

September 14, 2024

Dear Mayor Hopkins,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit my 2025 Police Department Budget. As always, thoughtful stewardship of the City's funds is the mandate by which I measure these annual budget requests. I have attempted to keep the 2025 budget to no more than a 10% increase over 2024, which is almost exclusively to put officer salaries in near-parody with the Fircrest Police Department¹.

The intent of this letter to provide explanation and context for my proposal. Let me first explain my priorities for 2025 and beyond:

Maintain a high quality of life for our residents, a positive environment for our businesses, and a pleasant experience for our visitors

1) Attract and Retain Good Police Officers

Objectives

- 1.1 Provide effective and wise leadership to foster a good working environment
- 1.2 Seek competitive wages for officers
- 1.3 Provide the right tools for which to carry out their duties
- 1.4 Support ongoing training for professional development

2) Build Trust and Individual Relationships with our Community

Objectives

- 2.1 Vigorous application of criminal interdiction activities and effective criminal investigations
- 2.2 Outreach and Interaction with our public at every opportunity

3) Professionalize the Police Department

Objectives

- 3.1 Continue project to become a nationally-accredited law enforcement agency
- 3.2 Build partnerships with law enforcement allies in our area

4) Seek Programs to Promote Public Safety and Support Innovation

Objectives

- 4.1 Implement and manage a traffic enforcement camera program in the City of Ruston
- 4.2 Modernize equipment and support other programs to benefit the City's overall effectiveness to deliver services

Salary Increases (lines 18, 35, 37)

The Fircrest Police top-step salary is 10.64% greater than that of the Ruston Police; they also include a \$10,000 bonus for laterals hires and retention. An increase of 4% (COLA) and 6.1% (retention/near pay-parody) increase is requested.

¹ Fircrest PD has attracted more Ruston officers to lateral to their agency than any other in our area and currently offer a \$10,000 signing bonus to fill 2 current vacancies.

A request is included ensure the lieutenant salary position does not fall behind that of top step officer. A 4% COLA and a 6% retention increase is a requested.

The police chief's current base pay is much less than that of the current Fircrest police chief, WSP sergeant with similar years of service, and considerably much less than the Pierce County Sheriff contract chiefs to University Place, Edgewood, Eatonville, Pierce Transit, et al. Unlike all the chiefs in Pierce County (except Roy), the Ruston chief carries out all important projects and critical department management without civilian staff members.

Since starting in 2018, the police chief's overall salary is an accumulative total of base pay, and an agreed-upon buy-out of two standing employee benefits: Employee medical coverage and the City's contribution to the LEOFF2 retirement plan. A 4% COLA and 6% increase in base pay (not buyouts) is requested in an attempt to maintain the pay ratio between the police chief and that of the lieutenant/top step police officers. While this increase still results in a base pay below all other chiefs, it demonstrates an economic commitment to keep the overall requested annual budget increase to around 10%.

Budget Reductions

Lines 21, 22	Reduced by \$1500
Line 24	Reduced by \$500
Line 30	Reduced by \$5000
Line 43	Reduced by \$1500
Line 47	Reduced by \$1700
Line 50	Reduced by \$9000
Line 53	Reduced by \$2000
Line 64	Reduced by \$2500

Miscellaneous Changes

Line 63	Funds moved to Line 86 (Police Body Cameras) and slightly increased to match anticipated cost of contract in 2025.
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Respectfully Always,

Nestor Bautista