

Questions & Answers

about Contract Negotiations between Placer County and the Deputy Sheriffs' Association

September 2020

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Background

Is the Board of Supervisors trying to defund police?

No, public safety is one of the Board of Supervisor's top priorities.

The Board has annually demonstrated its support for law enforcement by increasing the amount of discretionary funding for the Sheriff's Office each year, including Fiscal Year 2020-21. Public Safety is the only county function that has experienced a material increase in countywide spending per capita over the last forty years.

What is the "Deputy Sheriffs' Association" and who do they represent?

The Deputy Sheriffs' Association (DSA) is the public employee union that represents the more than 250 sworn law enforcement officers employed by the offices of the Placer County Sheriff and District Attorney, including Deputy Sheriffs II and Sheriff Sergeants.

What are Placer County law enforcement officers paid?

The average total cost for a Placer County Deputy Sheriff II is more than \$200,000. The average total cost for a Placer County Sheriff's Sergeant is more than \$250,000.

How does the pay for Placer County deputies compare to that of other communities?

Placer County's total compensation of deputies is 18% higher than that of surrounding counties, and 17% higher than local cities like Auburn, Roseville, Rocklin, and Folsom. These numbers do not include the value of Placer County's fully funded retiree health program, which is a top-tier benefit compared to that of other agencies.

When considering salaries only, Placer County is 6% below the labor market. This low wage does not reflect the attractiveness of the rest of Placer County's generous compensation package and creates an obstacle to recruiting top-tier law enforcement professionals. The County's plan realigns the deputies' compensation structure to be more competitive in the market, while ensuring escalating costs do not inflate to an unsustainable level.

See page 4 for a breakdown of the County's offer.

Does the County want to cut pay for deputies?

The County is not proposing pay cuts for deputies. The County's offer is designed to keep paychecks whole, except for a 2% pre-tax contribution to retirement costs funded by the 5% increase deputies received in February 2020.

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Why does the County want to make changes now?

In addition to public safety, the Board of Supervisors makes prudent financial planning a top priority. To consider the future taxpayers of Placer County, the Board makes several financial decisions related to remaining fiscally sustainable. Such decisions include adequately funding a rainy-day fund or fully funding retiree health benefits, including our public safety retirees.

The continued growth of compensation costs in the Sheriff's Office is escalating more rapidly than county revenues. The County wants to prevent future costs from escalating to an unsustainable level.

Over the last twenty years, growth in deputy sheriff base salaries alone have outpaced the Consumer Price Index (CPI)¹ by over 30%, in addition to soaring pension costs.

Since March 2018, the County has explored options with the Deputy Sheriffs' Association to address these concerns.

The Board of Supervisors is fully committed to supporting the efforts of the Sheriff's Office to keeping our community safe - balanced with fiscal responsibility to future generations of Placer County residents.

¹CPI is the measure of the average change over time in the prices paid by urban consumers for a market basket of consumer goods and services.

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Ongoing Negotiations, Offer Details

What is the County offering to the union (DSA)?

The primary financial elements of the County's offer include:

- Employees will contribute an additional 2% of pay to their retirement benefits, funded by the 5.15% salary increase deputy sheriffs received in February 2020.
- Salaries will increase by 7%. Special pays for Peace Officer Standards and Training certificates will decrease by 7%. (See information about "special pays" below.)
- Other special pays that are currently a percentage of pay will be converted to a unique equivalent flat amount per incentive. Increases can be negotiated. (See information about "special pays" below.)
- The County will pay 80% of the health insurance premium plan most-selected by union members. Currently, the County pays 80% of any plan selected.
- Employees earning \$875 per month for working in Tahoe must have a residence within fifty driving miles of the station. Currently, employees stationed in Tahoe receiving this stipend do not have any residency requirement. This change would only apply to employees newly assigned to Tahoe.

Will the County's offer make recruitment and retention of deputies more difficult?

No, the higher salaries proposed in the County's offer will be more attractive to potential candidates. That, in addition to the County's top-end compensation package, generous retiree health program, and unparalleled quality of life, will allow Placer County to continue to attract and retain the best talent available in the law enforcement community.

How is "special pay" different from "base pay"?

The County offers pay, or incentives, for a variety of assignments, training, certificates, etc. in addition to a deputy's base pay. Examples include education incentive, special teams pay, detective premium, night shift differential, bilingual pay, and longevity pay.

Will the County offer cut "graveyard" pay in half? How about other special pays?

No, the intent of the County's offer is for employees to receive at least their current amount earned for special pays like night shift, or "graveyard," pay. Some union members would even experience an increase in these special pays.

