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# 2 top cops in DHS retire

**Cmdr. Bressler is acting chief**



*Desert Hot Springs Police Chief Kate Singer and Commander Ken Peary / The Desert Sun*

**DESERT HOT SPRINGS — Police Chief Kate Singer and Commander Ken Peary have decided to retire “as soon as possible,” Interim City Manager Bob Adams told The Desert Sun on Saturday.**

The announcement comes less than a month after city leaders declared a fiscal emergency in an effort to avoid bankruptcy. “They are both past the retirement age for police officers, so these are not early retirements,” Adams wrote in an email. “I believe the city’s financial situation and the cuts we will be forced to make as a result of this condition may have been contributing factors to their decisions, but that would be for them to confirm.”

Singer and Peary did not return phone calls Saturday seeking comment.

In a memo sent to city employees Friday night, Adams wrote, “It is with regret that I announce that Police Chief Kate Singer has decided to retire effective today. She has served the Desert Hot Springs Police Department well in various command posts, and most recently as Chief of Police since August 2012. Chief Singer has shown an affection for the community and great concern for the working conditions of her officers. She will be missed.”

Commander Daniel Bressler is being named Acting Police Chief as she steps down, Adams wrote, “with all the authority, rights and privileges that come with the Chief position.”

It is unclear when Peary’s retirement is effective.

The City Council unanimously approved a fiscal emergency in November in an effort to cut costs by more than \$2 million by June in order to pay city employees and other contractual obligations. City leaders hoped that the declaration of a fiscal emergency would give them more leeway while negotiating with the city’s various unions, including the Teamsters and Police Officers Association.

According to city documents, Desert Hot Springs is on course to collect revenues of \$13.9 million this fiscal year, and spend \$18 million. More than \$9 million of that is allotted to police and code enforcement services.

An August study by the California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training found that Desert Hot Springs has steadily increased funding to its police department to where it now encompasses more than 60 percent of the city’s budget. Despite this, the study found that violent crime rates in the city are more than 250 percent higher than the national average.

Focusing on data from 2007 to 2012, the study found that violent crime has been trending upward, while property crime is on a downward trend.

**According to city records, as of Oct. 8, the highest paid rank-and-file Desert Hot Springs police officer earned more than \$200,000 annually, while the lowest-paid officer was on course to make more than \$80,000.**

**During this same period, the police chief earned a little more than \$300,000 and two of the city’s police commander positions averaged more than \$250,000 each. These amounts included regular pay, benefits and overtime.**

Wendell Phillips, an attorney representing the Desert Hot Springs Police Officers, told the Desert Sun previously that officers are not making \$100,000 unless “they are working double shifts, and after a while, the overtime is not worth it.”

The police commission study also determined that Desert Hot Springs police patrol officers are overworked and understaffed. “We wish her well and wish the retiring commander well, but we do believe the reorganization of the police department’s upper command staff was necessary, and we supported it,” Phillips said. “This is nothing against the individuals ... but in these tight times, it’s time to focus on delivery of services on the line level — on where the rubber meets the road.”

The City Council at its Tuesday meeting also will consider cutting funding to the Boys & Girls Club of Coachella Valley.

The city’s \$250,000 annual subsidy helps cover the cost of the club’s lease and utilities in the city’s year-old Health and Wellness Center.