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September 26, 2006

To: Mayor Michael D. Antonovich
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Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Don Knabe

From: David E. Janssen
Chief Administrative Officer

FEASIBILITY OF UTILIZING HIGH TECHNOLOGY AUDIO/VISUAL EQUIPMENT FOR THE DETECTION OF ILLEGAL GUNSHOTS AND GRAFITTI IN THE UNINCORPORATED AREAS OF THE COUNTY

On June 26, 2006, on motion by Supervisor Burke, your Board: 1) directed the Chief Administrative Office (CAO) and the Office of Public Safety (OPS) to work with the Sheriff's Department (Sheriff) to assess the feasibility of utilizing high technology audio/visual equipment for the detection of illegal gunshots and graffiti in the unincorporated areas of the County of Los Angeles (County); and 2) directed the CAO to report back with its findings and recommendations, as well as identify potential funding sources for a pilot program in the unincorporated area(s). We completed our analysis and have included our findings and recommendations below.

BACKGROUND

On July 26, 2005, on motion by Supervisor Burke, your Board directed that a task force be convened with representatives from various departments, including Sheriff and OPS, to develop recommendations to address increased gang activity at County parks. As a result, OPS received funding for increased patrol at 20 County parks and began considering the use of surveillance cameras in the parks to further enhance park safety. At the same time, the Sheriff began exploring the concept of installing gun-shot activated cameras in specific unincorporated area(s) of the County having the highest concentration of murders.

Both the Sheriff and OPS have advised us that law enforcement agencies nationwide have begun using camera surveillance systems to identify, track, and record criminal activity in real-time. Surveillance cameras have been found to be very effective at not only capturing criminal activity but also in deterring it.

Of particular interest to the Sheriff and OPS is a project in the City of Chicago where law enforcement is utilizing "smart" camera technology. These so called "smart" cameras are programmed to differentiate sounds such as a shot fired from a .38 caliber gun versus a firecracker. When a predetermined sound (i.e. gunshot) is heard, the camera is activated, panned to the source, and law enforcement is notified. Both the Sheriff and OPS agree that this type of technology could assist both agencies with responding to incidents in a more timely and effective manner.

PILOT PROGRAM PROPOSAL

The Florence/Firestone area has recently experienced a rise in violent crimes. The Sheriff reported that last year, there were 41 murders in the area. Because of the high murder rate, the Sheriff recommends this area be designated for a pilot program utilizing high technology audio/video equipment.

The pilot program proposal would consist of 20 cameras deployed in two target zones of the Florence/Firestone area, which would be identified by the Sheriff. OPS would need to develop a deployment plan for installing surveillance cameras within the four parks located in this area. While specific requirements have yet to be determined, it is expected a pilot program would cost a minimum of $1.6 million.

One issue that would delay launching a pilot program is that Southern California Edison (SCE) will not allow the County to install cameras on SCE poles. The Department of Public Works advised the County to erect their own poles. The cost to erect poles is estimated at $0.3 million and is included in the initial cost for a pilot program. While exact costs are not known, both departments do not have funding available in their operating budgets.

FUNDING ALTERNATIVES

Various funding options can be explored to fund a pilot program including grants available from the State/Federal governments, Productivity Investment Fund (PIF), and Information Technology Fund (ITF). Several governmental entities, including the Office of Homeland Security, may have grants available for which a pilot program may be eligible. However, since the deadline to apply for funding this year has expired, fiscal year (FY) 2007-08 is the earliest funding would be available.

Funding may also be available to either fully or partially fund the program through a PIF grant from the Quality Productivity Commission (QPC). Both the Sheriff and OPS could submit, joint or individual, proposals to the QPC for consideration. Proposals are reviewed and funding is awarded on a quarterly basis. The deadline to submit a program proposal for the second quarter of FY 2006-07 is October 13, 2006.

Another option is an ITF Grant from the Chief Information Office (CIO). A joint executive committee reviews proposals and develops funding recommendations. If a project is less than $100,000, the committee has authority to approve the project. However, if a project is over $100,000, it is presented to your Board for consideration.

It should also be noted that a proposal was submitted to Congresswoman Linda Sanchez's office for funding consideration of a pilot program. Congresswoman Sanchez represents the Florence/Firestone area. However, funding was denied.

Finally, the Board could allocate net County cost to fund a pilot program. However, a funding source has not been identified at this time as there are other funding priorities affecting Sheriff and Probation operations, as well as bargaining.

CONCLUSION

Utilizing high tech equipment, such as cameras, appears to be feasible in the unincorporated areas of the County and may be used to deter crime in the most problematic areas. The Sheriff and OPS should continue to work to develop a pilot program. The Sheriff's Department has committed to pursue all possible funding alternatives to initiate a pilot program.

If you have any questions, please contact me or your staff may contact Yolanda Reyes at (213) 974-0841.

DEJ:SRH:DIL
RG:YR:yjf

c: Sheriff
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors
Office of Public Safety

OPS.Equipment.Detection.bm