

Charlotte Police Department

Memo

To: Mayor Armitage, City Council Members

From: Chief Brentar

Date: July 17th, 2020

Re: Body Cameras, In-Car Cameras, and Interview Room- AXON

I am requesting that funding be approved for new body camera's, in-car camera's, and a new interview camera through AXON.

Background:

In October of 2017 we purchased 16 body cameras and 5 in-car video systems from Panasonic. Since implementation we have experienced nothing but problems with the entire system and Panasonic as a whole. Everyone one of the 16 body cameras that were purchased have been sent back for repair a minimum of 3 times, most of them even more. We currently only have 12 cameras that function properly but, in my opinion, those will fail as well as all the rest have. I have over 200 emails since implementation with Panasonic outlining the problems that we have experienced. Their solution to the problem is to send the defective equipment to a third-party vendor, who then repairs the product, and sends it back. I have done this numerous times and sent in broken body cameras only to have them returned to me in the same condition. After much discussion and expressing my displeasure, Panasonic sent factory representatives from Japan to my office in August of 2019 to try to figure out what the problem was. They concurred that the problem was with their product and would need 4 months to come up with a solution. Representatives from Panasonic met with me this past February and when I told them I wanted to be reimbursed they only thing they could offer me was to replace their products.

Consequences:

Failure to replace this equipment is going to put the city at an increased risk for civil liability. If we have body cameras that fail to work when needed, officers' actions will get called into question even more. We were very fortunate that the officer-involved shooting that we had in January of 2019 was captured on body camera. This led to clearing the officer of any wrongdoing, swift prosecution of the offender, and no civil liability to the City. With the current state of affairs in this country it is imperative that officers have body cameras that are reliable.

Panasonic has proven that their product is not reliable which is only going to set us up for failure.

Solution:

Going with AXON for body cameras, in-car cameras, and a new interview room camera has many benefits. AXON is the most reliable camera system for law enforcement and is used by more agencies around the world than any other. Having body cameras, in-car cameras, and the interview room on one system allows officers to use less time doing reports. Currently, for any video that we have we must first download and convert the video to the desktop of a computer. Depending on the size of the video this can take an hour or more. Then this file gets burned onto a DVD which can take just as long. Finally, these DVD's must then be hand carried to the Prosecutor's Office. With the AXON system, videos from all three systems can be sent digitally through the system without the download process saving time and allowing officer to be more efficient. It also creates an audit trail showing exactly when videos are sent and received thus holding us accountable for when they are sent and those who receive them as well.

Part of the AXON system also includes redaction software. This would allow us to blur out people's faces, license plates, or mute certain audio when we must fill Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests. Our current process for this is even more complicated. Not only do we have to download and convert video and burn it to a DVD, we then have to upload that video to another program for editing and finally burn it to another DVD to be released. This process takes an enormous amount of time for not only our secretary, but the Sergeant who fills FOIA requests who should be supervising the road officers. The AXON system will eliminate many wasted hours of time-consuming work making us more efficient.

AXON Executive Summary:

I have included the Executive Summary from AXON for your review which breaks down the equipment we would receive and the associated costs. As you can see, they finance the cost of their products out over a 5-year period. Originally, the cost was going to be around \$63,000 for the first year but I have worked with their representative to get the first 2 years at a lower cost, \$14,000/yr., so that there will be less of an impact on this current budget and the next fiscal year's budget as well. There will however be an increase in the cost for years 3, 4, & 5.

If you have any other questions please let me know.