



MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the Finance Committee

FROM: Rich Olson, City Manager
Eddie M. Buffaloe, Jr. Chief of Police

DATE: September 8, 2015

REF: Consideration ~ Authorization to Accept Governor's Crime Commission
"Local Law Enforcement Block Grant" Award

BACKGROUND:

The Elizabeth City Police Department, in its on-going quest to seek grant funding opportunities from outside sources that will enhance operations and further the department's mission of the pursuit of excellence, submitted an application to the Governor's Crime Commission (GCC) for the "Local Law Enforcement Block" grant. This grant was requested for the purpose of acquiring body worn cameras, in an effort to enhance efficiency and effectiveness of operations and in response to the nationwide trend of improving transparency during police-citizen encounters. The Elizabeth City Police Department received written notification during last week of August 2015 that the grant has been awarded. For this particular grant, no matching funds are required by the City of Elizabeth City, as the grant provides 100% funding.

ANALYSIS:

The Governor's Crime Commission offered grant funding to law enforcement agencies for FY 15-16 for programming that will support technology initiatives to enhance the readiness and effectiveness of a department's day-to-day operations. Specifically for the FY 15-16 "Local Law Enforcement Block" grant, the Elizabeth City Police Department applied for funding to acquire body worn cameras to outfit uniformed patrol officers in the field. Purchase of the cameras will supplement the camera system already in place in patrol vehicles (I-Cop/dash cameras) and will enhance the daily operations of the department, as well as provide greater officer safety and accountability to citizens served.

The Elizabeth City Police Department submitted a grant application to the GCC in January 2015 and was notified in August 2015 the grant had been awarded. In the

award letter from the GCC, the total grant budget total is \$14,550.00. Grant funds will be used to purchase thirty (30) body-mounted cameras to be used by officers in the field. Also, in the FY 15-16 budget, Council approved the purchase of ten (10) additional body worn cameras, which will bring the total to forty (40) cameras - enough to completely outfit the Department's forty patrol officers assigned to the Operations Division who work in the field.

OPERATIONAL CONCERNS:

During the preliminary grant application process, City Council expressed concern that a standard operating procedure be in place before the police department implements its new "BWC" (Body Worn Camera) Program. These cameras have been known to decrease citizen complaints and, given recent national events, have become a top priority for the law enforcement community. To ensure that privacy issues, as well as security and storage concerns are properly addressed, the Elizabeth City Police Department drafted a "model policy," had it reviewed and received approval by the District Attorney's Office.

The Department also believes it is highly important to receive public input regarding the use of body worn cameras in the field; therefore, a collaborative "BWC" Committee was formed and met in August 2015, with a second meeting planned for September 2015. The purpose of the Committee will be to carefully review policy and ensure that all stakeholders play an integral part of this process. We also plan to hold public forums to receive additional input from community members. It is imperative that there be a "buy-in" by the public; and therefore the Elizabeth City Police Department is committed to ensuring that all checks and balances are in place before the cameras are actually used in the field as a part of daily operations.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

By motion, recommend that the City Council approve the Elizabeth City Police Department's acceptance of the Governor's Crime Commission's "Local Law Enforcement Block" grant in the amount of \$14,550, for the purchase of body worn cameras.