

By Jan Schultz, The Imperial Republican News Editor

Welcome to new Police Chief Ryan Wisnieski, who was hired Monday on appointment from Imperial Mayor Dwight Coleman.

One of the ideas he is considering to institute will to ask all new police officer hires to sign an agreement that guarantees a specific time of service with the Imperial Police Department. If the city has put up much of the cost for their training at the Nebraska Law Enforcement Training Center in Grand Island, shouldn't a time commitment, maybe three years, be asked?

It's not a new concept—many companies use it, both small and large. It would guarantee, for the most part, that new police officers who gained employment here, which required the professional training paid for by the city, commit to working here for a specified amount of time.

Imperial has paid for training for a number of police officers over the years who then went to work elsewhere not long after. And, it happened again just recently, with an Imperial police officer hired just a year and a half ago is moving on to another job.

The money put up by the city for police officer training, specifically, can be costly. In the most recent example, a conservative estimate is \$15,000.

Broken down, that includes about \$12,000 for salary while the officer is attending the 16-week long training in Grand Island. The officer is paid as if he or she is working during the time they are in full-time training. That includes not just the full salary, but all of the other income taxes and retirement benefits that are paid. The future officer often returns home on weekends, but does not usually work during the weekends as they are encouraged to study.

Added to the training costs are three meals per day while at school, the physical and lab tests required before attending training, reimbursement for gas to and from each week and the clothing/equipment required for training (some of which can also be used when the officer starts on-the-job). The city or other sending agency does not pay for the potential officer's tuition; that is paid for by the state.

No one is begrudging a person for wanting to change jobs, or seeking more opportunity or better hours with another agency. That's part of most people's work experience and should be encouraged in most cases.

However, if tax dollars were used for the training which that individual must have to do his or her job, there should be some commitment back to the government agency that put up the money. An agreement or contract with new police hires is a good idea and should be supported.