



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 6/25/2019

File #: 19-996

To: Board of Supervisors

From: Sheriff

Agenda Section: Departmental

SUBJECT:

Emergency compensation Range Increase for Humboldt County Sheriff's Office Emergency Communication Dispatcher, Senior Dispatcher and Supervisor Positions (4/5 Vote Required)

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Approve an increase of the compensation range for Class 0128 Emergency Communications Dispatcher from range 353 to 381 effective June 30, 2019;
2. Approve an increase of the compensation range for Class 0127 Senior Emergency Communications Dispatcher from range 373 to 401 effective June 30, 2019;
3. Approve an increase of the compensation range for Class 0401 Emergency Communications Supervisor from range 406 to 425 effective June 30, 2019; and
4. Instruct Human Resources and Payroll to make the approved changes to all class and compensation tables effective June 30, 2019.

SOURCE OF FUNDING:

General Fund

DISCUSSION:

In the interest of public safety, and due to a great need by the Humboldt County Sheriff's Office (HCSO) and the community, HCSO is recommending that the Board of Supervisors (BOS) immediately increase the salary for emergency communication dispatcher and supervisor positions. Though this action is out of the ordinary, pursuant to the Humboldt County Salary Resolution, the BOS has the authority to increase a salary range for a specified job classification for emergency situations such as this.

Humboldt County Salary Resolution 79-150, SECTION 7. SPECIAL ACTIONS BY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS. Upon a four-fifths (4/5) vote, the Board of Supervisors may take any action concerning the employment and remuneration of county personnel deemed by the Board of Supervisors to be for the insurance of orderly and efficient operation of county government; and in such event such action of the Board of Supervisors shall be binding and controlling as against any inconsistent provisions of this resolution. Any salary increase given under this section shall establish a new anniversary date for such employee.

The Human Resources director was consulted about this action, and she supported using Section 7 of the Salary Resolution to obtain authority for this emergency increase. HCSO is making this request without asking for an additional General Fund request.

HCSO maintains the county's Emergency Communications Center (ECC) 24-hours a day 7-days a week. Personnel assigned to the ECC are responsible for answering all 911 calls for residents in the unincorporated areas of the county, as well as non-emergency calls for the same populace. ECC personnel dispatch deputies, community services officers, animal control officers, probation officers, district attorney investigators, deputy coroners, drug task force special agents, Yurok tribal police officers, Blue Lake tribal police, Bureau of Land Management, and the US Forest Service. The ECC is also the afterhours emergency contact for all county departments. The ECC serves all of these agencies and departments while answering hundreds of calls for service each day.

To run an efficient ECC, there should be two dispatchers on duty at all times. One dispatcher should be assigned to answer incoming 911 calls and the other to monitor, dispatch, and respond to radio communications with the field deputies. Under current staffing conditions, this is not a reality. Currently we have three fully trained full-time dispatchers and a dispatch Supervisor. Two dispatchers are currently in training, but they are months away from having the ability to work independently.

Historically the ECC has been staffed by six Emergency Communications Dispatchers, two Senior Emergency Communications Dispatchers and one Emergency Communications Dispatch Supervisor. Due to increased need for coverage, your Board approved an additional Emergency Communications Dispatcher with Measure Z funding, making the total staffing 10 full-time positions. The ECC has struggled to maintain staffing levels, and since 2013 the ECC has averaged three to four vacancies. Over the past year the number of vacancies reached five, and as of June 18, 2019 there are currently four vacancies.

Each vacant position causes additional work and stress on the current employees. Recruitment for these positions has been a top priority for the county for several years. Even with the recruitment efforts being a top priority, it is difficult to attract qualified candidates for the position and even more difficult to retain them. Frequently the ECC has been successful with recruiting a new candidate, but once the candidate realizes how short-staffed the ECC is and how much additional overtime they are required to work, they decide it's not the right fit for them.

