



County of San Mateo

Inter-Departmental Correspondence

Department: BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
DISTRICT 1
File #: 21-894

Board Meeting Date: 11/16/2021

Special Notice / Hearing: None
Vote Required: Majority

To: Honorable Board of Supervisors
From: Supervisor Dave Pine, District 1
Supervisor Don Horsley, District 3
Subject: **Measure K** Reserves to Establish San Mateo County Gun Buy-Back Pilot Program

RECOMMENDATION:

Measure K: Recommendation to:

- A) Adopt a resolution authorizing up to \$208,000 in **Measure K** Reserves to establish a San Mateo County Gun Buy-Back Pilot Program, supported by an additional \$100,000 from the Sheriff's Department and at least \$67,000 raised by Citizens for a San Mateo County Gun Buy Back, a local community group; and
- B) Approve an Appropriation Transfer Request (ATR) of \$35,000 to the Sheriff's Department for staffing and logistics; and
- C) Approve an Appropriation Transfer Request (ATR) of \$138,000 to Non-Departmental Services for contracting with Gun by Gun to distribute the incentive.

BACKGROUND:

Firearms transactions have grown in recent years, tripling from 2007 to a peak in 2016, before leveling off by 2018 to 2019. This leveling off was short lived, with 2020 setting the record for the most handguns sold in a year.

Gun buybacks are events where individuals can turn in firearms to law enforcement, with no questions asked, and receive compensation in return. The overall goal of gun buyback programs is to reduce the number of gun deaths and injuries in a community by getting guns off the streets and making homes gun-free. Gun buyback events also provide an opportunity for the safe disposal of unwanted or unsecured firearms, especially by gun owners who would not otherwise know how to do so. Studies link deaths by firearm suicide to the number of households that contain weapons.

The County of San Mateo hosted three such successful events in 2018-2019, yielding a total of 1254 firearms collected.

As at prior San Mateo County events, individuals will be able to surrender their firearms to Sheriff's Department personnel in exchange for a cash gift, in the amount of \$100 per handgun/shotgun/rifle and \$200 per assault weapon. (Recipients can choose to keep the cash incentive or donate it to selected non-profit organizations; in 2019, most donations were given to the Sheriff's Activities League (SAL).)

Citizens for a San Mateo County Gun Buy Back ("Citizens"), a local community-run group, manages the "incentive" side, directing the grant/donations to a nationally recognized 501(c)3 organization, Gun by Gun, which in turn provides the banking support and actual cash gifts.

The Sheriff's Department provides all other logistical arrangements, including pre-planning, day-of operational support at and around site, packaging/sealing/labeling/storing for evidentiary purposes, and eventual destruction of the firearms.

In addition to removing firearms from the community, gun buyback events also provide an opportunity to educate the public about safe firearm storage and other gun safety protocols for the home, and to distribute free gun locks. Citizens also disseminates a voluntary and anonymous survey among participants to inform future planning efforts.

The chart below shows data from the three previous SMC events:

San Mateo County Gun Buybacks - total firearms collected

	May 5, 2018	Dec. 15, 2018	Dec. 14, 2019	Total 2018 & 2019
Total Firearms	426	441	387	1254
Handguns	191	168	156	515
Rifles/Shotguns	218	250	218	686
Assault Weapons	17	23	13	53
\$ Distributed	\$42,300	\$43,700	\$39,700	\$125,700

It is estimated that the first event held after the COVID-19 pandemic shelter-at-home orders will yield more firearms than these earlier events, due to multiple assumptions including increased firearm sales during shelter-in-place and the continued economic hardships of many residents who may need the cash.

As at past events, Citizens will continue to offer a voluntary and anonymous survey to each participant, with questions approved by the Sheriff's Department. In total, 518 surveys were collected in the three 2018/2019 buybacks. The surveys gathered valuable information, such as about attendees' reasons for participating and their level of satisfaction during the event. At the previous buybacks, cited reasons for participation included: having a suicidal family member, having a new baby, having lost a 17-year-old stepson to gun violence, finding firearms in the attic of their new home, and having domestic violence in the family. Surveys also showed that participants were grateful for a safe, organized event; 80% said it was easy to participate and many added remarks of appreciation for the officers conducting the buyback. The vast majority of participants at prior events are San Mateo County residents. Approximately 50% of participants had inherited their guns and

about 45% said they had no firearm training. Going forward, feedback from the surveys will continue to be used to improve the San Mateo County Buyback program.

