

SLTPD Chief Daniels leaving

By Kathryn Reed

Embattled South Lake Tahoe Police Chief Terry Daniels is calling it quits after more than 27 years in law enforcement.

As part of a reorganization plan that will be before the City Council on Tuesday, a number of jobs are likely to go by the wayside. This doesn't mean there won't be a police chief or building inspector (Ron Ticknor may be retiring as well), but having people on the higher end of the pay scale retire will save money.



Terry Daniels

"Early retirement is being offered to the chief and to some line people," City Manager Dave Jinkens told *Lake Tahoe News* on Friday night. "We are not trying to get rid of people."

But the city is trying to eliminate positions in an attempt to save about \$1 million a year.

Furlough days are still going to be part of the mix even with the retirements. It's expected city workers will have to take four in December and then two days each month through September – the end of the fiscal year.

Most employees are also feeling a 9.23 percent cut in pay in 2009-10.

In addition to the restructuring of city government, the budget is also on the Nov. 17 agenda. The fiscal year began

Oct. 1, therefore the city has been operating without a final budget.

Other people expected to leave the police department are officers Chuck Owens, who has been with the department for more than 20 years, has had stints on the FBI and local narcotics task force; and Scott Willson, who is currently the school resource officer at South Tahoe High School.

It is up to each employee if he wants to accept the golden handshake. They have 90 days to make up their minds.

Retirements in the fire department and public works are also expected.

"Our goal was the equivalent of five people," Jinkens said. "It could be more."

Getting to this point

The city has been working with its various labor groups to rework the contracts to allow for furlough days and the reduction in staff. Those memorandums of understanding will be before the council on Tuesday.

The police officers association has been holding out, not wanting to compromise because of the dissatisfaction with Daniels as well as Jinkens.

An email that was sent by the association's labor consultant, David Swim, to Jinkens Nov. 13 says in part, "In response to your letter, the Association feels as though our proposal of having three frozen positions and potential retirees will clearly meet your initial budget objective. We are concerned and disappointed that our suggestion for cost savings was not considered. We provided what we viewed a viable alternative to address the city's financial deficit and in doing so avoided any additional job losses, furloughs or other negative impact. Since the department has been functioning for the prior 6-7

months down three sworn positions we felt by keeping those same three positions frozen, in conjunction with some scheduling adjustments and the addition of an officer who had been absent for almost three years, we could actually offer better service to the residents of the city.”

Jinkens response to Swim was, “Actually, your proposals for cost savings have been considered and this consideration is reflected in the proposed budget. I previously communicated this fact in a lengthy memo this a.m. though in more general terms. The cost containment measures do not require MOU amendments though impacts may need discussion, but the value of the conversation has resulted in the needed cost reductions for this fiscal year based on our budget assumptions.

“In summary, the cost reductions will come from projected early retirements including the retirement of the Chief of Police, backfilling of the Chief position with an interim appointment until a permanent vacancy is filled and then a likely management reorganization and reduction of one upper command staff, freezing of anticipated vacant CSO position and leaving unfilled one sworn officer position.

“What the future holds in regard to the City’s ability to pay will depend on the economy and require additional discussions with you and Association members in the future.”

Terry Daniels

Daniels, 52, has spent the bulk of his career with the local force. He started in January 1983 after working as a deputy for a year with the El Dorado County Sheriff’s Department.

He became a sergeant in 1991 and not long after added another stripe to become a lieutenant.

Daniels became the eighth chief of police in July 2006. He had worked for four of those chiefs.

Prior to taking the helm of the department, the chief, who was unavailable for comment, was involved in a slew of interesting cases.

He was on the force in 1989 when then Mayor Terry Trupp was arrested on a variety of federal crimes – mostly drug related in what the FBI called Operation Deep Snow. Trupp recently died after serving a number of years behind bars.

Daniels was the supervising officer in 2001 the day 9-year-old Rebecca Aramburo was found with her throat slashed at Campground by the Lake. Her mother is in prison for that crime, while her mother's boyfriend committed suicide in jail.

He has also been involved in controversial officer involved shootings.

Daniels is highly regarded in K9 circles for his command with his German shepherds through the years.

In August he was part of the parade of thousands who celebrated the release of Jaycee Lee Dugard who had been kidnapped from a Meyers bus stop 18 years earlier.

It has been the last three years that have caused Daniels the most strife. He vigilantly fought to have Officer Johnny Poland fired and kept off the force for an incident at the high school in 2006. Last month a judge ruled Poland should be given his badge back.

Earlier this year Daniels did little to discipline his friend Sgt. Jeff Regan. Regan had been arrested on a DUI charge – this coming after he had a prior arrest, though no conviction, stemming from allegedly hitting his wife.

A scathing grand jury report in 2008 left more questions unanswered – about his leadership and the morale within the department.

In his three-plus years, Daniels was able to increase staffing

to a level officers are no longer complaining about. He also has been an active member of the Youth Task Force, through which he got the Police Activities League going again.