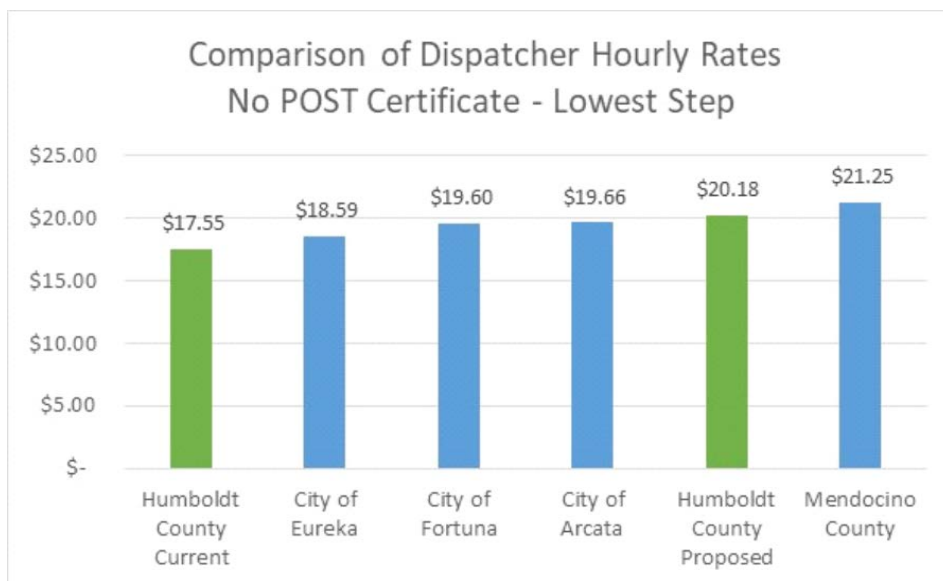
The extraordinarily difficult and stressful job of an Emergency Communications Dispatcher is compounded when having to work in an emergency environment that is short staffed. Often vacations and necessary trainings are cancelled due to the staffing crisis within the ECC. With every resignation comes the additional burden of maintaining a safe and healthy working environment for the remaining ECC staff as well as the law enforcement personnel and public they serve.

Over the past year several tenured dispatchers resigned. Exit interviews revealed that compensation was a driving factor in addition to the added stress of working overtime due to staffing shortages. Some of the employees took positions as a dispatcher at other agencies with increased pay and an environment that didn't require as much overtime. Other employees decided to leave the dispatch profession entirely. The Senior Dispatchers have expressed the same frustrations as the ones that have left and are currently looking for higher paying employment opportunities.

An ECC is a very unique profession and takes a specific skill set to be successful. There are not many people that have this skill set to thrive in this high-stress environment. The ECC is the lifeline for law enforcement personnel and the public they serve. The continued staffing crisis has the potential to create unsafe conditions for the law enforcement personnel and the public. HCSO leadership is making every effort to come up with ways to combat the staffing crisis, including staffing the ECC with Sheriff Deputies. However, pulling Sheriff Deputies from patrol is not an ideal solution. It only exacerbates the Sheriff Deputy shortage and decreases overall services to the public. However, the ECC is so critical that it must be staffed for patrol operations to continue in any capacity. The ECC crisis has reached an emergency level calling for the BOS to take immediate action to help solve.

HCSO leadership has worked with Human Resources to modify and streamline the recruitment and testing process for positions in the ECC. The BOS recently approved an incentive program for lateral transfers of dispatch personnel, which includes a \$3,000 signing bonus, \$1,000 upon completion of the 6-month dispatch training program, and an additional \$1,000 upon completion of the 1-year probationary period. While this incentive program is helpful and appreciated, HCSO leadership does not believe it will be enough to end this crisis. HCSO understands that the county has engaged Koff & Associates to complete a comprehensive classification and compensation study. Unfortunately, that study will take at least a year before the results could have a positive impact on the ECC staffing crisis.

HCSO has done a basic evaluation of hourly compensation for entry-level dispatchers at other local agencies and Mendocino county. While HCSO realizes that this comparison may not be transferable for other positions and departments within the county, it does provide a comparison for the agencies that staff have moved to after leaving HCSO. The requirements and job descriptions for an entry level dispatcher with no previous experience and no POST certification was the best comparison HCSO was able to find among the agencies. Assessing senior and supervisor positions became difficult due to varying degrees of experience, certification, and duties. All the agencies listed below provide PERS retirement. The benefit packages of each agency along with additional compensation for longevity and certificates vary making it difficult to provide 100% accurate comparisons for overall compensation. The below graph is a comparison of the hourly rate at each agency for an entry-level dispatch position as published on their agency website.



The HCSO ECC answers more calls per year than any of the other local agencies and as the graph clearly shows under “Humboldt County Current,” its personnel make less per hour (\$17.55) than any other local agency (other agencies range from \$18.59 per hour to \$21.25 per hour). HCSO believes it is in the county’s best interest to compensate its professional dispatchers at a level that reflects the work that they do.

HCSO proposes the following increases to the Emergency Communications Dispatcher position, and other positions to maintain parity among the dispatch series:

- Class 0128 Emergency Communications Dispatcher - 15% increase in compensation from range 353 to 381. This would bring the rate above the other local agencies, to a beginning hourly rate of \$20.18.
- Class 0127 Senior Emergency Communications Dispatcher - 15% increase from range 373 to 401. This would bring the hourly rate from \$19.39 to \$22.30.
- Class 0401 Emergency Communications Supervisor - 10% increase from range 406 to 425. This would bring the hourly rate from \$22.86 to \$25.13.

