

Cops awaiting big raise

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East Palo Alto City Council has ratified a 13-percent raise for its police force, which would bump up its cops' salaries to match what other Bay Area police officers make.

The salary adjustment, effective Jan. 1, was ratified Wednesday by council members. Council announced the agreement with the police association two weeks ago after discussing the matter for months behind closed doors.

As part of the deal, officers will also get a one-time bonus of \$1,000.

City Hall is still holding its breath on the results for Measure H, a 5-percent utility tax that is currently holding an eight-vote lead.

If it passes after the final absentee ballots are pushed through the system, police officers will see an additional 3 percent tacked onto their pay increase.

The utility tax is an additional surcharge placed on residents' telephone, gas, electricity, water and cell phone bills and will cost the average household between \$10 and \$15 a month.

The tax bolsters the city's coffers by about \$1 million annually. Residents have been paying the tax since the late 1980s, when it was approved by City Council without going to the voters.

San Mateo County elections officials say they still have thousands of absentee ballots waiting to be counted, which could sway the outcome of the Measure H race. Elections officials say they have no way of knowing how many ballots are for East Palo Alto, but anticipate a final vote tally by late today.

In other action taken by council Wednesday night, city leaders pushed one step closer to finalizing the purchase of Palo Mobile Estates, an affordable housing community on E. Bayshore Road, for \$8.4 million.

Council authorized acting City Manager Sandy Salerno to enter into contract with the current owners of Palo Mobile Estates.

City staffers estimate the deal will close by year's end.

Additionally, council reviewed and made slight revisions to a new travel policy, which will go before it for action Nov. 19.