



## Chief applies elsewhere; city named in suits

By TONY REED Staff Writer -

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It may come as a surprise to some that Police Chief Mark Puthuff was one of six candidates for a chief's position in Grand Junction, Colo.

Several Colorado news agencies reported that the person to be hired for the \$120,000 per year job may start as early as this month.

Puthuff was not offered the position.

City Manager Linda Ruffing said Tuesday that Puthuff had notified her that "he had participated in a recruitment process for the police chief position in Grand Junction."

Laurie Kadrich, Grand Junction city manager, confirmed that Puthuff did not get the job, but did not say who did. Grand Junction's former police chief, Bill Gardner, stepped down in August.

"Unless and until the Chief [Puthuff] leaves his current position, it is my expectation that he will continue performing his duties as Police Chief," Ruffing said by email.

Puthuff said Tuesday that he occasionally finds ideal opportunities, and the Grand Junction position was one of them. He said the process gave him some ideas that may be implemented at the Fort Bragg Police Department.

The application process was intense and finalists were narrowed down from about 75 applicants, Puthuff said, adding that it helped him compare his leadership abilities to others around the country.

Puthuff said he will remain as Fort Bragg's police chief. He was hired in 2006.

### Civil suits

Two civil lawsuits have been filed against the City, one naming Chief Puthuff and the other naming former Fort Bragg Police Lt. Floyd Higdon as defendants.

Puthuff, along with the city and police department, is named in a civil lawsuit filed by former Fort Bragg police officer Donald "Rick" Miele.

The suit, filed in Los Angeles County Superior Court, contends two counts of defamation, and one count of Labor Code 1050, which is defamation that prevents future employment. Miele was employed at FBPD from December 2007 to May 2008; his reason for leaving undisclosed.

He had worked for the Oakdale Police Department and Southern California agencies before accepting the position here.

Miele's attorney, Joy Rosenquist, said the City had been served with the suit, but as of Monday afternoon, the process server was not able to serve Puthuff or the police department. She said a pleading would be released once all defendants have been served.

"City staff does not discuss litigation matters or pending lawsuits without specific direction from the City Council and no such direction has been given on either of these cases," Ruffing said in an email Tuesday. Puthuff's email response was almost identical.

When asked, Ruffing also disclosed that the city and Lt. Higdon had been named in a suit alleging civil



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rights violations. A claim by Robert Forest, rejected by the City Council in June 2007, alleged he was unlawfully arrested and that Lt. Higdon had altered official documents, causing his prosecution. The suit was filed in San Francisco and does not include a dollar amount for damages.

Higdon currently serves as commander at the Merced Police Department.

Ruffing said that as a rule the City of Fort Bragg does not comment on personnel matters.

The newspaper continues to investigate these suits and allegations by former police officers.

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