



City Manager's Report
July 14, 2015 City Council Meeting
Prepared By: Scott Heller, Chief of Police

Item#: 3.1

Subject: Recommend City Council acceptance of an informational report regarding the status of testing and evaluation of body worn cameras for uniformed patrol officer within the police department.

Discussion: The attached report and presentation to the City Council is an update on the progress the Body Worn Camera Project authorized by Council in January 2015 and implemented by the police department in February 2015. In January 2015, Council accepted a grant from the Northern California Cities Self Insurance Fund (NCCSIF) in the amount of \$1,515 and immediately applied it to the purchase of two Taser Axon Flex Camera Systems with supporting hardware and software and began the testing and evaluation phase of the Body Worn Camera Project.

The Placerville Police Department currently has in car video systems which capture a stable and static view from the windshield of the patrol car. This system captures audio through a microphone attached to the officer. This technology has been in existence for the past two decades and still provides the benefit of its stable image, albeit a static image through the front windshield and the backseat area. The Department is committed to furthering and improving police technology in this area by researching, testing and evaluating the more advanced and portable body worn camera solution.

Officer body worn camera system deployments are rapidly becoming a best practice amongst police agencies throughout California and the nation. Due to their portability and viewpoint from the officer's perspective, they provide the most accurate account possible of police/citizen contacts. They supplement their in-car camera predecessor by providing audio and video evidence of the highest liability contacts of police work (i.e. foot pursuit, K9 tracking, and all the interactions and arrests occurring out of view of the patrol car windshield).

In a Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) survey of Chiefs of Police from 254 agencies nationwide, the number one reason for implementing an officer-worn camera system was to provide accurate documentation of encounters. Body worn cameras increase transparency and accountability which is a priority of the Department of Justice COPS Office and law enforcement agencies throughout the nation today. According to PERF, there are many benefits to officer-worn cameras, such as: improved digital evidence gathering; reduced time in court; increased successful prosecutions; streamlined reporting; and use as a training tool. Additionally, cameras improve quality of service by more efficient clearance of public complaints, reduced liability claims, and by protecting officers from false accusations.

Staff advised the Council upon accepting the NCCSIF grant and implementing the project, the police department would return to Council with findings to report on the progress of the project. Staff also requested a budget allotment for FY15/16 to continue to support the project. The request was approved by Council in the police department's FY15/16 Capital Outlay Budget. Meanwhile, the police department is aggressively seeking grant funding for the program. Following the inception of the program in January 2015, Support Division Commander Kay Iida was assigned as the Body Worn Camera Project Manager and will be providing the project's update presentation to Council in addition to the attached report.

Options: N/A

Cost: None with this informational report.

Budget Impact: None with this informational report. Council has previously accepted \$1,515 from a NCCSIF grant in FY14/15 and has authorized ongoing funding of the project in the police department's FY15/16 Capital Outlay Budget.

Recommendation: Recommend City Council acceptance of an informational report regarding the status of testing and evaluation of body worn cameras for uniformed patrol officer within the police department.



M. Cleve Morris, City Manager



Scott Heller, Chief of Police

Attachment:

Update BWC Project Report from Cmdr. Iida

Memo



To: Scott Heller, Chief of Police *SH*
From: Kay Iida, Support Division Commander *KI*
Date: 07/06/15
Re: Body-Worn Camera (BWC) Project Update

Background:

This report is being provided as an update on Placerville Police Department's Body-Worn Camera Program. Understanding that law enforcement agencies across the country and worldwide were moving towards the use of body-worn cameras as a promising tool to improve law enforcement interactions with the public, the Placerville Police Department (PPD) in its progressiveness, subscribed to this practice early-on in 2014.

Body-worn cameras (BWCs) provide a visual and audio record of interactions which are often useful and necessary for successful prosecution in criminal cases. However, more importantly, evidence indicates that the presence of BWCs helps strengthen accountability and transparency, and can assist in de-escalating conflicts, resulting in more constructive encounters between the police and members of the community. Law enforcement agencies' use of BWC programs has shown them to be a promising practice to improve their interactions with the public. These cameras are an important tool that could be an integrated part of a jurisdiction's holistic problem-solving and community-engagement strategy, helping to increase both trust and communication between the police and the communities they serve. BWCs can be highly effective, providing an inalterable audio and visual record of interactions that can capture empirical evidence in the event of a crime, police-citizen interaction, or use-of-force incident. Preliminary research indicates that departments that have effectively implemented BWC programs have received fewer public complaints, file fewer use-of-force reports, and show a reduction in adjudicated complaints resulting in a decrease of settlements.

Summary Report:

Realizing that the initial costs associated with starting a BWC program would inherently have a substantial financial impact; PPD began to research alternative funding source opportunities in order to become part of the best practice agencies throughout California and the nation.

In May 2014, PPD learned of a program in which consideration was being given by the Police Risk Management Committee (PRMC) to help fund the purchase of BWCs for a limited number of grant requesting NCCSIF Police Departments. In June 2014, the PRMC proposed and the Board of Directors approved a budget of \$50,000 for the purchase of BWCs. In December 2014, the Placerville Police Department applied for and received funding assistance in the amount of \$1515.00 from Alliant Insurance Company to purchase (2) Taser Axon Flex body-worn cameras. After working with Alliant Insurance Company and Taser International, Inc. directly, PPD received the two BWCs in late January 2015.