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For example, union members currently assigned to the Investigations Division are paid a 5% detective premium. Although 28 of the 34 detectives are Deputy Sheriff IIs, the County is offering to set the flat incentive amount for detective premium at \$464 per month, which is equivalent to 5% of the higher Sheriff's Sergeant base pay (\$9,270 base monthly pay x 5% = \$464.) For those 28 Deputy Sheriffs working as detectives, the result is an additional \$75 per month.

Will the County's offer result in slower response times when I need help?

No, the budget of the Sheriff's Office is fully funded, and there are no proposed changes to the number of law enforcement personnel available to serve the community.

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Current Status of Negotiations

Is the County refusing to negotiate with the union (DSA)?

The County has engaged with the union in two rounds of good faith negotiations, most recently for more than fifteen months over ten meetings. Both parties have submitted, modified, and withdrawn proposals in an effort to reach agreement.

The County's most recent offer to the union included increases to four different compensation elements at the request of the union. These elements include Special Teams Pay, Stand-By Pay, Canine Pay, and Overtime Pay for court appearances.

The County will continue to abide by the rules of collective bargaining and looks forward to continued coordination with the union to resolve the impasse. The next step is for both parties to meet in mediation.

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Measure F

Doesn't Measure F determine pay for deputies?

Measure F, approved by Placer County voters in 1976, established that the minimum salary for various law enforcement positions will be equal to an average of salaries for comparable positions in the counties of El Dorado, Nevada, and Sacramento. The voters have also given the Board of Supervisors the authority to negotiate higher salaries, which is the case in the County's current proposed offer.

What is the effect of Measure F on the union's request to keep the status quo?

Over the last twenty years, Measure F has resulted in deputies receiving an average increase of nearly 4% every year, which has far exceeded CPI. When combined with special pays that are 45% above the market average and employee retirement contributions far below market average, total compensation costs for the union are unsustainable.

Why doesn't the County just cut other employee salaries instead?

Salaries for other employees are not subject to Measure F. The Board has approved wage increases for other employees that are in line with CPI. Additionally, other employees have negotiated to pay their full share of retirement contributions and are not eligible for all the special pays that apply to members of the deputies' union. As such, concerns about unsustainable cost escalation do not apply to other employees.

What counties does Placer County compare to when evaluating compensation?

Measure F specifies that Placer County will compare law enforcement salaries to those in the counties of El Dorado, Nevada, and Sacramento. Additionally, when evaluating the labor market, Placer County surveys several other counties with equivalent or higher costs of living, as well as cities in our region.

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Retirement Benefits, Health Insurance and Contributions

Why is the County asking for deputies to pay more for retirement benefits?

A survey of surrounding cities and counties shows that the minimum percentage of pay law enforcement employees contribute to their pension benefits is 9%. The minimum amount Placer County deputies contribute is 5%.

Will the County continue its current contribution toward retirement benefits?

Pensions will continue to be the most significant benefit cost for the County. For employees currently contributing 5%, the County contributes over 47% of pay. If unchanged, that percentage is projected to grow to over 53% within four years. An additional 2% contribution from employees will only partially defray the anticipated escalation in County costs.

Is the County only offering one insurance plan?

The County offers a total of eleven health insurance plan options to union members. There is no proposed change to the number of plans available and any employee is able to select the health insurance plan that they feel meets their individual and family needs.

What is the County offering to contribute towards health insurance?

Currently, the County pays 80% of the cost of ten different plan premiums. In its offer, the County proposes to limit its contribution to 80% of the current most widely-used plan by union members, which is Kaiser Permanente.

The County recognizes that not all plans are available in all locations, which is one reason the County pays an additional \$875 per month to union employees assigned to work in Tahoe. In further recognition of Tahoe employees, the County has offered to contribute 80% of the most widely-used plan selected by employees assigned to work in that area, which is currently the Police Officers Research Association of California (PORAC) Anthem Blue Cross plan.

What is the impact to deputies of the proposed health insurance contribution?

If no employees made changes to their plan selections, 58% would experience no change in cost under the County's proposal. For others, the impact would be modest because 70% of the plans currently selected by union members have premium costs within 15% of the most popular plan in their area.

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Retirees

Is the County trying to limit the health insurance options for retirees?

No, retirees can choose their health plan at Open Enrollment each year and will continue to have access to all the plan options.

Retirees receive up to the same County contribution toward their health insurance costs that active employees receive. If the deputies' union negotiates a different contribution from the County, retirees will also receive contributions based on what is negotiated.