TO:   HONORABLE CITY COUNCIL

FROM:  CITY MANAGER     DEPARTMENT:  POLICE

DATE:  NOVEMBER 8, 2004     CMR:462:04

SUBJECT:  APPROVAL OF A BUDGET AMENDMENT ORDINANCE (BAO) TRANSFERRING $200,000 FROM THE TECHNOLOGY FUND INTO THE POLICE VEHICLE-MOUNTED VIDEO RECORDING CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM PROJECT NUMBER PD-05010 FOR THE PURCHASE AND INSTALLATION OF IN-CAR VIDEO RECORDING SYSTEMS IN POLICE PATROL VEHICLES

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that Council adopt the attached Budget Amendment Ordinance (BAO) that transfers $200,000 from the Technology Fund into the Police Vehicle – Mounted Video Recording Systems Capital Improvement Program Project #PD-05010 for funding the purchase of hardware and installation for in-car video recording systems in all 26 police patrol vehicles.

BACKGROUND

Video technology has become instrumental in law enforcement training, evidence collection, and for officer safety and accountability. Staff’s interest in in-car video recording systems began in 1996 (CMR:494:96) with the installation of a video camera in one police vehicle by a local provider in exchange for feedback on the performance of the product. This public/private partnership led to a 1998 pilot program using Citizen Options for Public Safety (COPS) funds (CMR:461:98) that resulted in the purchase of video cameras and recorders for five patrol vehicles.

Although the Department had secured the equipment as part of this pilot program, staff identified a number of technological issues that required further research before deploying
these units. One of the most significant issues dealt with the recording format and vast amount of storage space and staff time that were needed to store and catalog individual VHS tapes for the one-year minimum retention period prescribed by law. These issues have since been addressed with the emerging transition from analog to digital technology. This report provides information about the proposed use of video cameras in patrol vehicles.

DISCUSSION

Police departments throughout the United States are realizing the value of video recording of officer-citizen contacts in the field, citizen transports, criminal investigations and citizen complaints. Almost 50 law enforcement agencies in California and hundreds across the Country are already using in-car video systems. They have realized a number of benefits including increased conviction rates, reduced time for court proceedings and litigation, increased officer safety, reduction in unwarranted lawsuits and complaints, officer accountability and usefulness in training.

Digital systems have several advantages to analog. Analog systems require VHS tapes, which can degrade over time and require additional personnel time to manage, maintain and store the tapes. Digital systems utilize a different format for recording. Digital Video Display (DVD) disks are smaller and the video can be archived onto a server for indefinite storage. Access to any portion of the recording is immediate and video clips are easier and less expensive to copy. Many new digital systems come with a “pre-event recording” feature. This feature automatically captures a preset amount of video prior to recorded activation. If an officer witnesses an event prior to activating the recording device, such as a car running a red light, the video evidence is automatically captured and recorded. Utilizing security features inherent to this newer technology, images are stored and secured for reproduction only; the original recordings cannot be altered. As with other official police records, the Department will utilize a custodian of records to manage these recordings.

Staff recommends funding the installation of a digital in-car video system in each of the 26 patrol vehicles. Each system will include a zoom lens camera, audio transmitter, monitor, controller, and recorder. A server and software will be purchased to easily store, search and copy video, and audio files.

Due to space limitations on the existing police motorcycles, these in-car video systems will be deployed first in the patrol vehicles. However, as the current motor fleet is replaced, the
newer models, which utilize smaller radio and data components, will be equipped with in-car video systems as well.

Pending the approval by the City Council, staff is prepared to move forward with the purchasing process by releasing a Request for Proposal (RFP) seeking competitive pricing based on specific technical requirements and services. Upon selection of a vendor following the formal bid process, the Bid Award Contract will be returned to the City Council for final approval. Currently, the Department is working with the Palo Alto Police Officers Association (PAPOA) on the development of a use policy for in-car video systems, researching vendors and working through procedural issues.

RESOURCE IMPACT

The attached BAO (Attachment A) reflects an increase in revenues and expenditures of $200,000 into the Police Vehicle – Mounted Video Recording Systems Capital Improvement Program PD-05010 by a transfer from the Technology Fund. Ongoing equipment maintenance at an annual cost will be budgeted in the Police Department operating budget and replacement costs will be budgeted in the Information Technology (IT) Infrastructure Fund. Ongoing and replacement costs will be provided to Council as part of the Bid Award process.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This agreement is consistent with existing City policy.

TIMELINE

The project will begin as soon as possible and should be complete within xx-days.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

This ordinance and the project to install in-car video recording systems, is not subject to CEQA pursuant to Title 14 California Code of Regulations Section 15061(b)(3), and it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility of a significant effect on the environment.
ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A:  Budget Amendment Ordinance
Attachment B:  CIP PD-05010 Project Description

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