



CITY COUNCIL AGENDA STATEMENT



May 11, 2021

File ID: 21-0127

TITLE

RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF CHULA VISTA ACCEPTING \$53,700 FROM THE CALIFORNIA GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF EMERGENCY SERVICES AND APPROPRIATING SAID FUNDS TO THE POLICE GRANTS SECTION OF THE FEDERAL GRANTS FUND FOR THE COVERDELL FORENSIC SCIENCE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (4/5 VOTE REQUIRED)

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Council adopt the resolution.

SUMMARY

The Police Department has been awarded grant funding from the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services for the Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement Program. The goal of this program is to improve the quality, timeliness, and credibility of forensic science services over current operations.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The activity is not a "Project" as defined under Section 15378 of the California Environmental Quality Act State Guidelines; therefore, pursuant to State Guidelines Section 15060(c)(3) no environmental review is required.

BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

Not applicable

DISCUSSION

The Paul Coverdell Forensic Sciences Improvement Program, which is administered by the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES), provides federal funding to accredited crime laboratories throughout California. Coverdell funds can be used to provide education and training in both technical and personal skills to California's forensic scientists to ensure that they can effectively perform their laboratory assignments. In order to receive these funds, the crime laboratories must verify their accreditation status with a Forensic Crime laboratory organization or appropriate certifying body. The crime laboratories must also certify that they have a plan in place to conduct an independent external investigation into allegations of serious negligence or misconduct by laboratory employees or contractors.

The Police Department has been awarded \$53,700 for the 2020 Coverdell Program. This funding will be used to provide training and equipment used by crime laboratory personnel. The education and training to crime laboratory personnel, involving disciplines of digital media and crime scenes, will ensure that they can effectively perform their assignments during crime scene callouts.

Digital forensics is recognized as a growing field that is increasingly beneficial in solving crimes. The Chula Vista Police Department's Digital Evidence Unit (DEU) was created in 2016. Since then, the Department has utilized several cell phone data extraction devices to forensically examine cell phones as a part of criminal investigations. These devices are limited to devices that have been collected as evidence in criminal cases and every search is performed as part of a specific search warrant in compliance with California State law. The 2016 California Electronic Communications Privacy Act governs how law enforcement may search and forensically examine devices such as cell phones. It is widely considered the strongest personal privacy law in the country.

The Police Department recently added a third Digital Forensic Examiner to the DEU, and the addition of a third device and its related software will solve an existing and ongoing backlog of devices awaiting forensic examination. By solving the analytical bottleneck of too few devices for the current staff, turnaround times should decrease, and the ability to provide more timely information to investigators will have a positive impact in the Department's ability to solve crimes.

Additionally, the grant funding will cover the cost of a supercomputer to ensure newly acquired digital forensic equipment and software are functioning at its fullest capacity. Lastly, the purchase of a new crime scene camera lens will give the crime laboratory the ability to take high resolution pictures in low light environments that will improve forensic analysis.

DECISION-MAKER CONFLICT

Staff has reviewed the decision contemplated by this action and has determined that it is not site-specific and consequently, the real property holdings of the City Council members do not create a disqualifying real property-related financial conflict of interest under the Political Reform Act (Cal. Gov't Code § 87100, et seq.).

Staff is not independently aware, and has not been informed by any City Council member, of any other fact that may constitute a basis for a decision-maker conflict of interest in this matter.

CURRENT-YEAR FISCAL IMPACT

Approval of this resolution will result in the acceptance of \$53,700 grant funding from the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services for the Paul Coverdell Forensic Science Improvement Program and the appropriation of \$4,020 to the supplies and services category and \$24,147 to the capital category of the Police Grant section of the Federal Grant Fund. Funding from the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services will completely offset the cost of the Coverdell Forensic Improvement Program, resulting in no net fiscal impact.

ONGOING FISCAL IMPACT

Since the grant crosses multiple fiscal years, approval of this resolution will direct staff to include \$25,533 to the supplies and services category of the Police Grant section of the Federal Grant Fund in the FY 2021/2022 budget. The table below outlines the funding from the Coverdell grant.

DESCRIPTION	FY 2020/2021	FY 2021/2022	GRANT TOTAL
Training Costs for Crime Lab Personnel	\$2,020	\$7,383	\$9,403
Digital Device Extraction Equipment & Software	\$12,000	\$18,150	\$30,150
Super Computer	\$12,147	\$0	\$12,147
Crime Scene Camera Lens	\$2,000	\$0	\$2,000
TOTAL COVERDELL FUNDING	\$28,167	\$25,533	\$53,700

ATTACHMENTS

None.

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