



AGENDA ITEM COMMENTARY

MEETING NAME:	City Council
MEETING DATE:	March 16, 2026
ITEM TITLE:	Consider and take appropriate action on request for establishment of Police Cadet position
STAFF INITIATOR:	Patrick Austin, Chief of Police

BACKGROUND:

Currently, the Wolfforth Police Department only hires sworn peace officers that are already licensed through the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE). Over approximately the last year, the Wolfforth Police Department has had a significant influx of applications from unlicensed candidates. These candidates come from the local area as well as around the state. We have found through reviews of those applications and discussions with the candidates that many of them would be suitable candidates. However, we are unable to hire those candidates because they are unlicensed.

In alignment with the Wolfforth Police Department's efforts to hire the best qualified candidates, we seek to create a Police Cadet position to employ qualified candidates from a larger pool. Hiring Police Cadets will also create more opportunities for candidates while allowing us to have training oversight of candidates at earlier stages. The creation of a Police Cadet position will allow us to remain competitive in a dynamic and evolving employment environment.

To facilitate Police Cadet training, the Wolfforth Police Department has begun working with the South Plains College (SPC) Law Enforcement Academy. Eligible candidates would be required to go through our hiring process which includes background checks, a physical fitness test, a written test, and interviews. Candidates would also be required to go through any additional enrollment requirements of SPC. Candidates that are hired would be full-time employees while attending the academy for a period of five months. As full-time employees, Police Cadets would receive the same benefits and insurance as a "Step 0" Police Officer with their pay reduced by 25%. After the completion of the academy, Police Cadets would change positions from a Police Cadet to a Police Officer at a "Step 0" pay rate. All Police Cadets would also be subject to an employment contract for a period of two years.

Hiring a Police Cadet would not be feasible in all circumstances. It would rely heavily on the timing of any vacancies in relation to the academy's schedule. In many cases we would still need to hire licensed candidates. Therefore, creating a Police Cadet position would not replace our current hiring practices, but rather it would supplement them and expand our hiring options.

While developing the Police Cadet position, the goal was to have zero impact on the budget. The approximate cost to send a Police Cadet through the SPC Law Enforcement Academy is \$5,500.00. SPC housing for Police Cadets that are not local or those with special circumstances is approximately \$1,000.00. The maximum total estimated cost to send a Police Cadet through the SPC Law Enforcement Academy is approximately \$6,500.00. The "Step 0" Police Officer 25% reduced pay rate for a Police Cadet over the five-month period they attend the academy offsets the total estimated cost of \$6,500 and facilitates the zero impact on the budget.

EXHIBITS:

COUNCIL ACTION/STAFF RECOMMENDATION: