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EDITORIALS

On the E. Palo Alto beat

SAN MATEO County Sheriff Brendan Maguire is a man with a clear sense of duty and a commitment to the job of law enforcement.

Faced with a threat by officials of newly incorporated East Palo Alto to refuse to pay a bill for police services, Maguire could have responded with a threat of his own to pull sheriff's deputies out of the town. Since the California Highway Patrol has already pulled officers off East Palo Alto streets, a similar move by the sheriff would have left the community without protection against crime.

Instead, Maguire said law enforcement by his department would continue in East Palo Alto with or without agreement on the contract for fiscal 1984-85. "I am the chief law enforcement agent of the county and my (only) option is to provide law enforcement," he said.

Whether or not Maguire's attitude provided the impetus, it appears that there will be an agreement on police services. East Palo Alto Mayor Barbara Mouton said, "I think Sheriff Maguire is

a very reasonable person. He understands that a municipality has the right to insist on, since it's paying the bill, what it feels is best."

The proposed \$1.8 million contract between East Palo Alto and the county actually includes all county services, such as building inspection, public works and planning. The bulk of the money, though, would go for law enforcement. The contract calls for 15 deputies, four sergeants, five detectives, a secretary and a substation commander.

What it doesn't mention is the use of dogs, and dogs are a sticking point in the contract discussion. East Palo Alto officials don't want them used on patrol in their community; Maguire thinks they're needed for a more efficient operation. There are also complaints from East Palo Alto residents about slow response time by deputies.

Those are hardly insurmountable problems, however, and given the reasonable attitude both sides have displayed more recently, it appears a settlement is likely soon on the law enforcement question.