THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE

Staff Report

Council Meeting Date: April 12, 2022

Subject: Wellness Coordinator Position

Staff Resource(s): Chief David Zack, Captain Janice Hawkins

Action Requested: Adoption of a resolution authorizing the City Manager to apply for and, if awarded, accept an award on behalf of the police department, of grant funding from the Office of Community Oriented Police Services (COPS), U.S. Dept. of Justice (DOJ) Law Enforcement and Mental Health and Wellness Act (LEMHWA) in the amount of up to $175,000 to fund a wellness coordinator position within the department.

Background:

- In March of 2015, The President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing identified and confirmed in Pillar Six that Officer Wellness and Safety was an identified area of concern and should be addressed.
- It stated, “a large proportion of officers' injuries and deaths are not a result of interaction with criminal offenders but the outcome of poor physical health due to poor nutrition, lack of exercise and lack of sleep and substance abuse”.
- Also stated, “An officer whose capabilities, judgment, and behavior are adversely affected by poor physical or psychological health may not only be of little use to the community he or she serves but also a danger to it and to other officers”.
- In June of 2021, the wellness committee within the police department reported a recommendation to create and maintain a wellness program managed by a Wellness Coordinator to address identified physical fitness and nutrition issues along with coordination of current mental health services in the Asheville Police Department.
- To create and maintain a successful employee wellness program for police employees there must be a continuum of mental health and wellness strategies beginning at the hiring process and continuing through retirement.
- The Asheville Police Department, along with the Asheville Fire Department and Human Resources, currently contracts with Responder Services.
- Responder Services provides resilience training and provides support to include mental health services when recognized and appropriate.
- A new Wellness Coordinator will provide the missing piece of physical wellness, fitness, nutrition, coordinated training on mental health, peer support and suicide prevention that is currently missing in the Asheville Police Department.
- A new Wellness Coordinator will increase awareness of effective mental health and wellness strategies, peer support, family resources, suicide prevention, and other promising practices for wellness programs by coordinating regular training/rollcalls with Responder Services and other available City resources.
- The new Wellness Coordinator will enhance officers' performance and reduce occupational injury; design and implement comprehensive exercise programs for employees following a health and fitness assessment; educate and provide counseling to maintain or improve employees’ physical performance and health; interpret health results for employees and counsel employees regarding their individual health risks; lead exercise sessions, and coordinate mandated and non-mandated training and development of training programs to support credentialing requirements.
- Physically fit and mentally well officers are able to:
    - demonstrate better de-escalation skills,
    - have lower rates of worker’s compensation claims,
    - build community relations more effectively,
    - have lower suicide rates,
    - have better decision-making skills and,
    - exhibit more positive behaviors.

Vendor Outreach Efforts:

- This position will be advertised and filled using the hiring process established and currently employed by the City of Asheville Human Resources department.

Council Goal(s):

- Connected & Engaged Community

Committee(s):

- None - The short window for grant applications does not allow time for formal committee review.

Pro(s):

- Physically and mentally fit officers, as indicated above, are able to:
  - demonstrate better de-escalation skills,
  - have lower rates of worker's compensation claims,
  - build community relations more effectively,
  - have lower suicide rates,
  - have better decision-making skills and,
  - exhibit more positive behaviors.
- A successful employee total wellness program for police employees must include a continuum of physical wellness strategies beginning at the hiring process and continuing through retirement.

Con(s):

- To maintain the position after the grant funding is exhausted the department will need to fund the position in future fiscal years.

Fiscal Impact:

- Funding for supplies, equipment, and training will be requested in the grant application.
- To maintain the position after the grant funding is exhausted the department will need to fund the position in future fiscal years.

Suggested Motion:

- Motion to authorize the City Manager to apply for and, if awarded, accept an award on behalf of the police department, of grant funding from the Office of Community Oriented Police Services (COPS), U.S. Dept. of Justice (DOJ) Law Enforcement and Mental Health and Wellness Act (LEMHWA) in the amount of up to $175,000 to fund a wellness coordinator position and associated expenses within the department.

Attachment(s):

- Resolution

RESOLUTION NO. 22-____

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO APPLY FOR, ACCEPT AND SIGN ALL NECESSARY DOCUMENTS IF AWARDED, A GRANT FOR THE OFFICE OF COMMUNITY ORIENTED SERVICES, U.S. DEPT. OF JUSTICE LAW ENFORCEMENT AND MENTAL HEALTH & WELLNESS ACT TO FUND A WELLNESS COORDINATOR POSITION WITHIN THE POLICE DEPARTMENT

WHEREAS, N.C. Gen. Stat. § 160A-17.1 authorizes the City to make contracts for and to accept grants-in-aid and loans from the federal and State governments and their agencies for performing any function the City may be authorized to perform.

WHEREAS, the Asheville Police Department ("APD") continues to have 60 vacancies out of 238 sworn officer positions; and

WHEREAS, the APD intends to provide enhanced, complete, and consistent total wellness care for its employees; and

WHEREAS, physically and mentally well officers demonstrate better de-escalation skills, have lower rates of worker's compensation claims, have lower suicide rates, exhibit more positive behaviors; and

WHEREAS, officer wellness and safety is identified as Pillar Six in The President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing; and

WHEREAS, there is a grant opportunity to fund a Wellness Coordinator for the APD;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE THAT:

The City Manager is hereby authorized to apply for the Office of Community Oriented Police Services (COPS), U.S. Dept. of Justice (DOJ) Law Enforcement and Mental Health and Wellness Act (LEMHWA) grant, and further authorized to accept an award, on behalf of the police department, in the amount of up to $175,000 to fund a wellness coordinator position within the department.

Read, approved and adopted this the 12th day of April, 2022.

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City Clerk Mayor

Approved as to form:

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City Attorney