



City of South Lake Tahoe Report to City Council

Meeting Date: July 28, 2020

Title: Police Body Worn Camera Purchase

Location: Citywide

Responsible Staff Member: Shannon Laney, Police Lieutenant (530) 542-6130

Background:

During the January 14, 2020 City Council Meeting, City Council provided the Police Department direction to bring back a Police Body Worn Camera (BWC) system for purchase approval. The Police Department required a system that had automatic camera activation under prescribed circumstances such as an officer's weapon being drawn, video storage and sharing solutions, compatibility with or replacement of the current in-car camera system and video redaction software. The Police department examined three systems: 1. Axon, 2. Watch Guard, and 3. Panasonic. Although our current in-car camera system is Panasonic and implementing Panasonic BWC's would be the cheapest option, there are currently several unresolved issues with the storage and duplication of the video evidence within the Panasonic in-car camera system that makes their BWC system less desirable. The quotes obtained from both Axon and Watch Guard included upgraded storage solutions and replacing existing in-car camera systems. The Watch Guard quote is under attachment 09 and came to a total of \$311,888, including installation. The Panasonic sales quote includes just the purchase of the body cameras and necessary support equipment and is included in attachment 09 for a total of \$76,705.

Issue and Discussion:

This item is before the City Council to authorize the purchase of 42 body worn cameras (includes all sworn officers), 28 in-car camera systems including installation, and a cloud-based storage/video redaction system, plus the addition of one Information Technology permanent full-time position to work at least ½ time with the Police Department maintaining the BWC system and responding to Public Information Act requests. The recommended system was selected because of the automatic turn-on feature that will record an incident when an officer fails to turn the camera on manually in certain circumstances. We believe that this feature alone is extremely important in protecting our officers and community. It lends to transparency and accountability when an officer is in a position that a firearm or taser is used and overcomes the human element of forgetting to activate a camera under stressful and rapidly developing circumstances. Axon is the only company who currently offers this technology.

SOLE SOURCE JUSTIFICATION:

AUTOMATIC CAMERA ACTIVATION:

Automatic camera activations are situations that cause the camera to automatically start recording. The camera can always be manually triggered, but one requirement the Police Department feels is of upmost importance is the ability to have the cameras auto activate under pre-programed circumstances. Axon is

the only manufacturer who has this technology to address all the scenarios listed here. The triggers we are looking for are;

1. Emergency Lights/Collision activation

- a. When an officer activates their emergency lights or the vehicle is in a collision, both the in-car camera and body worn camera activate. Driving is one of the highest liability areas for a police department and recording an officer's driving behaviour under stressful code 3 situations is necessary and if the officer is involved in a traffic collision, the recording is used to either exonerate the officer or find guilt in a collision. All three manufactures offer this function.

2. Weapon Activation

- a. When an officer draws his firearm from its holster or activates his Taser, the body worn camera will auto activate through a sensor in the duty holster or a signal from the Taser. When an officer is under stress and responding to an immediate threat, the officer should not need to be concerned about whether they remembered to activate their body worn camera. The camera will auto activate and record the scene. Only Axon offers this option. Axon also activates the in-car camera if it is in range and all other Axon BWC's within a prescribed proximity.

3. Proximity Activation

- a. When an officer comes within a pre-designated distance from another officer who has their camera activated, the incoming officer's camera will activate. This is important to capture a scene from as many angles as possible. We have all seen the body worn camera footage that is blocked by the officer's hands or has a bad angle. If one officer activated his camera, all officers at the scene need to have their cameras on. Only Axon offers this option.

EQUPTMENT REPLACEMENT AND WARRANTY:

Axon offers a no-questions asked replacement policy and will ship out a new camera if one is damaged. Also, with this program, we get all new body cameras at years 2.5 and 5. Year 5 being the end of the contract, but we would be starting with brand new cameras with a life expectancy of up to 3 more years. Only Axon offers this type of equipment replacement and warranty program.

STORAGE:

Axon system uses a cloud-based storage solution, which would eliminate our current need for maintaining the additional server. The in-car video uploads via cellular connection and the body worn cameras download when plugged into a docking/charging station. The video is stored by event and all video from the same event is collated and organized. A bonus to the Axon system is that the online portal handles all Police digital evidence. All digital photos, audio recordings, cell phone video, etc. is uploaded via an easy to use cell phone application. Our current system uses a department-based server and staff hours to duplicate for court and public records requests. The Axon system will automatically add the digital evidence to the correct case and file accordingly. El Dorado District Attorney's office is currently moving forward with their own purchase of Evidence.com which will make sharing files seamless. Panasonic has promised a cloud-based system to us for several years; however, they have failed to provide it. WatchGuard's cloud-based system is similar to Axon's.

VIDEO REDACTION:

Responding to Public Records Requests is a large part of the maintenance and operation of the body worn camera system. A major task is redaction of information that is protected and not releasable under a public records request such as sexual assault victims, minors, personal identifying information and so on. The

older systems required staff to go through hours of video, frame by frame, redacting that information. Axon's video redaction software is highly automated. The user just tags a person's face that needs to be redacted and the program follows that face through the entire video, blurring it out. Even though this is a very user-friendly system for duplication and redaction, it still requires numerous staff hours to review all video prior to release.

IN-CAR CAMERAS:

We will be replacing our current in-car camera systems with Axon's solution. This allows a seamless full integration of all officer created video and combines all collected video under the assigned case. Two cameras will be installed in each patrol car, one facing forward and one in the back seat. The in-car cameras are synced with the body worn cameras. When one is activated, they will all activate. The BWC replaces the current microphone pack that officers wear.

ADD-ALTERNATES:

Axon offers an option called "Aware". This program provides a real-time alert to supervisors and/or the joint dispatch centre when an officer's camera is activated. It provides real-time GPS location data and what action (those listed above) activated the camera, including a "gun shot alert". If the body worn camera hears a gun shot go off, it will auto activate and send out the alert. This is important in a situation where an officer is ambushed, as the system provides real-time notification and location information. The costs of this add-alternate is an increase of \$108 per sworn officer (42) per year (5) for a \$22,680 total increase.

STAFFING:

The Police department along with Administrative services is requesting the addition of one Permanent full-time Information Technology (IT) Staff person. This position is needed at least ½ time to manage the Body Worn Camera system, including the responses to public records requests for BWC video and maintaining our patrol car fleet IT needs. Video redaction, although very automated in the requested purchase, is still time consuming and without the additional position it will be difficult to meet the legal requirements timeframe to respond to PRA requests. The current staffing at the police department is inadequate to meet the needs the BWC program creates and all the technology associated with it. When these systems fail, as technology often does, the department needs an IT person who is well trained and able to respond.

Financial Implications: The recommended vendor Axion provides for full payment in year one or installment payments over five years. The initial outlay for year one is approximately \$170,000 and is available from the General fund undesignated, unreserved fund balance. For years 2-5 the yearly amount of approximately \$78k will be included in the Police Department operating budget. The additional IT staff member will cost approximately \$110,775 and will be included in the general fund operating budget beginning 2020-2021. With the additional of this position, the Information Technology department 2020/2021 budget requests remains level with prior year due to reduction in other areas.

Environmental Considerations:

This program will have no impact on the environment.

Policy Implications:

The Police department believes in transparency and legitimacy with the community services. Further, through our research we have found that an officer with a body worn camera promotes more positive and compliant interactions with citizens, assists in investigation and prosecutions and increases officer safety.