

**From:** [John Fitch](#)  
**To:** [City Council Public Comments](#)  
**Subject:** [EXTERNAL] Agenda Item #13.4 - Duty Handgun Purchase Order  
**Date:** Thursday, July 17, 2025 7:41:21 AM

---

To the Honorable Mayor and Members of the Santa Rosa City Council,

My name is John Fitch, and I am a resident of Santa Rosa. I am writing to you today regarding the recent resolution to equip our police officers with pistol-mounted optic (PMO) handguns. While I commend the desire to provide our officers with modern, effective tools, the operational success and safety of this transition depend entirely on a foundation of rigorous training and a meticulously managed maintenance protocol. An advanced tool without expert handling and care is not an upgrade; it is a liability.

### **A Concerning Contradiction: New Complexities vs. Reduced Resources**

Pistol-mounted optics are not simple iron sights. They are complex electronic systems that introduce new points of potential failure. Their reliability hinges on consistent battery management, secure mounting, and, most critically, maintaining an accurate “zero.” A dropped weapon can compromise this zero, rendering the firearm inaccurate until it is professionally inspected and recalibrated. Given these increased demands, I was alarmed to find significant contradictions within the city’s proposed FY 2025–26 police budget:

- The Equipment & Repair (E&R) Maintenance and Replacement budget is facing a combined decrease of \$174,000 at the very moment the department is adopting a more maintenance-intensive firearms platform.
- The overall Operations & Maintenance (O&M) budget increase is a mere 5%, a figure that barely addresses inflation, let alone the new, specialized logistical requirements for deploying a department-wide fleet of PMO systems.

These figures suggest a concerning disconnect. The city is investing in advanced hardware while diminishing the very resources required to ensure it remains safe and functional. This raises urgent questions of both fiscal prudence and public safety.

### **A Call for a Formal PMO Readiness and Sustainment Plan**

To ensure this investment enhances safety, I urge the Council to require the Santa Rosa Police Department to submit a formal, publicly reviewable PMO Readiness and Sustainment Plan as a precondition for deployment. Technology alone does not create better outcomes; policy, training, and accountability do.

This plan must, at a minimum, include:

1. Initial Certification and Transition Training: Mandatory, hands-on training for every officer covering optic theory, zeroing procedures, target acquisition, and addressing PMO-specific malfunctions
2. Mandatory Drop/Impact Reporting Protocol: A strict requirement for any weapon

subjected to impact to be immediately submitted for an armorer's inspection and re-zeroing.

3. Scheduled Maintenance & Armorers' Logs: A documented schedule for battery replacement, lens inspection, and mount integrity checks for every PMO unit.

4. Ongoing Qualification Standards: Regular qualification courses that specifically test and certify an officer's skill with the optic-equipped handgun under realistic conditions.

5. Lifecycle and Consumables Budgeting: A clear plan for managing the long-term costs of batteries, replacement optics, and compatible holsters, ensuring funding is allocated beyond the initial purchase.

### **On the Responsible Disposal of Retired Firearms**

Additionally, I ask the Council to revise the current trade-in disposal plan. Investigative reporting has shown that decommissioned police weapons, when sold on the secondary market, are often later recovered at crime scenes. This risk is not hypothetical. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) has urged agencies to reconsider resale practices, citing over 25,000 former police weapons recovered from crime scenes between 2019 and 2023 alone. To prevent this unacceptable risk, I respectfully ask that the Council amend the resolution to require that all retired handguns are either:

- Retained by the department for training or as backup equipment; or
- Destroyed in a certified and documented manner.

### **Prioritizing Responsible Implementation**

The resolution is silent on how the city plans to support the complex lifecycle of this new technology. With the existing handguns slated for trade-in, there will be no fallback equipment. Our officers and our community will depend entirely on the reliability of these new systems. True modernization is not just about acquiring new tools; it is about building the institutional capacity to manage them responsibly.

I ask that you demonstrate both fiscal prudence and an unwavering commitment to public safety by conditioning the deployment of these weapons on the approval of a comprehensive sustainment plan and a responsible disposal policy.

Thank you for your time and your dedicated service to our city.

Respectfully submitted,  
John Fitch:  
Santa Rosa Resident