TO: HONORABLE CITY COUNCIL

FROM: CITY MANAGER DEPARTMENT: POLICE

DATE: DECEMBER 13, 2004 CMR:503:04

SUBJECT: PUBLIC HEARING AND ACCEPTANCE OF CITIZENS OPTIONS FOR PUBLIC SAFETY (COPS) FUNDS IN THE AMOUNT OF $100,000 FOR THE PURCHASE OF A BAR CODING SYSTEM, EVIDENCE COLLECTION AND DETECTION EQUIPMENT, UPGRADE OF HOSTAGE NEGOTIATION EQUIPMENT, LAPTOP FOR SEXUAL ASSAULT INVESTIGATIONS, AND UPGRADES OF THE POLICE MOTORCYCLE PROGRAM

RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends the City Council approve the acceptance of Citizens Options for Public Safety (COPS) funds in the amount of $100,000 for the purchase of bar coding system, evidence collection and detection equipment, upgrade of hostage negotiation equipment, laptop for sexual assault investigations, and upgrade of police motorcycles.

BACKGROUND

Since 1997, the California State Budget Act has included allocations to counties and cities for the COPS program. This funding is intended to fill the need for additional resources at the local level to ensure public safety. Under the provisions of Government Code Section 30061, 75 percent of the funds are allocated to counties and cities, based upon population, for law enforcement services. Funds must supplement existing services and cannot be used to supplant any existing funds. Each county is required to continue the operation of a Supplemental Law Enforcement Services Fund (SLESF) to receive the State funds and each agency’s proposal for the use of the funds must be approved by the county’s Supplemental Law Enforcement Oversight Committee (SLEOC). Prior to sending the proposal to the SLEOC, the bill requires that each city conduct a public hearing for the purpose of reviewing and approving the Police Department’s request for expenditure of funds. Each city is also required to deposit the funds into a separate SLESF so that these funds are not intermingled with General Fund dollars. The funds must be expended within two years after receipt. Council has approved accepting COPS funding for the last seven years.

Previous uses of COPS funds have included the purchase of safety equipment, surveillance equipment, mobile data terminals, Positive Alternatives for Youth (PAY) program activities, upgrades to the telecommunications infrastructure associated with the Computer Aided Dispatch system, for an additional
sergeant position for the Special Problems Team, and a captain position and associated training to assist in the City’s homeland security efforts.

DISCUSSION

Staff proposes to use this year’s COPS funds in the following manner:

Bar-Coding System for Property and Evidence: $40,000

Bar-coding technology is quickly becoming the industry standard for police department property and evidence rooms, enhancing the ability to store, locate and track the whereabouts of property and evidence. Bar-coding technology also improves speed and accuracy of the evidence lifecycle; produces instant chain of custody reports; tracks disposition and destruction of individual items; and produces standard and user defined reports for both internal management and external auditing purposes. A recent Santa Clara County Civil Grand Jury Report cited the lack of a bar-coding system as one of the deficiencies associated with the Palo Alto Police Department property and evidence function. Staff proposes to implement a bar-coding system for the property and evidence room to enhance efficiency and effectiveness.

Evidence Collection Team Equipment: $6,000

The Evidence Team is responsible for identifying, collecting and processing all physical evidence at major crime scenes. Staff proposes to purchase two laptop computers and three specialty cases to store and transport evidence collection equipment. The laptop computers will enable the Evidence Team to be linked to the Department’s computer aided dispatch (CAD) and records systems and national databases directly from the crime scene. Once the bar coding system for property and evidence function is implemented, evidence team members will be able to tag and enter evidence directly into the records system. The purchase of three large, portable, unbreakable, chemical resistant, plastic cases would provide a portable evidence collection kit for each of the two shifts in Patrol and one for the detectives. These kits would include all the basic evidence collection equipment necessary to process a small to medium size crime scene.

Forensic Evidence Detection Equipment: $35,000

Quality evidence collection and preservation techniques benefit the investigation, identification and prosecution of individuals involved in criminal activities. Latent fingerprints, trace evidence, and body fluids yielding DNA are only some of the types of valuable evidence. Staff proposes to purchase equipment that will enable investigators the ability to identify and capture trace evidence and latent fingerprints at crime scenes using state of the art equipment. A special viewing unit attached to a digital camera utilizing reflective ultraviolet imaging technology will be invaluable in identifying latent fingerprints that are invisible to the naked eye without the use of powders, chemicals or vapor treatments of any kind. This product has proven to be both a non-destructive and non-corrosive method of
discovering evidence at a crime scene. This also means less clean-up and reduced crime scene contamination, as well as less damage to property and evidence. In addition, a portable argon laser will be used to detect trace evidence and illuminating fluorescent fingerprint powder for photographic purposes.

**Hostage Negotiation Team Equipment Upgrade: $7,000**

The goal of the Hostage Negotiation Team (HNT) is to negotiate a critical incident situation to a peaceful resolution. The HNT, used in conjunction with the SWAT Team, is often used for barricaded suspects as well as for hostage situations. The technology associated with the monitoring equipment used by the HNT has progressed substantially since the last equipment was purchased over seven years ago. An upgrade to the current equipment includes a new "throw" phone with built-in color cameras and an additional monitor, which can be interfaced with a digital recorder. This system will provide the Department with clearer video/audio monitoring capabilities and provide better information to the HNT and SWAT teams in real time. The system will enable the Department to digitally record the video feed for a permanent record of the event.

**Laptop Computer for Sexual Assault Investigations $1,500**

Staff proposes to utilize funds to purchase a laptop computer to be used by sexual assault detectives during the course of an investigation to communicate with suspected sexual predators and outside law enforcement agencies. Using a laptop for this purpose, rather than a fixed desktop workstation will ensure absolute anonymity as a law enforcement agency, will protect the City's network as many of the online activities can include sexually explicit information, and ensures maximum flexibility by allowing for remote access to this system in the field during an investigation.

**Police Motorcycle Upgrade $10,500**

Since 1995, when the City reinstated the police motorcycle program, the Department has utilized the Kawasaki as their enforcement motorcycle. Since then, BMW has entered the police market and has introduced a motorcycle that is safer, more ergonomic, better handling, quieter, more fuel efficient, less expensive to operate, and maintains its resale value better than the Kawasaki and other police motorcycles on the market. Six of the Kawasaki’s are due for replacement during the next two years. Staff proposes to utilize COPS funds to accelerate the replacement of the Kawasaki motorcycles and help offset the initial incremental costs to upgrade to the BMWs.

**RESOURCE IMPACT**

Palo Alto’s $100,000 allocation of COPS funds have been received by the City and deposited into the City’s Supplemental Law Enforcement Service Fund (SLESF). Revenues and expenses of $100,000 will be budgeted in the City’s SLESF as part of the mid-year report. Replacement costs will be budgeted in the Information Technology (IT) Infrastructure Fund.
**POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

Expenditures of funds associated with COPS funds are consistent with City policy.

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

This is not a project subject to CEQA requirements.

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