



County of San Mateo

Inter-Departmental Correspondence

Department: SHERIFF

File #: 19-1265

Board Meeting Date: 1/14/2020

Special Notice / Hearing: None
Vote Required: Majority

To: Honorable Board of Supervisors
From: Carlos G. Bolanos, Sheriff
Subject: Sheriff's Office Unmanned Aerial Systems Program

RECOMMENDATION:

Informational report related to the implementation of an Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) program in the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office.

BACKGROUND:

Over the last year, the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office has been researching the feasibility of creating a UAS program, commonly known as a drone program. Unmanned Aerial Systems have become a proven and widely used tool in law enforcement agencies throughout the country. They provide agencies with new capabilities that are beneficial in a variety of situations including search and rescue missions, active shooter situations, accident reconstruction, 3D mapping, and scene over watch. A UAS is not a replacement for a helicopter or an airplane. It can, however, provide advanced capabilities in a manner that is safer and more cost-effective than a helicopter or airplane.

The Sheriff's Office is in the process of implementing a UAS program. The UAS program will be comprised of a Sheriff's Sergeant and four Deputy Sheriffs who will be trained and certified through the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). Each deputy in the UAS Unit will be assigned a UAS that will be kept with them while on-duty. This service model is very similar to our Canine Unit. The UAS deputies will be assigned a regular shift; however, they will have the added responsibility of piloting the UAS when called upon. This model ensures that there will be a UAS available in the field when one is needed.

DISCUSSION:

The equipment portion of this project will include, at a minimum, six UAS units with two camera systems and a forward-looking infrared (FLIR). FLIR is especially effective during night deployments as it senses infrared radiation from a heat source. The UAS will include spotlights, along with speakers, which will be used for directing or calling for missing people. The total cost of the equipment is anticipated to be approximately \$22,000.

The Sheriff's Office will place the highest priority on the protection of individual civil rights and the community's reasonable expectation of privacy when making any decision to deploy a UAS. The Sheriff's Office UAS program will primarily be used for emergency and life-saving missions such as search and rescue, cliff rescue, disaster response, hostage situations, locating fleeing suspects, fire response, and hazardous material spills. The UAS could also be used for non-emergency situations such as post-incident crime scene preservation, documentation, and training.

While the UAS Program is not being implemented with the purpose of aiding in criminal investigations, the Sheriff's Office UAS policy will nevertheless specifically prohibit use of a UAS to conduct warrantless searches of private residential property without a showing of exigent circumstances. The UAS policy will also comply with all federal and state laws to ensure the public's trust relating to privacy and safety. The Sheriff's Office will file for a Certificate of Authorization through the FAA, and each pilot will obtain a Remote Pilot Certificate as required by the FAA's Small UAS Rule (Part 107) prior to flying a UAS.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The cost associated with the implementation of a UAS program including equipment and training is not to exceed \$65,000. This project will be funded through Sheriff's Office Reserves. The Sheriff's Office anticipates implementing the UAS program in the first quarter of 2020.