

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JUNE 14, 2004

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: PHILIP SUNDERLAND, CITY MANAGER *PS*

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF A GRANT APPLICATION TO ENHANCE POLICE RESPONSE AND COMMUNICATIONS CAPABILITY

ISSUE: City Council consideration of a grant application to the U.S. Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Justice Programs, for a Congressionally mandated award up to \$742,101. This grant represents a one-time set-aside of funds allocated to Alexandria by Congressman Moran, to be used to enhance police services by providing equipment needed by the Police Department.

RECOMMENDATIONS: That City Council:

- (1) Approve the grant application to the U.S. Bureau of Justice Assistance for a total of \$742,101, for which no City share is required; and
- (2) Authorize the City Manager to execute all necessary documents.

DISCUSSION: The proposed grant is being submitted under the federal Discretionary Grants programs of the Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Assistance. In April, Congressman Moran met with Police Chief Charles Samarra to discuss a set-aside of funding intended to address unmet equipment needs of police officers. A similar amount was set aside by the Congressman for Arlington County police.

The proposed grant would be used to fund the following equipment:

- 9 fully equipped cruisers for Patrol divisions, which would enable the assignment of older cruisers as take-home cruisers for Special Operations Team members;
- 2 unmarked vehicles to be used for undercover and decoy operations, including 1 "bait vehicle" to assist in the apprehension of auto thieves;
- 40 mobile computers that would provide a mobile computer in the field for each uniformed officer; and
- Video enhancing and resolution equipment requested by the police union to assist criminal investigations.

Funding for 9 Cruisers (\$322,101). In 2003 the City Manager approved the assignment of take-home cruisers for police officers who are trained and certified as Special Operations Team (SOT) officers. The vehicles are assigned to SOT officers as cars become available through reassignment or through retention of older cruisers. This policy change is a direct result of homeland security recommendations that followed the September 11, 2001 attacks. With take-home cruisers, the officers can transport weapons and special uniform equipment directly to an

incident scene if needed, which should decrease their response time to an emergency call-out situation. Previously, the protective equipment and weapons used by SOT were stored centrally at Police headquarters. The officers would need to stop at headquarters to retrieve their weapons and gear before responding to the scene. Alternatively, a truck loaded with the equipment would be transported to the scene and officers would retrieve their equipment upon arrival at the scene. Now, each SOT member has his or her individual equipment and weapon when they arrive at a scene, and we avoid transporting equipment for those who are not responding to the incident.

In FY 2005 the Police Department deferred replacement of 14 vehicles from its replacement plan due to the mandated 1% cut budget reduction required for all City departments for the FY 2005 budget process. If approved, the grant will partly meet the police fleet replacement needs, enabling the City to procure 9 cruisers and assign additional older vehicles to current SOT members for the next 5 to 7 years. These SOT vehicles were not planned to be replaced.

Funding for 2 Undercover Vehicles (\$69,000). The proposed grant also would fund two vehicles, possibly a multi-passenger vehicle and a mid-size sedan, for decoy and surveillance operations. The request will include equipment to convert one of the vehicles into a "bait car." That vehicle will be used in operations to attract and apprehend auto thieves, similar to programs in Washington, DC and Arlington County.

Funding for 40 Mobile Computers (\$320,000). In 1996 the Police Department introduced its mobile computer system with a goal of providing a computer in the field to every uniformed officer. If approved, the grant will enable completion of that goal through the procurement of an additional 40 computers, necessary licenses and software. It is notable that the City will have funded the Police Mobile Computer System almost entirely using federal grants and seized assets over the past 8 years.

Funding for Video Tape Enhancement Equipment (\$31,000). The Criminal Investigations Section frequently obtains and analyzes businesses' surveillance videotapes as part of case investigation procedures. The quality and resolution of such videos vary greatly. The proposed grant would fund a forensic video system that will improve investigators' ability to view, analyze, output and present photographs from source video tapes.

FISCAL IMPACT: If the grant is approved, the federal government would provide up to \$742,101 for a period not to exceed 24 months. Staff have prepared a grant proposal, using current cost estimates for the vehicles and equipment under consideration. There is no requirement for the City to match this grant. It should be noted that this is a one-time award of funds and there are no additional City resources currently in the City's ongoing budget to maintain or replace grant-funded equipment at the end of its useful life. When this equipment needs to be replaced, the funding for the replacements will need to compete with other City budget needs for funding needs.

The estimated fiscal impact of 9 police cruisers is \$322,101 or \$35,789 each (a vehicle is \$23,000, the radio is \$4,325, mounts and consoles are \$3,500, other ancillary equipment is \$3,100, and installation costs are \$1,864). The estimated cost of an undercover multi-passenger vehicle is \$26,000. A sedan would cost approximately \$22,000 with an additional \$21,000 cost for the global positioning tracking system, maintenance, and batteries to equip it as a bait car.

The estimated cost of each complete mobile computer system package is \$8,000, totaling

\$320,000 for 40. The estimated cost of video recovery and enhancement technology is \$26,000 plus \$5,000 for supplies and equipment.

The City is responsible for the normal administrative costs associated with this grant. These costs include financial and reporting oversight provided by the administering agency and by the Office of Management and Budget and the Finance Department.

ATTACHMENTS: None. The grant application may be reviewed in the Office of Management and Budget, Room 3600, City Hall during normal working hours.

STAFF:

Charles Samarra, Police Chief

Michele Evans, Assistant City Manager

Blaine Corle, Deputy Police Chief, Field Operations

Amy Flenniken, Division Chief, Police Fiscal Management

Alfred Coleman, Budget/Management Analyst, OMB