The below table shows the proposed change in range for all three positions. The change is recommended to take effect with the June 30, 2019 pay period, which coincides with the date that negotiated pay increases go into effect for other county employees.

Proposal 6/30/19	Salary Range 6/30/19	Class Number	Class Description	Hours	Step 1A	Step A	Step B	Step C	Step D	Step E
Current	353	0128	Emergency Comm Dispatcher	40	\$ 36,504	\$ 38,376	\$ 40,331	\$ 42,390	\$ 44,574	\$ 46,842
Proposed	381	0128	Emergency Comm Dispatcher	40	\$ 41,974	\$ 44,117	\$ 46,384	\$ 48,755	\$ 51,251	\$ 53,872
Current	373	0127	Sr. Emergency Comm Dispatcher	40	\$ 40,331	\$ 42,390	\$ 44,574	\$ 46,842	\$ 49,234	\$ 51,750
Proposed	401	0127	Sr. Emergency Comm Dispatcher	40	\$ 46,384	\$ 48,755	\$ 51,251	\$ 53,872	\$ 56,618	\$ 59,509
Current	406	0401	Emergency Comm Supervisor	40	\$ 47,549	\$ 49,982	\$ 52,541	\$ 55,224	\$ 58,053	\$ 61,027
Proposed	425	0401	Emergency Comm Supervisor	40	\$ 52,270	\$ 54,954	\$ 57,762	\$ 60,715	\$ 63,814	\$ 67,080

HCSO believes this compensation increase would dramatically increase the odds of retaining the two senior dispatchers that remain on staff, and the ability to recruit qualified and skilled dispatchers. The ultimate goal would be to eliminate the staffing crisis that has plagued the department for the last 6 years.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

The proposed increases would have a potential impact of \$79,441 for budget unit 1100221 - Sheriff Operations and \$7,839 for budget unit 1100297 - Sheriff's Measure Z as outlined below. HCSO will absorb these salary increases by reducing other operating expenses. HCSO will submit the appropriations request in accordance with county budget adjustment procedures. There will be no additional General Fund request.

Budget Unit 1100221 - Sheriff Operations							
Position	B Step 1 FTE	1A Step 1 FTE	C Step 4 Vacant	D Step 1 FTE	E Step 1 FTE	E Step 1 FTE	Total
Emergency Comm Dispatcher	\$ 6,053	\$ 5,470	\$ 25,459				\$ 36,982
Sr. Emergency Comm Dispatcher				\$ 7,384	\$ 7,758		\$ 15,142
Emergency Comm Supervisor						\$ 6,053	\$ 6,053
Total Increase of Salary	\$6,053	\$5,470	\$ 25,459	\$ 7,384	\$ 7,758	\$6,053	\$ 58,178
SUI @ 0.0026	\$ 16	\$ 14	\$ 66	\$ 19	\$ 20	\$ 16	\$ 151
PERS @ 0.27139	\$ 1,643	\$ 1,485	\$ 6,909	\$ 2,004	\$ 2,106	\$ 1,643	\$ 15,789
PARS @ 0.015	\$ 91	\$ 82	\$ 382	\$ 111	\$ 116	\$ 91	\$ 873
FICA @ (0.062+0.0145)	\$ 463	\$ 418	\$ 1,948	\$ 565	\$ 594	\$ 463	\$ 4,451
Total Increase of Salary & Benefits	\$8,265	\$7,470	\$ 34,764	\$10,083	\$10,594	\$8,265	\$ 79,441

Budget Unit 1100297 - Sheriff's Measure Z	
Position	A Step 1 FTE
Emergency Comm Dispatcher	\$ 5,741
Total Increase of Salary	\$ 5,741
SUI @ 0.0026	\$ 15
PERS @ 0.27139	\$ 1,558
PARS @ 0.015	\$ 86
FICA @ (0.062+0.0145)	\$ 439
Total Increase of Salary & Benefits	\$ 7,839

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK:

This action supports your Board's Strategic Framework by managing our resources to ensure sustainability of services and investing in county employees.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

None.

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Board could choose to decline this request and instruct HCSO to wait until the results of the Koff & Associates study are completed; however, this is not recommended as the staffing situation for the ECC is in crisis mode and immediate action is needed to help prevent unsafe conditions for law enforcement personnel and the public.

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ATTACHMENTS:

N/A

PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:

Board Order No.: N/A

Meeting of: N/A

File No.: N/A