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INSIDE

'Don't panic or I'll shoot'

A gunman, telling a teller "Don't panic or I'll shoot," leaps over the counter to get money during a Los Altos bank robbery. **See page 8**

Theater to reopen

As a Christmas present
Palo Alto movie

Sgt. Cole kept off streets

But whistle-blower will still get paid

BY KARA CHALMERS
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

East Palo Alto officials appear to have changed their minds and now don't want whistle-blowing Sgt. Robert Cole to return to work — even though a federal judge has ordered the city to give Cole his job back.

The city will pay Cole his salary, but he'll be placed on administrative leave.

Cole, who has become a hero to many East Palo Alto residents because he spoke up against police brutality, said he wants to return to work.

"We're asking them to honor the court order," said Tony Tanke, Cole's lawyer. "We think 'go back to work' means go back to work. He wants to be a police officer, he wants to get

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COLE

Expert: Cops improving

BY KARA CHALMERS
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

Consultant Joseph Brann, who a year ago found the East Palo Alto Police Department was understaffed and poorly administered, has issued a new report saying changes still are needed but the department has made improvements.

Staffing levels, while not as critically low as they were last year, are still low.

"We need more officers, but the city doesn't have the

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IMPROVING

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money to fund those officers," said Police Chief Wes Bowling.

Bowling said that due to a hiring freeze in the city, he can not hire anyone. The city will be forced to tighten its belt this year, as it is facing a \$200,000 budget deficit.

"All the positions are filled that the City Council has authorized me to fill," Bowling said.

The report, which Brann issued in September, says that "staffing problems are on the verge of improving," given the number of people looking for jobs in the department.

Bowling, who said he would not comment on the case of Sgt. Bob Cole, said the sergeant position that Cole will fill will be an addition to the positions in the department now.

A federal judge has ordered the city to reinstate Cole, the cop who claimed abuses in the police department and was subsequently fired three years ago.

While Cole would like to come back to work, City Manager Monika Hudson will place Cole on administrative leave, as the City Council has directed.