

Scotts Valley gets funds to beef up police department

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SCOTTS VALLEY — A healthy \$2.3 million budget with enough spare revenue to hire a new police officer and maintain Siltanen Park was unveiled Wednesday night before the Scotts Valley City Council.

But while city coffers are fuller this year due to revenues from industrial and commercial growth, the city also has more need for services, particularly police services, according to budget documents.

City Administrator Bob Rockett gave his preliminary budget package to council members, who set Tuesday for the first study session.

Study sessions will be from 4 to 6 p.m. and from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m.

The \$2.3 million represents estimated revenue for operations the city expects to receive from the general fund, the gas tax, revenue sharing and other fees.

The city anticipates getting another \$512,000 through fees to operate the sewer system.

If all revenue from all sources — such as government grants for mandated programs — were included, the annual budget would be closer to \$5 to 6 million, according to finance director Joyce Bray.

Rockett said he thinks the city will take in less revenue from construction permits this year because he anticipates less commercial and industrial growth and more residential development.

Rockett recommends adding a patrol officer, a new vehicle, an additional dispatcher and new communication equipment and weapons to the Scotts Valley Police Department for fiscal year 1984-85.

If approved, the additional staff and equipment would increase the police department's budget from \$812,514 to \$987,405.

His report includes almost \$50,000 to hire "half a man" — that is, a half-time

year-round employee — to maintain Siltanen Park "for the first time in the history of Scotts Valley."

Last year, members of the volunteer Parks and Recreation Committee resigned when the City Council majority opted not to put any money into the beleaguered park. (A new committee has since been organized.)

Rockett has also recommended funds to repave city roads.

He has recommended additional staff in the following departments:

- POLICE: one patrol officer and one dispatcher

- COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: One full-time, temporary (six months) employee to help Community Development Director Yuchuek Hsia work on the new General Plan.

- PUBLIC WORKS/ENGINEERING: One entry-level engineering aid

- PUBLIC WORKS/ROAD DEPARTMENT: One half-time permanent parks maintenance worker

Rockett's recommendation is midway between what Chief Gerald Pittenger wanted — a \$1.07 million appropriation for four new employees, new equipment and capital outlays — and retaining the status quo.

The need for increased police services has been a major campaign issue with candidates on both sides of the growth question in the June 5 council election.

The city will be getting more money this year because of an increase in revenues from property tax, sales tax, business licensing fees and a utility's users tax.

This is largely due to the spurt in industrial growth which began four years ago, Rockett said.

However, this growth is not without its costs. Pittenger notes in his budget request that growth has put pressure on the city's police services.

"Service demands have increased significantly over the past few years, primarily because of the increase in industrial

and commercial growth," Pittenger wrote. "Specifically, we have had a substantial workload increase in traffic enforcement created by the extra work force."

The city's current population of 7,000 has grown by an additional 3,000-person work force, most of whom do not live in the city, Pittenger wrote. As a result, "a minority of the work force have increased the workload of the police department in narcotics activity."

The police department makes up almost

one-half of the city's total operating budget. The force has a staff of 17 and eight vehicles.

The police department has not added any personnel since 1978. Since that time, Pittenger noted, there has been a 62 percent increase in traffic accidents, a 23 percent increase in arrests made, a 37 percent increase in calls to the department for service and 65 percent increase in calls requiring investigative reports.

Furthermore, in just the first quarter of 1984 compared to the last quarter of 1983,

there's been a 146 percent increase in the numbers of times officers responded late for service due to officers being tied up with other calls, according to Pittenger.

Most of the departments are receiving more money this year, if for nothing else than the 5 percent inflation factor which has been worked into the budget planning.

Legal costs, for example, are up from \$26,890 to \$45,390. Extra costs were incurred last year by the city attorney due to an increase in claims and lawsuits the city was involved in, said Rockett.

The Legislative Department, on the other hand, will be getting \$28,000, some \$7,000 less because the city has negotiated a better benefits plan for City Council members.

Rockett's revenue estimates are based on the city's retaining the controversial 3 percent utilities tax initiated last year. The tax is expected to bring in some \$216,000 this year.

That tax could be declared void if the so-called "Jarvis 3" initiative passes in November.

REFERENCE