



St Helens Police  
Department  
Staffing Needs  
2022/2023

# Current Staffing Levels



- SHPD authorized staffing is **23 employees**: 20 sworn and 3 non-sworn
- A staffing study conducted in 2012 identified the **need for 26 sworn officers**. Since the study, the population of St. Helens has increased by over 2,000 residents.
- We have 2 vacant officer positions, **currently putting us at 18 sworn officers**. We are having a difficult time filing these positions.
- 3-4 SHPD **officers are considering leaving SHPD** to work at other agencies in the next few months due to the increased pay and benefits these agencies offer compared to SHPD.
- Beginning in **2023, SHPD will lose 6 officers to retirement** (over 100 years of combined law enforcement experience).

# Recruiting/ Retention Challenges



In 22 years, SHPD has lost over 35 officers to other agencies. The primary reason officers leave is low wages. In the last 30 days, our officers have been scouted by:

- ✓ Columbia County Sheriff's Office
- ✓ Washington County Sheriff's Office
- ✓ Oregon State Police
- ✓ McMinnville Police Department
- ✓ Port of Portland Police
- ✓ Hillsboro Police Department
- ✓ Longview Police Department
- ✓ Oregon City Police Department
- ✓ Clark County Washington Sheriff's Office
- ✓ Castle Rock Washington Police Department



- SHPD has experienced a **significant reduction of police applicants**. In the past, SHPD would receive over 200 applicants for an officer opening. We received only 20 applicants for our last opening. To compare, our recent posting for clerical staff received 70 applications.
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- The **anti-police sentiment and police reform are adding to the challenge** of finding qualified applicants. This increases the need to keep our current officers, as well as attract officers from agencies where the community does not support them.
- **It takes on average 52 weeks (1 year)** from the time we advertise for a vacant position until the new hire has graduated from the police academy and field training and can work independently as a full-fledged officer.
- On average, **the City spends \$120,000** to recruit and train a new officer.
- **Taxpayers have spent over \$4 million** to fill vacant police officer positions. We need to focus on retaining officers instead of replacing them to be more fiscally responsible.

# Community Safety Impact

At our current recruitment rate, the City will not be able to hire six officers from a pool of 20 applicants. It has proven difficult to find one qualified officer in a pool of 20 applicants.

SHPD will have to look at making significant changes to our service levels and how we operate if we continue to be unsuccessful in filling vacancies.



# Community Safety Impact

If we find ourselves short six or more officers, the following changes will soon follow:

- Removal of 24-hour police protection coverage (we are the only Law Enforcement Agency in Columbia County which provides 24/7 police coverage/protection).
- Removal of Detectives to fill patrol staff vacancies.
- Altering our effective patrol schedule.
- Improper supervision.
- Improper investigations/case management.
- Increased number of officers applying to different agencies for better pay and less work stress.
- Failure to train at the required state level, much less at the level of best practice.



# Current Detective Investigation Snapshot

- ✓ 8 Child Pornography Investigations
- ✓ 5 Juvenile Sexual Abuse Investigations
- ✓ 10 Physical Abuse Investigations
- ✓ 3 Adult Sexual Assault Investigations
- ✓ 2 Elder Abuse Investigations
- ✓ Attempted Murder Investigation.
- ✓ Projected 25-30 Search Warrants Being Completed in 2021.

