



# CITY OF COSTA MESA

P.O. BOX 1200, COSTA MESA, CALIFORNIA 92628-1200

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE INTERIM DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

## PRESS RELEASE

**June 20, 2011**

### **CONTACT**

Bill Lobdell, (949) 887-2541

[wlobdell@ci.costa-mesa.ca.us](mailto:wlobdell@ci.costa-mesa.ca.us)

[www.ci.costa-mesa.ca.us](http://www.ci.costa-mesa.ca.us)

[www.facebook.com/CostaMesaCityHall](https://www.facebook.com/CostaMesaCityHall)

Twitter @CityofCostaMesa

## **Costa Mesa CEO Tom Hatch ‘shocked and saddened’ by interim police chief’s letter over proposed 3.5% budget cut; new interim chief hired**

*The following is a statement from Costa Mesa Chief Executive Officer Tom Hatch:*

I am shocked and saddened by the unprofessional resignation letter sent today by interim Police Chief Steve Staveley to our police department.

I know that Mr. Staveley is angry at some of the changes being proposed for the police department, but this reckless parting shot does not help our organization or the community. Since his incautious and potentially libelous words have the capacity to do harm to our community, I've responded personally below to his allegations.

But first, I wanted to underscore that Costa Mesa will be fine—we are debating a 3.5% cut in our police department budget. We will remain safe.

And knowing the differences that stood between Mr. Staveley and myself, I had been interviewing for a replacement interim police chief while the search concluded for a permanent police chief. Today I hired Dennis Kies, former La Habra police chief, for the interim position. He has 35 years of law enforcement experience and will provide a steady hand.

Within the next couple of weeks, I expect to hire a permanent police chief. The finalists for the position are all top members of the law enforcement community and bring with them many innovative—and some old-fashioned—ideas for policing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

We will get through this challenging period and, with the help of our police chief and the fine men and women of our police department, we will continue to make Costa Mesa a safe city that scores high marks from residents, the business community and visitors.

As for the individual allegations:

**Mr. Staveley's base contention is that the budget crisis in Costa Mesa doesn't exist.** This just isn't true—and anyone who follows the news knows that cities across California, from San Diego to San Francisco and beyond, are struggling with how to bridge large budget gaps created by drops in revenue and steeply rising pension costs. Like Costa Mesa, many cities have had to propose cuts in public safety—and I'm sure many more municipalities will follow. The money just isn't there at this time.

Costa Mesa's financial numbers are simple and alarming. Our City has used more than \$33 million of its reserves since 2008 and, within the next several years, faces the prospect of using 25% of its budget just to cover pension costs. In recent years, we've eliminated more than 140 positions and cut some of our services to the bone—and still have spent significantly more money than we've taken in.

Costa Mesa is in a financial crisis.

**For next fiscal year, we are asking the police department to cut just 3.5% from its budget.** I've tried as much as possible to keep budget cuts away from public safety. We, along with a respected consultant, have developed a plan to maintain the same level of patrol hours while increasing the number of non-sworn personnel for support. In some areas, the level of service won't be the same for residents and the business community, but unfortunately, this is what we can afford. And I feel strongly that a 3.5% cut—about \$1.35 million for the next fiscal year—in the police department budget during these times is reasonable and our community will remain safe. I live here with my wife and daughters. I wouldn't do anything to jeopardize their safety.

**Mr. Staveley is correct that I'm asking non-sworn personnel to work five days a week.** For the City, it's more productive, for the most part, to have a five-day a week schedule for its employees—similar to the private sector. I don't think most people outside of government would have a problem with this. Many of our employees work five days a week now without complaint. I haven't asked sworn personnel to work five days a week.

**If Mr. Staveley has any evidence that anyone on the council is corrupt, he should have come forward with any evidence immediately.** If he doesn't have any evidence, his allegations are simply libelous and I assume intended to inflame the police department and the community. I've never seen any council member do anything that was corrupt or against the law. If I did, I would report that council member to the authorities immediately.

**Mr. Staveley says Costa Mesa is heading toward being the next Bell. In fact, we are the anti-Bell.** In my nearly four months as CEO, I can say that I've seen no City that has worked harder and made tougher budget decisions to make sure its finances got back on track. And in the process, we've done it with a transparency that's been second-to-none.