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## More cuts in Desert Hot Springs puts police department on chopping block

DESERT HOT SPRINGS, Calif. -

After Measure F failed to pass, the Desert Hot Springs city council must find a way to cut \$1.6 million from an already "bare-bones" budget for the 2014-2015 fiscal year. "Programs and other services that we have, that we can't fund anymore, so where else do we cut?" said city manager Martin Magana.

The city declared a fiscal emergency last November. According to Magana, the city will end this fiscal year with about \$200,000. The city would like to end the next year with \$1.5 million. Magana says everything adds up to the need for more cuts. Measure F, an increase on vacant parcel tax would have brought in nearly \$3 million for public safety. It required two-thirds majority vote (66%) and received 62%. "The voters have spoken and now I hope they're prepared for the additional cuts that this council needs to make," said Magana.

Now without it, the council must decide how much its police department is worth to them. "Is it still possible for us to make these adjustments in order to keep our police department, and we have to have community participation," said Mayor Adam Sanchez.

The council's taking a hard look at a proposal to disband its own department and contract with the Riverside County sheriff's department. If they go to RSO, new estimates show it could save the city about \$730,000 a year. At a special meeting, residents spoke passionately in support of both options. "It doesn't make sense to me that we would want to go with the Riverside County Sheriff, who has no vested interest here," said one resident.

"The sheriff's department has higher standards and it's going to cost a lot less money," said another.

Mayor Sanchez said he hopes the council will come to a consensus by Saturday. Members of the police department believe the decision should be an easy one. "The best decision that they could

make for the city is to stay with the police department, fund the police department, back the police department," said Commander Jim Neujahr.