



Hudson

She said the pact ends in 2003, but it runs out Sunday; the sheriff says services will continue until a new accord is signed.

Sheriff-East P.A. contract mixed up

By **Thaai Walker**

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Two weeks ago during budget deliberations, former East Palo Alto City Manager Monika Hudson assured council members that the city had another year left on its contract with the San Mateo County Sheriff's Department, which provides much of the city's law enforcement.

County officials, however, were operating under a different signed contract — one that expires at the end of June.

Now, city officials are moving quickly to reach an agreement on a new contract with the

county, which for more than a decade has provided services crucial to the city's crime-fighting efforts.

City and county law enforcement officials say despite the mix-up, the sheriff's department has no intention of pulling out of the city, even if a new contract isn't signed by Sunday.

"We're not going to abandon the city," said Sheriff Don Horsley, who supplements East Palo Alto's police force with 10 deputies and two sergeants. Under the current agreement,

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the city pays the county about \$260,000 annually for services that cost the county about \$1.4 million.

The new contract being negotiated will mean some changes in services for East Palo Alto. The county intends to take away one sheriff's investigator, and the city will pay an estimated \$130,000 more, according to Police Chief Wes Bowling.

Beyond those changes, the snafu, which involves two different signed contracts with expiration dates a year apart, has caused confusion and may raise legal questions. Tonight, the city council is scheduled to hold a closed-session discussion focused on "potential litigation" related to the sheriff's contract.

"There's possibly some discrepancy and I'm trying to find out what that discrepancy is or if it exists," Mayor Duane Bay said. "I'm sure by the end of the evening on Tuesday we'll know the answer to that."

The confusion also raises questions about the lines of communication between the city council and former City Manager Hudson. At a June 11 budget hearing, Hudson told the council repeatedly that the city had an approved contract with the sheriff's department through June 2003. She did not mention that she had met last month with county officials about the existence of the second contract — which she had signed — according to city and county officials. Hudson could not be reached for comment Monday.

At that same June 11 meeting, council members voted not to renew Hudson's contract, but Bay said Monday that the action was unrelated

to the sheriff's contract.

City documents show that on June 19, 2000, council members Bay, Pat Foster, Myrtle Walker and Sharifa Wilson voted to approve a three-year contract agreement that had been forwarded by the county.

County officials, however, say that was a draft that never made it to the county board of supervisors for approval. San Mateo County Manager John Maltbie said the county decided it only wanted to enter into a two-year contract with the city.

"The financial situation in the city two years ago was on the verge of changing, with growth and retail, and within two years it might be in a better position to provide a full range of services," he said.

The county sent the city a two-year contract proposal, which was signed by Hudson and then-Mayor Walker and later approved by the county board of supervisors.

It apparently was never brought before the full council, and Bowling said it was not brought to his attention, either.

On Monday, Bay could not say whether council approval was needed for the second contract. City Attorney Michael Lawson said, however, that council approval in a public meeting was needed.

"As I review the documents, the council did not approve the second agreement," he said, adding that Walker told him she didn't specifically recall signing it.

Lawson declined to comment further until after the discussion with council members in closed session.

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