

City of Piedmont
COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

DATE: May 15, 2017

TO: Mayor and Council

FROM: Paul Benoit, City Administrator

SUBJECT: Consideration of the Implementation of a Public Safety Camera Pilot Program & Appropriation of \$10,000 from the Citizens Option for Police Services (COPS) Fund

RECOMMENDATION

Approve the implementation of a public safety camera pilot program and appropriate \$10,000 from the COPS Fund to support the program.

BACKGROUND

At the City Council meeting on April 3, 2017, the Police Department presented a recommendation to install public safety cameras at the newly renovated Hampton Park. Also presented was a public safety camera system policy governing all aspects of the establishment, usage and release of information to other parties.

The recommendation to install public safety cameras was driven by a desire to assess the impact of integrating such technology with existing staff work and functional practices of the Department. Specifically, dispatchers and detectives are the direct end-users of the technology and a pilot program to test use of the public safety cameras was viewed as the best way to receive end-user input to determine the feasibility and efficacy of public safety cameras in Piedmont.

The Department's rationale for the need of the experimental integration of public safety cameras was not fully communicated during the April 3, 2017 Council meeting. Concerns about privacy and opportunities for public input were also raised during public testimony. Following Council discussion, the Council did not approve placement of public safety cameras at Hampton Park, as proposed, but did approve the Public Safety Camera Policy. Recognizing the need for a more thorough discussion of public safety cameras, the experimental nature of the Police Department's proposal, and the fact that a fuller discussion of an appropriate location of public safety cameras was warranted, staff prepared this report for consideration at this meeting.

DISCUSSION

Public safety cameras provide a technological opportunity to enhance public safety by providing information to police officers responding to calls in the vicinity of the cameras and to detectives by aiding in investigations. A review of the academic literature provides an inconclusive answer

to the question of whether cameras have an effect in reducing crime. While it may be difficult to draw conclusions based on aggregate data, accounts by law enforcement practitioners of the effectiveness of well-thought-out and strategic public safety camera placement provide a basis for assessing how the technology can be integrated with existing practices, work flows, and end-user input. This technology is not new and in the last few years numerous cities have leveraged cameras to deal with a multitude of issues ranging from mitigating violent crime to preventing vandalism in parks and other public spaces. Many Bay Area cities use public safety camera systems including: Danville, Lafayette, Orinda, Hayward, Fremont, Dublin, Oakland, and San Leandro. Just recently the State of California has approved funding for wide-spread camera deployment throughout the East Bay in an effort to curb violent incidents on our roadways. Many cities, and now the State, have invested in this technology to improve the safety of their community by providing an additional tool to aid law enforcement. The Department, in its research with other area law enforcement agencies, has been briefed on specific cases where the use of public safety cameras were critical in solving stabbings, burglaries, theft cases and robberies. Several of these cities have integrated both Automated License Plate Reader (ALPR) cameras and public safety cameras as complimentary systems to address the limitations of each camera system type and to account for the different ways criminals have adapted to the effective use of ALPR technology by law enforcement. Law enforcement agencies who use ALPRs have experienced instances where suspects have removed the license plates from the vehicles used in the commission of their crimes, applied substances to license plates which frustrate the plate reading ability of the cameras, and used rental vehicles or freshly stolen vehicles whose information is not in the databases which the ALPR system accesses.

While cameras would not be continuously monitored, our dispatchers and officers could immediately access the live camera feed, or time frame capturing the reported incident, to provide responding officers with subject descriptions, vehicle descriptions, directions of travel, and other pertinent information. We are fortunate to have the potential to leverage this camera technology in this way. As an example, during the Department's research at the Danville Police Department it was learned that their alert processes with their ALPR cameras is not as streamlined as the City of Piedmont's due to the fact they don't have their own dispatch center. In addition, they don't employ the practice of leveraging the public safety camera technology as described above because of this same fact; they contract their dispatch service through Contra Costa County and those internal workflows don't exist. Allowing Department staff to conduct a public safety camera pilot program would aid in evaluating methods for integrating the immediate viewing capabilities of the public safety cameras with the alerting capability of existing ALPR technology to enhance police response. Allowing the end-users to be part of the assessment aids in assessing employee buy-in, effective system usage, and return on investment.

The Department understands there may be privacy concerns regarding the use of public safety cameras. Being sensitive to that concern, the City Council has adopted a protective policy, and the Department will employ practices to ensure that privacy is appropriately protected. The policy addresses Fourth Amendment rights protecting citizens from unreasonable search and seizure by, for example, providing that cameras should only be used where there is no constitutionally protected expectation of privacy.

Recordings will be retained in accordance with the City's retention schedule and state law. The public disclosure of such records upon request would be subject to the applicable exemptions codified in the Public Records Act. While there are many products offered by vendors, the cameras generally record on a loop which means that after a period of time, typically 90 days,

the data will be overwritten within the public safety camera hard drive.

If approved by Council, the Department would propose to deploy the pilot public safety cameras in the same manner and strategy utilized in the deployment of ALPR cameras, using a prioritized assessment based on where we know crimes such as burglaries and robberies tend to occur and the points of ingress and egress the criminals travel to commit those crimes. On that basis, the Department proposes to locate the public safety cameras at the intersection of Grand Avenue and Oakland Avenue.

FISCAL IMPACT

Staff is recommending leasing the cameras for the purpose of the pilot program. System highlights of the proposed leased equipment include:

- High-definition recording in 3MP and 5MP (megapixels)
- 1-4 TB (terabyte) onboard storage for up to 90 days of recording
- Built-in 4G LTE, wi-fi and ethernet connectivity
- Remote monitoring and management

The Police Department is requesting a \$10,000 appropriation from the Citizens Option for Police Services (COPS) Fund for the public safety camera pilot program. The Department will provide a report on its findings to the Council within one year after the implementation of the pilot program.

By: Jeremy Bowers, Chief of Police