

Items 9, 12, 30
52
2/12/04

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Wynn and City Council Members
FROM: Laura J. Huffman
DATE: February 4, 2004
SUBJECT: Austin Police Department Action Plan—Budget Amendment

On your February 12, 2004 agenda you have four items related to implementing the Austin Police Department Action Plan: a budget amendment, the purchase of tasers, the purchase of in-car cameras and a classification ordinance change. The budget amendment, in the amount of \$1.3 million, is structured to cover the full cost of the tasers and in-car camera purchases on the 12th agenda. This amendment will also cover the cost of additional beanbag shotguns and the associated training and implementation costs for all of the new equipment. Below is additional information about how these purchases relate to the APD Action Plan.

Less Lethal Weapon Purchases

The availability of less lethal force in the field is critical to officers for safety reasons. This equipment, including tasers and beanbag shotguns, reduces the chance that officers will be forced to engage in physical contact that could result in injury to the suspect or the officer. Throughout the Country, departments have found that less lethal weapons are a proven method to avoid the escalation of use of force during an incident.

On the February 12th agenda, we are seeking the approval of 730 tasers, which will equip 100% of uniformed patrol officers and the specialty patrol units (i.e. the DWI unit). The Department will also purchase an additional 15 beanbag shotguns. This will provide 3 beanbag shotguns per shift. Together, these equipment purchases will provide our uniformed patrol officers with readily available use of force options in the field. We view this as a critical purchase in order to meet the Action Plan goal of reducing both officer and suspect use of force injuries by 20%.

Classification Ordinance Changes

On the 12th we are also proposing the addition of one Sergeant and one Corporal to the APD classification ordinance. This will allow us to create an additional shift in the downtown area. The downtown patrol function is one of the busiest and most stressful functions in the department. The unique challenges associated with an entertainment district that has grown rapidly over the last several years has created a difficult situation for our police officers.

In-Car Cameras

Finally, there is an agenda item for the purchase of in-car cameras. These new cameras

will replace the first generation of in-car cameras installed in patrol cars. There are 156 of these older cameras and we are finding that failures in the field are causing operational difficulties. For example, if a camera is malfunctioning that patrol car will likely not be deployed until the camera can be repaired or replaced. In most cases, this means that patrol car will be out of service for that shift. In some cases, when other patrol units are not available—we are deploying patrol units with non-functioning cameras. By replacing this older technology, we will be able to buy more rugged and reliable equipment and thereby avoid these operational difficulties.

Budget Amendment Source of Funding

In FY03, the Police Department, through a combination of salary and overtime savings was able to produce an additional one-time savings to the City in the amount of \$1.5 million. This amount reverted to the General Fund fund balance at year-end. We are recommending this surplus fund balance as the source of funding for these critical one-time purchases needed to implement the APD Action Plan.

The Austin Police Department remains committed to implementing the Action Plan. We are recommending these purchases as part of our commitment to the City Council and to this community. If you have any questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to call.