custody operations can maintain core levels of service, the SFSO is detailing sworn deputies from throughout the Department who were assigned to other critical functions. These units dedicated to activities such as reform oversight, implementation, and

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coordination, community connections and engagement, investigations, and the implementation of use of force and other training protocols, were all reduced to impossible-to-maintain levels. These units are so understaffed that this work will need to be abandoned entirely.

Low Staffing Drivers and Impacts

In FY19-20, in response to concerns regarding racial equity, my office was put on a hiring freeze. When the hiring freeze was lifted, concerns about Covid-related expenditures resulted in a personnel-requisition-approval process that takes well over three months. This exacerbated already low staffing levels that were further challenged by significant overtime reductions in the FY20-21 budgeting processes. The unrealistic budget cuts, use of backfill for staffing demands from lack of hiring, and staffing-intensive Covid-mitigation strategies are driving an enormous over-spend above budget in overtime.

Additionally, the vaccine mandate not only meant separations for those not vaccinated, but also was the catalyst for SFSO to transfer full-duty sworn members from regular assignments, including Investigations, Personnel, Planning and Projects Management, to patrol in order to ensure adequate front-line personnel were available to respond to calls for law enforcement services. The work of those members who were assigned back to patrol currently is not being performed, performed on overtime, or absorbed by other members who are then not performing some of their functions.

Solutions

The current loss of personnel is unsustainable and will need an immediate financial intervention along with a long-term five-year budget planning strategy to respond adequately to public safety demands across the city.

The immediate intervention strategy the SFSO is proposing includes the following.

A. Civilian/Professional Staff Hiring

   Immediate civilian hiring is the quickest way to begin to address the gaps caused by the vaccine mandate and delays in prior year hiring. It is SFSO's intent to increase the use of civilians, many on a one-to-one basis, to replace sworn staff. These positions have been approved in the budget and I simply request your support to expedite the personnel-requisition approval process.

B. Hiring Strategy for Sworn Members

   Overtime backfill does not represent a sustainable solution and the expansion of Academy classes (including costs to recruit and retain) under an accelerated hiring plan is the only viable long-term solution. The SFSO requests funding for two recruiters to help expand work on engagement strategies and recruitment activities ($371k/yr). The SFSO also requests additional support in non-personnel services ($1m) to expand the range of recruitment services currently in use to attract as wide of an applicant pool as we can. Based on recent Academy class sizes, we expect class sizes of approximately 20 deputies. To bring staffing back to acceptable levels, the SFSO must plan for at least two academy classes annually with a total annual cost of $4,213,872. As with civilian hiring, I also request your support to expedite the personnel-requisition approval process.

C. Overtime Deployment

   The existing approved overtime budget is not based on analysis and does not reflect the ongoing workload requirements of the department. For FY21-22, we expect to significantly exceed the base overtime budget allocation and the reason is due to the lack of available staffing to provide for sufficient service coverage. While I appreciate that we received an overtime supplement for FY21-22, such funding must continue into FY22-23 and beyond.

D. Incentives

Other strategies the SFSO is exploring to mitigate potential personnel losses include expediting the hiring process, expanding incentives for lateral hires, and offering greater retention incentives for current sworn personnel. These include:

- FTO pay year-round, not limited to training days, for FTOs who work with probationers as well.
- Offering $50,000 signing bonus for individuals who enter and graduate from the Academy.
  - Would need to commit to staying with the Department for five years
  - Would be required to return the entire sum if they leave before 18 months
  - Would receive a prorated portion if they leave after 18 months, but before five-year period.
- Increasing signing bonus to Lateral Peace Officers
  - Increase lateral signing bonus
    - $10,000 – upon successful completion of FTO program
    - $10,000 – upon successful completion of 12-month full duty probationary period
    - $10,000 – upon successful completion of 5 years of employment
  - Allow vacation time and compensation time to be carried over or receive comparable vacation time and compensation time based on years of service
  - Reduce time for transitional training/academy
- Offering $5000 referral bonus to members who refer individuals who enter and graduate from the Academy
- Sick Pay Buyback (up to 200 hours per fiscal year)
- Compensation Time Buyback (up to 200 hours per fiscal year)
- Vacation Balances (permit members to accrue up to 80 hours over the applicable cap until June 30, 2022)
- 8504 Salary Steps – Eliminating job class 8302 and expanding 8302 steps into 8504 job classification.
- Option for deputies to stay at hotel after working 16-hour shift.

C. Employee Wellness and Safety

Sworn deputies must contend with the long-term impacts of dealing with dangerous situations, sitting for hours in a patrol car, working extended shifts, and adapting to other work-related stressors which can lead to mental and physical health problems such as work fatigue, obesity, heart attacks, alcoholism, substance abuse, and suicide. These stressors can affect an deputy's family, colleagues, and their daily interactions with the public and community. Stress can lead to poor decision making and increase mistakes, both of which may jeopardize the success of the Department and the safety of the public.

In 2021, the Sheriff's Office was the first in the nation to offer wellness and resilience training to all professional staff. We chose Navigating Adversity from Pathfinder Resilience to provide comprehensive health and wellness training on a department-wide basis. Every participant learns to assess their own needs and gain the understanding and tools to create and sustain a healthy and fulfilling life. The 100% online program, a comprehensive eight-week virtual training curriculum that defines wellness in terms of the eight pillars of human health and behavior.

Creating a long term program to continue to support the resilience of deputies provides great benefits to the City. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services noted that resilient first responders are better able to:

- Care for themselves and others.
- Access needed resources more efficiently and effectively.
- Be physically and mentally healthier and have overall lower recovery expenses and

service needs.

- Miss fewer days of work.
- Get back to routines more quickly (which helps family members as well).
- Work through the strong emotions that come from being a first-responder, without relying on unhealthy coping strategies such as drinking heavily or smoking.
- Return to their day-to-day role and have positive interactions with co-workers and family.
- Have greater job satisfaction and career longevity.

To support deputy wellness and safety, the Department requests budget support for first-responder-specific Employee Assistance Program (EAP) services negotiated by the City's Health Service System (HSS).

In conclusion, the Department will need immediate financial support in the form of a higher overtime allocation, hiring authority to fill vacancies, and financial investments for hiring incentives to continue public safety duties in San Francisco.

Thank you for your time and consideration on this matter.

Paul Miyamoto
Sheriff

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