DISCUSSION

Since 2018, the San Mateo County gun buyback events have been organized by a private community group (Citizens) that was required to seek funding in advance of each event. Citizens raised most of this funding from municipal sources (the various Cities and Towns in San Mateo County and the County), with some funding being contributed by elected officials and individual private donations. Due to economic impacts from COVID-19 and other priorities that have emerged, it is unlikely that donations from Cities will be able to sustain the program. This Pilot program seeks to establish a sustainable source of funding to support two-gun buyback events per year, beginning in December 2021.

The Sheriff's Department, which has consistently supported these events in the past, would provide logistical support for all events, offering the cost of that support (up to \$35,000) at one event per year as an "in-kind" contribution, but requiring reimbursement for the cost of the second event.

Using Measure K Reserves, the proposed pilot would supplement the Sheriff's Department contribution and establish a program to include two gun buyback events per calendar year. Each event is estimated to cost between \$70,000-\$80,000 (including up to \$45,000 to cover cash incentives for participants, plus up to \$35,000 in logistical expenses from Sheriff personnel).

The proposed pilot would also incorporate a robust public outreach plan, using the existing resources of the County Communications office, the Sheriff's Public Information Office, and Board of Supervisors offices.

Citizens will continue to administer voluntary participant surveys to collect data, including demographics, level of satisfaction, reasons for participation and how participants acquired and stored the surrendered firearms.

SCHEDULE AND BUDGET: Planning is already underway for an event in San Carlos on December 11, 2021, with financial contributions as outlined below. The proposal for calendar years 2022-23 would add a "pilot" event in May/June to assess whether two events/year would generate the requisite demand, while also maintaining a December event, timed to coincide with December holidays. Ideally, the May/June event would be held in North County, exact location to be determined, to facilitate participation by North County residents.

The budget below reflects estimated costs through year-end 2023 and would accommodate five events. Here, the word "Incentive" refers to the expenses estimated for the management of cash incentives for participants.

The total budget is estimated to be \$375,000 to hold five events in 2021-23. Citizens would contribute a total of at least \$67,000 (committed as of September 30, 2021), with \$45,000 allocated to the first event and the remaining \$22,000 to the second event; the Sheriff's Department would provide in-kind services at a departmental cost of \$100,000 for three events; and Measure K Reserves would provide the balance, not to exceed \$208,000, spread out over four events. [NOTE: Citizens' committed funds as of September 30, 2021, includes major support from the City of San Carlos, as

well as contributions from Assemblymember Kevin Mullin, the Congregational Church of San Mateo, and the Cities of Belmont, Woodside, Burlingame, and San Mateo.]

Estimated Budget for Five Events

(2021-2023) DATE	Type of Expense	Estimated Cost (up to)	Source: Donation through Citizens	Source: SHF (“in-kind”)	Source: Measure K contribution
Event #1: Dec 2021	Incentives	\$45,000	\$45,000		
	SHF logistics	\$30,000		\$30,000	
Event #2: May/June ‘22	Incentives	\$40,000	\$22,000		\$18,000
	SHF Logistics	\$35,000			\$35,000
Event #3: Dec 2022	Incentives	\$40,000			\$40,000
	SHF Logistics	\$35,000		\$35,000	
Event #4: May/June ‘23	Incentives	\$40,000			\$40,000
	SHF Logistics	\$35,000			\$35,000
Event #5: Dec 2023	Incentives	\$40,000			\$40,000
	SHF Logistics	\$35,000		\$35,000	
TOTAL		\$375,000	\$67,000	\$100,000	\$208,000

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

The Pilot Project would establish the following performance measures:

	December 2021 event	May/June 2022 event	December 2022 event	May/June 2023 event	December 2023 event
#Firearms Surrendered	450	400	400	400	400

After each event, the Sheriff’s Department and Citizens will coordinate to make a presentation to the Board of Supervisors regarding the number of firearms surrendered, the actual costs, and the results of the survey.

FISCAL IMPACT: The total cost for the five events is not to exceed \$375,000. The total County obligation is not to exceed \$208,000 over two years which will be funded entirely through Measure K Reserves. Of these Measure K reserves, \$35,000 will be transferred this fiscal year to the Sheriff’s Department, with an additional \$35,000 for staffing and logistics to be included in the Sheriff’s Department budget for Fiscal Year 2022-23, and \$138,000 will be transferred to Non-Departmental Services for the incentive program. The Sheriff’s Department contribution is not to exceed \$100,000. The balance (at least \$67,000) will be provided by Citizens from its donated sources.