

The Pueblo Chieftain

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More cops

By THE PUEBLO CHIEFTAIN

By this time next year there will be 12 more cops patrolling Pueblo's streets.

This week City Council approved adding the new officers to the 195-member department. Council has been discussing the need for more police officers since May when Chief Jim Billings requested 17 additional cops.

Despite more demands on the force due to growth in population and the crime rate, today the Police Department has two fewer officers than it did in 1975. The new hires will allow at least four more uniformed officers to be on duty during peak hours much of the week.

That's important. There are areas of town, particularly low-income neighborhoods, where citizens have asked for more police protection. They certainly deserve it.

City Manager Dave Galli told Council the current city budget will allow for the additions. One of the city's pension programs, which has required \$2 million from the General Fund each year to keep actuarially sound, will need only \$1 million per year starting in 2009. The first-year cost of the new hires is estimated at \$702,000. The new officers will be recruited later this year and go through the police academy starting in January.

We're glad the city administration and its elected representatives were able to make this move. This should help make Pueblo a safer place to live.