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## Another benefit to CRDA police funding in this era of officer shortages

Nov 25, 2022



The Atlantic City Police Department conducted a roll call with Class II special law enforcement officers of the Tourism District Unit in June on the Boardwalk. The CRDA will fund 30 such officers, up from 25.

Atlantic City Police Department, provided

or several years, the Casino Reinvestment Development Authority has been funding additional police officers for Atlantic City. This important benefit to the city **F** began before state government started working to restore the city, even before the CRDA shifted its statewide focus to the city and its Tourism District.

Most are Class II special officers who work up to 20 hours per week in the tourism season when they're needed most. They have full police powers and carry a firearm on duty.

This year the CRDA is funding 30 Class II officers, up from the usual 25. The position is a step toward full-time police work for many, and with nationwide shortages of police, more are taking that next step.

Having more Class II officers will provide stability as some take full-time positions. And it also enlarges a pipeline in the region into police work at a time when demand for officers exceeds the supply.

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The National Police Association has reported that 11 cities, including Philadelphia and New York, have experienced severe staffing issues after the anti-police rhetoric of 2020 and its political fallout. A spokesman said the shortfall could go on for years, noting the time it takes for a person to become a police officer.

The year before, recruiting police already had become challenging. In a September 2019 membership survey by the International Association of Chiefs of Police, 78% of law enforcement agencies reported having difficulty recruiting qualified candidates; 65% reported having too few candidates applying to be law enforcement officers; and 75% of agencies said it was more difficult to recruit than it was five years ago.

The nation's 18,000 law enforcement agencies were already responding to the challenge, with 50% having changed policies to increase the chances of gaining qualified applicants, and 25% reducing or eliminating some agency services, units or positions because of staffing difficulties.

In June of last year, a national survey found that police departments on average were filling just 93% of available budgeted positions, according to the Police Executive Research Forum. The shortfall was worsened by a 45% increase in retirements and an 18% jump in resignations over the previous year.

CRDA funding will also add five full-time officers to the Atlantic City police force.

The CRDA's expansion of its police-funding program is its latest effort to make the city cleaner and safer. The authority is a key partner in the project of Gov. Phil Murphy's administration to improve the quality of living for residents while helping the city achieve its potential as a destination for visitors. This has included marketing initiatives, many improvements for the Tourism District and repaving of some city streets.

Last year, the CRDA spent more than \$4 million to make the seven public bathrooms on the Atlantic City Boardwalk practically new. They all got completely new interiors including plumbing, toilets, urinals and fixtures, as well as new heating and ventilation systems — all with the durability needed for public use in the challenging salt-air zone.

Atlantic City is making substantial progress for the first time in years. The many steps by state government, its CRDA affiliate and the city have turned things around and justified confidence in a lasting, brighter future for its residents, visitors and

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