RECRUITS: 'Expectations of who we hire are going up'

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which means they should be ready to hit the streets on patrol around November. It is hoped that another officer will attend the April academy.

For most police departments, hiring laterally from other departments is always preferred to recruiting someone new. The reason is simple: time. An officer coming from another department has already graduated from the Oregon Department of Public Safety Standards and Training (police academy) and is certified by that agency, or comparable one in another state, to hit the ground running after a brief stint with a department training officer. When a department recruits someone off the street, it can take up to a year or more from the time they turn in their application to being handed the keys for solo duty in a patrol car.

The first position KPD opened for hiring in November 2017 was for a lateral officer to work in the department's traffic unit. Not a single application was received. When the department opened up recruitment for a lateral detective the results were almost the same. The one prime candidate was someone Kuhns and Teague courted specifically for the job, but other obligations got in the way.

One of the barriers for Keizer, specifically from a human resources standpoint, is that the department is not seen as comparable to areas like Salem, Eugene, Albany or Portland. Even Albany is able to make use of hiring resources with better yield rates than Keizer.

During a recent recruitment push, Albany had more than 200 applicants, Keizer opened up recruiting for four positions and got only 36 applications.

Of those 36, only nine passed background, physical and psychological screenings.

"It's not because they are bad people, they just didn't fit what we need," Teague said. "I don't know why fewer people are interested, but our expectations of who we hire are going up. The pool (of applicants) is being worked at from both ends."

Teague added that it is a prime time for those looking to start in law enforcement.

"When Jeff and I were hired it was an us vs. them and my mentality was there was somebody doing something wrong and it was my job to find them and give them a citation or put them in jail," he said. "These days it is about public safety and making people's lives better. For an officer to start now, they will be on the leading edge of those changes."

In addition to the four reserve officers heading to the academy this month, the department is hoping to send another officer – one paid for by the services fee – in April. That is a monumental sea change within KPD. The department will still be short one officer due to a recent retirement.

"I can't remember the last time we sent four officers to the academy together. I can't remember the last time we sent two at a time," Kuhns said.

While the situation worked out well for the department as far as hiring from within their own ranks in the Reserve Officer program, that same program is now down to one officer. In addition, there are approximately a half-dozen current officers at KPD contemplating retirement. That is the hallmark of another major change.

"We're getting to be like other agencies where we are recruiting all the time," Kuhns said.

Drawing on new recruits will mean major reshuffling of the current KPD roster at some point in the next year. The new officers will start on patrol, while current officers will have the opportunity to apply for roles within the Community Response Unit (CRU), detective squad, traffic unit, and night shift. To make-up for the unexpected slow-down in hiring, KPD has reassigned a member of it's CRU to the traffic patrol.

"We understand that people want traffic worked and I've been reassured by Sgt. (Bob) Trump that there hasn't been any negative impact," Teague said. Trump oversees the CRU team.

Two sought in armed robbery

Keizer police officers are looking for two individuals in connection with an armed robbery at Cooper's Deli on Friday, March 9.

About 2:26 a.m., two male suspects entered the shop, located at 5408 River Road North, armed with a handgun and demanding cash. The men obtained an undisclosed amount of cash and cigarettes and fled the scene before police could arrive.

The first suspect was described as a white male, 20-30 years old, medium to heavy build and wearing a gray coat with dark sleeves, dark pants and a gray bandana over his face. He carried a silver handgun during the robbery. The second suspect was described as a white male, about 20 years old and weighing about 150 pounds. He wore a gray jacket with a hood, blue jeans, a gray cloth coving his mouth, gloves and white shoes with red laces. Anyone with information should contact Det. Tim Lathrop at 503-856-3481.





Two men, one armed with a handgun, robbed Cooper's Deli on Friday, March 9.



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