

Sheriff's office facing critical staffing shortages

By Nick Baptista / The Valley Springs News / August 11, 2023

Public safety is reaching a critical level in Calaveras County, Sheriff Rick DiBasilio warned the Board of Supervisors at their meeting on Tuesday.

"We have a staffing problem," the sheriff told the board. "We're losing people like there's no tomorrow."

And according to the sheriff, "It's all about pay."

Because neighboring counties are offering higher pay, the sheriff said his office is seeing a net loss in personnel.

"In 2023 we've hired nine people, and with retirements, and people quitting, we have lost 11 people."

In the next few weeks, the office is losing three corporals and a sergeant. The loss of institutional knowledge and money it takes to hire new people is of great concern and may entail a reduction in services, he told the board.

Morale is high in the office, but everyone knows they can go elsewhere and get higher pay, he said.

The office has been running nine to 11 deputies short "for a long, long time," he said, and the dispatch center is at a critical level with only seven dispatchers although it should be a dozen.

"You guys aren't fighting with the unions, you are fighting with the other counties, and the other municipalities that are paying these people more money," the sheriff said. "Tuolumne County did a 20 percent pay bump in one shot. Our folks got 17 percent over five years. We are still behind Tuolumne County. We are way behind Amador County, and we are behind everybody who we are associated with in the bargaining units."

He said the board should shift its recent focus about adding more parks and recreational opportunities in the county toward addressing this public safety issue. Placing a park in Rail Road Flat will require more deputies to deal with associated homelessness and drug issues, he added.

"I am asking you to redirect your focus back to public safety, where it needs to be," DiBasilio said. "We need to keep our constituents safe, and I can't do that if I don't have the staff, we are going in a vicious circle."

The sheriff's comments were made during staff announcements and since the matter was not on the agenda, no action was taken by the board.