

# Officials claiming success in grants

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Staff Writer

Three years ago, when Police Director John Rappaport was appointed to run the Orange department, he said that securing grants to supplement its operations would be a priority.

After the City Council approved his appointment in 2008, Rappaport informed them that one of his first orders of business as the acting police director had been to interview his officers to learn what skills or educational backgrounds they had that could be put to better use on behalf of the city. As a result, he said he had identified a female officer “who writes grants worth millions of dollars in her spare time.”

“Rather than having people ride around inside radio cars, clock out and go home, we’re trying to put their education to good use,” Rappaport said at the time. “We put together a grant team to use their educational backgrounds to write grants for the department to try and get money into the city.”

Rappaport’s efforts coincided with those of Mayor Eldrige Hawkins’ to promote “outside-the-box” thinking and actions in the rest of the city with an eye toward “doing more with less.” The mayor said that included researching and seeking out more grants for everything from police and public safety to other departments.

In a recent report, Rappaport and Hawkins stated their efforts have paid off. They said it has resulted in the city receiving public safety grants, including a recent \$1.2 million federal SAFER appro-

priation to hire 12 firefighters.

According to city officials, grants the police department have received include:

- \$964,000 from the U.S. Department of Justice in July 2009 to hire five officers for the following three years. Part of the COPS grant was used to rehire five laid-off officers last week.

- \$450,000 from the U.S. Department of Justice for a computer-aided dispatch system, records management database, and other communications upgrades in December 2009.

“Getting grants is a very integral part of what government does today,” said Hawkins. “At a time when we’re seeing funding cuts at the county, state and federal levels, it is imperative for all municipal governments to find alternative funding.”

Officer Joe Lane, president of PBA Local 89, the officers’ union, said Hawkins was correct about the importance of grants. He said that the union was grateful city officials were able to “retool” the COPS grant so it could be used to rehire five of the 12 officers who were laid off as a budgetary measure. However, said Lane, the city has had a history of receiving and applying for grants that pre-dates Hawkins’ tenure.

“If you do research, you will find out that most of the guys who were hired as cops were hired under grants,” Lane said. “In terms of what the city’s financial situation was, they probably needed to ask for givebacks and to do the layoffs, but most of what we have come through grants, not the budget.”