

Agenda Report

TO: City Council **DATE:** June 30, 2003

FROM: City Manager

SUBJECT: Amend Chapter 5.24 of the Pasadena Municipal Code relating to the assessment of a fee for false alarms; recognize additional revenue from false alarm fees; add one FTE in the Police Department.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended the City Council:

1. Direct the City Attorney to prepare an ordinance to amend Chapter 5.24 of the Pasadena Municipal Code relating to the assessment of fees for false alarms. The amendment would allow for the charging on the second and all subsequent responses in a twelve-month period.
2. Recognize additional revenues of \$125,000 from the Alarm Fines in FY '04.
3. Amend the FY '04 Police Department operating budget to add 1.0 Police Officer FTE to the Patrol Section (403100) and adjust appropriations by \$103,360.

BACKGROUND

Unnecessary calls for service due to false burglar alarms continue to be a tremendous drain on resources for the Police Department. Police officers respond to approximately 8,000 false alarms per year, more than 10% of the total calls for service. The time involved in such responses amount to approximately 2,600 hours per year. Though burglar alarms serve as useful deterrents to crime, the amount of time and money the Police Department spends responding to false alarm calls every year is intolerable.

The Police Department has studied various ways to reduce their responses to the false alarm problem, including a "Verified Response." The Verified Response would require confirmation of a crime through a private security response, video monitoring of the location, or other similar confirmation. The Police Department would only respond after there was evidence of an actual crime. While this option was considered, there is concern about the impacts of such a policy.

Therefore, rather than recommend a Verified Response Policy at this time, it is recommended that the current ordinance be amended so that a fee would be assessed on the second false alarm in any twelve-month period rather than the fourth alarm as is current practice. The revenue projected from billing on the fourth false alarm and any subsequent alarm is \$175,000. The two primary objectives of the recommendation action are cost recovery for services unnecessarily provided, and added financial sanctions to those who have control over an alarm system. Presently, a charge of \$94.00 is assessed for billable false alarm responses. This covers all costs associated with such a response and billing. It is anticipated that the added financial sanctions will encourage those who have control over alarm systems, both vendors and users, to improve of the reliability of such systems. While it is not possible to accurately determine the extent of any such reduction, it is hoped that it will be in the range of 10-15%.

Over the past three years, the police department has responded to the following number of burglar alarms:

Year	Number	Average Minutes	Total Hours
2002	8083	20:36	2742
2001	7208	19:43	2343
2000	7864	21:02	2755

Year	Total Calls for Service	% False Alarms	Cost	Per Hour
2002	67,880	11.9	\$220,391	\$80.70
2001	74,927	9.6	\$182,938	\$78.38
2000	75,803	10.3	\$199,351	\$72.36

During calendar year 2002, the Police Department responded to 8,083 false burglar alarms, with the average call requiring 20.36 minutes for the responding officer to complete the call. This totals 2,742 FTE hours diverted from crime and neighborhood problems. The addition of one FTE assigned to the Patrol Section will allow the Police Department to recover some of the lost-opportunity costs for officers responding to false alarms and maintain adequate staffing to address more significant public safety issues.

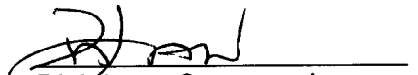
FISCAL IMPACT

Approval of the recommendations will result in an increase to the General Fund in the amount of \$126,524. Appropriate \$103,360 to the Police Department's budget to fund the new Police Officer position in the Patrol Section.


Respectfully submitted,


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City Manager

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