

## Fairfax County Police Department Pay and Benefits Committee

### Meals Tax Task Force

The current vacancy rate in the Department is 92 positions, with the current sworn strength 1244 of the authorized strength of 1336. This represents an almost 7% sworn vacancy rate. In March 2014, the vacancy rate was 64. The vacancy rate has increased nearly 2% in only three months.

The ability of the Police Department to address these vacancies with recruiting/hiring efforts have been challenging, with the April 2014 Session 62 Academy Session consisting of 25 recruits in a class that was projected to seat 54 recruits. Despite intensive recruiting and hiring efforts, the ability of the Department to only fill 46% of its available vacancies represents the difficulty encountered in attracting qualified applicants for the Police Department. The Department processed several thousand applications and polygraphed 427 of the most qualified applicants, to arrive at the 25 in Academy Session 62. This represents 6% of the applicants who were polygraphed for Academy Session 62.

Establishing a continuous source of qualified applicants is essential to maintaining the authorized strength of the Department. Normal attrition rates continuously detract from the authorized strength at an average annual level of 5%. Of particular note in terms of attrition, 2013 had the highest number of retirements since at least 1997, and a 76% increase over 2012, and a 122% increase over 2011. In 2014, it is projected that there will be 84 separations from the Department, of which 21 are facing a scheduled DROP end date. This projected attrition rate represents a 6% decrease in the authorized sworn strength of the Department.

In addition to the increase in retirements, 2013 also saw an increase in the total separations from the Department. Since 2011, there has been a significant increase in the number of sworn employees leaving the Department. There was a 27% increase from 2011 to 2012, a 62% increase from 2012 to 2013, and an expected 11% increase from 2012 to 2014. Although the percentage increase from 2013 to 2014 appears to lessen, the expected separation of 84 employees in 2014 is a historic high.

What is most concerning is the anticipated increase in the separation of employees beyond the statistically supported attrition rate. These sworn employees are those with 4 to 6 years of service and of the Police Officer First Class (P-II) rank. These employees have been denied merits for all but one year of their employment with the Police Department and as a group, P-II's with 4 to 6 years of service are 89% below the market average for midpoint pay. These are the officers that historically are most vulnerable to voluntary separation from the Department for other law enforcement agencies, career change, or personal reasons. There are 102 sworn P-II's in the

Department with 4 to 6 years of service, and any departure of these officers would add to the unprecedented expected attrition of sworn employees in 2014. The increase in attrition, combined with the inability of the Department to attract qualified candidates presents significant staffing challenges for the coming years.

Of the 123 officers that separated from the Police Department in 2012 and 2013, 27 were officers who voluntarily resigned for personal reasons, to join another law enforcement agency, or to seek a different career path. 22 of the 27 officers who resigned were P-II rank, while 1 was a Master Police Officer (P-III) and 4 were Police Officer I. The average years of service for the P-II's who resigned was 6.4 years.

As the County continues to urbanize and increase its great diversity, the Police Department's attrition rates and inability to recruit due to a lack of being an employer of choice is based upon non-competitive compensation. It also greatly hinders our ability to change the diversity of the Department to reflect that of the community. The Chief of Police has created a Council on Diversity Recruiting comprised of diverse community leaders. However, without a competitive compensation package it is extremely difficult to attract minority applicants whom already live in our County and the region as our compensation does not afford new recruits and early career officers the ability to reside in the County. This is reflective in the fact that only 29% of our sworn staff resides in the County and the majority are tenured employees who are the current factors in attrition rates (they are retiring).

Adequate compensation for all County employees, including your Public Safety agencies, is why we strongly support the implementation of a meals tax. The County needs to diversify its revenue streams to effectively provide the growing services that the community deserves. Due to the fact that the only significant source of revenue for the County comes in the form of real estate tax revenues, which have of course been significantly deflated in the past 6-7 years, the County has struggled to produce a balanced annual budget. The main burden for this has been born on the backs of the County employee, be they a Police Officer, Fire Fighter, teacher, administrative assistant, building engineer, custodian, librarian, or any one of the many careers that allow this County to operate. Since 2009, the Market Rate Adjustment has increased by 15%. In that time, County employees have received a total of 5%, meaning the County employee is around 10% below the Market Rate. Furthermore, The General County Employee has been working without a defined pay system for the better part of a decade. In the past 6 years, the Public Safety Merit system has been funded only once, in fiscal year 2013. Although the system has been reinstated for FY 2015, a Public Safety merit employee hired six years ago is currently looking at a salary that is 25-30% below where he or she was told their salary would be at this time.

All of these factors have arisen because the County has not had the money to fund compensation. Given the current economy, County leaders felt confident that the workforce would not leave their respective positions. Furthermore, current laws and policies ensured that there was no legal recourse to take these issues to a higher authority. It has therefore become convenient for Fairfax County to write off effective and appropriate compensation for immediate expenditures.

As distasteful as it may seem to some, the linchpin of the Government is Public Service. This service is provided by people. It is a labor intensive sector. Fairfax County is renowned for the services it provides its citizens and visitors. This high quality of service is a direct result of the quality individuals that Fairfax County attracts and retains. If we can no longer provide adequate and competitive compensation, we will lose our greatest asset- our employees.

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