

City Council approves addition of two probationary officers to Edwardsville Police Department

by Steven Spencer, Staff Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE - The Edwardsville City Council voted in approval Tuesday night for the addition of two probationary officers, when needed.



The addition will allow for two more officers to be added to the police department staffing when circumstances are necessary, for example if a police officer will soon be seeking retirement or resignation.

Chief Jay Keevan assured the council and the public that the addition would not change the head count of the department, from 43 to 45, but would only be needed for training during the replacement of an officer.

“Our current staffing ordinance allows for 43 sworn officers,” Chief Keevan said. “What we’re asking with this ordinance is to add another column if you will, to have up to two probationary police officers hired in anticipation of resignations and retirements.”

In some cases the time between going to field training, entering the police academy and other training can result in gap of possibly 12 months before the officer is ready to patrol the streets. The time gap could result in the department facing a staffing issue.

“It’s not like a two-week transition, this is a long transition,” Chief Keevan said. “So we don’t always have a lot of notice but sometimes we do. In those cases, what we would like to do is allow for the hiring of two probationary police officers. It would increase staff at the time up to 45 sworn but our true head count would be 43.”

One of the concerns is the amount of overtime that would be required officers if the department would be understaffed. Mayor Hal Patton and Chief Keevan said the hiring of the probationary officers would be more cost effective than overtime.

Mayor Patton also addressed the affects on morale that can come with the requirements of overtime, especially when working a job as intense, strenuous and demanding as a police officer.

“We run into officers having to back fill,” Mayor Patton said. “The cost of overtime is hitting us a little bit. As well as a morale issue. It’s a very tough job. A lot of different factors at play here. But, we feel comfortable having these two positions being considered probationary.”