

Evansville seeking extra officer through stimulus

By GINA DUWE

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EVANSVILLE ô The Evansville Police Department is hoping to add a full-time officer using federal stimulus money.

More calls for service have created the need for another officer, but more staff won't fit in the city budget, Chief Scott McElroy said.

That's why it would be ideal to win a grant through the COPS Hiring Recovery Program, which will receive the funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, he said.

"This is a no-brainer," he said. "If we're fortunate to get it, great."

The city council approved the grant application during a special meeting Thursday night.

The \$215,000 grant would cover the salary and benefits of a new officer for three years. In the fourth and subsequent years, the city would have to pay for the officer using other financial resources.

The program does not cover some expenses, such as clothing and body armor.

"Those are some expenses that we would incur that are not in the budget," McElroy said. "If we get this officer, it will most likely decrease our part-time hours significantly, so we do have the funds to make up for items not covered."

The department now has nine full-time officers.

Calls for service increased 16 percent from 2007 to 2008, McElroy said. Last year, the department had 10,503 calls for serviceô up from 6,635 in 2002.

License plate renewals also increased 20 percent last year over 2007, and vehicle inspections increased 49 percent.

"We're getting busier all the time, and staff stays real busy as it is, so we are ready now to add, but we just couldn't afford it," McElroy said.

In 2008, Evansville ranked fourth in the county in calls for service behind Janesville, the sheriff's office and the city of Beloit.

Applications for the grants are due next week, and McElroy anticipates finding out if the city is a recipient in June or July. An officer would be hired and start soon after.

"It's my understanding this is a fast-track grant if there is such a thing," he said.

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