Soon thereafter, using the included software provided with the BWCs, an initial familiarization training program was developed and two PPD officers were chosen to receive the BWC units.

Furthermore, it was determined that upon issuance, these officers would deploy and utilize the BWCs in an on-going basis as opposed to rotating the BWCs amongst several officers over short periods. The theory behind this idea was that if used consistently, each of the two officers could evaluate the BWCs on a regular basis over time and would ultimately have the ability to note and work through any challenges, as well as capitalize (and recommend later) on what consistently worked well.

Findings:

In late-February after the initial training was completed, the two Axon Flex BWCs were placed into service on a test and evaluation basis. Shortly thereafter, during the Placerville Police Department's Strategic Plan Meeting with the Community, Chief Heller spoke of PPD's newly implemented BWC program. As part of the meeting, Chief Heller invited the community to provide input, citing that collaboration is the cornerstone in the development of several focus areas including the BWC program.

Once the BWC program testing phase began, PPD learned a few things immediately:

- Collar placement of the BWCs and video recording alignment came with some challenges. Simply stated, if the camera was positioned too far forward or too far backwards, it followed the natural curvature of the collar in either direction and recorded video in a position that would be too far to one side (i.e. if the camera was positioned too far forward it would record too far to the left and visa versa). When positioned correctly on the collar the captured video evidence provided a better viewpoint then other options such as placement on the chest.
- Titling and tagging of each video clip was being done at desktop computers at the police station. Officers would sync the camera to the computer and begin going through the que of video files and properly title and tag them for upload into the digital evidence locker. This seemed an inefficient use of time and we looked for a mobile solution to allow the officers to index titles to videos after in the field incidents occurred rather than going back to station and then drawing from memory or having to research calls for service incident histories.
- The basic digital download software included with each Taser Axon BWC was not sufficient enough when it came to the required high standards of evidence management. Because digital evidence requires secure and efficient download, storage, and retrieval that meet rigorous evidence standards for our industry it was essential for PPD to exercise a better option. Taser offers an upgraded full function, cloud-based, digital storage system titled EVIDENCE.com.

As part of PPD's response to the noted challenges above, the Department acquired two Samsung DROID MAXX units to be utilized as portable tablet devices with the two existing Taser Axon Flex body worn cameras (these items were obtained through our service provider free upgrade program). When utilized, the units help with immediate video footage calibration (they instantly show what the officer is looking at as opposed to having to upload a video in order to see the camera perspective), as well as immediate indexing of videos by the officer/user in the field (i.e. input of case number, citation number, contact location etc.). Furthermore, in March 2015, the Department requested trial access from Taser to test and evaluate Evidence.com, a cloud based software program that facilitates the collection and storage of all digital evidence from TASER. As part of our research into Evidence.com; we found that there more than 3,700 police agencies in the U.S. who currently utilize TASER's cloud-based digital evidence management platform to securely store and manage the digital evidence from their body cameras, dash cameras, phones and other digital devices. PPD also found that TASER protects EVIDENCE.com with a robust and comprehensive security program far beyond the capabilities of competing solutions or on-premise

solutions. This includes a dedicated security team, advanced attack detection and response, regular vulnerability testing, detailed audit logs, robust encryption and more.

Through the test and evaluation process, PPD has also learned of a few of the many benefits that BWCs bring. For example, of the approximate 105 hours of combined captured digital evidence/footage, officers have recorded confessions to crimes by suspects, DUI contacts and driver conduct/high-sobriety levels during the standardized field sobriety testing process, suspect apprehensions and false allegations represented by a suspect against an officer during an arrest. Overall, both officers report a greater sense of security and protection against some of the unfortunate matters that the law enforcement community as a whole experiences on a daily basis (false accusations, use of force allegations, etc.).

Additional Information:

In May 2015, as part of PPD's on-going goal to improve its knowledge-base and understanding of the capabilities presented by the Evidence.com software program, we partnered with Taser to provide a hands-on webinar training program for staff members. This training was designed for department users at many levels, including those wearing the cameras, field supervisors responsible for auditing digital evidence, the evidence technician tasked with downloading digital evidence and the administrative staff responsible for implementing policy, setting access rights and assuring full compliance with state and federal laws.

Also in May 2015, as part of the CALEA standards program PPD developed and implemented our Use of Portable Audio/Video Recorders Policy in consultation with other law enforcement agencies and the PPOA. Among other things, the policy sets guidelines for department members in areas, such as checking and maintaining portable audio/video recording devices prior to going into service, supervisor responsibilities (i.e. random review of recordings to ensure adherence to policy and to assess performance for training purposes), activation of BWCs, prohibited uses, retention of recordings, critical incident review and more.

Currently, PPD is seeking a BWC grant through the U.S. Department of Justice BJA - FY15 Body Worn Camera Pilot Implementation Program. If successful, PPD could be awarded up to \$37,500 to be used for additional body-worn cameras, docking stations and digital evidence storage.