

E. Palo Alto funds cop position

By Suzanne Zalev
STAFF WRITER

EAST PALO ALTO — Nobody ever said law enforcement was inexpensive.

To avoid a decrease in police services next week, the City Council allocated an extra \$130,000 when it approved the city's 2002-03 budget on Tuesday. That amount, Police Chief Wesley Bowling said, pays for one detective on contract from the County Sheriff's Office.

The city contracts with the County for some of its law enforcement services, but there is some "confusion" between the city and the County over the length of the contract, acting City Manager Sandy Salerno said. The city's records show the contract was signed for three years and would expire next year, but the County has records of a two-year contract expiring on Monday.

"We're in the process of

trying to figure that out," she said. "We're not clear how that all happened."

Mayor Duane Bay said he wanted to make sure that, when the budget was approved, he wasn't agreeing to reduced services. However, the spending plan the council adopted estimates an ending balance of only \$79,000, and the city can't have a negative balance in the budget, he said.

The city will make up the difference by reducing the amount of a transfer from the general fund to an insurance reserve fund by \$130,000, giving that fund an extra \$120,000 instead of \$250,000. Salerno said that if the city and the County reach a solution, or if extra money can be found elsewhere in the budget, the council can change that later.

Bowling said the cost of a detective includes not only the salary, but also the benefits

and expenses such as the police car.

The budget, as approved, will come back for revisions in September regardless. The state has yet to approve its budget, and Salerno said there may be extra costs for cities when this is done.

"This has all been a dance in the dark, and it changes daily," she said.

The city will also hold off on personnel changes, both because of the unknown impact of the state budget and because the city manager position is in flux. Former City Manager Monika Hudson's contract was terminated two weeks ago, and Salerno is filling in until an interim manager is hired.

The council was scheduled to discuss the sheriff's contract in closed session Tuesday night, but had not had an opportunity to do so as of 10:30 p.m.

6/26/02