

# Agenda Report

**TO:** CITY COUNCIL

**DATE:** September 22, 2008

**FROM:** CITY MANAGER

**SUBJECT:** AUTHORIZE THE PURCHASE OF A POLICE HELICOPTER WITH IMPROVED QUIET TECHNOLOGY FOR AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$2,069,000

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

It is recommended that the City Council:

- 1) Authorize the issuance of a purchase order to MD Helicopters Incorporated not to exceed \$2,069,000 for the purchase of (1) MD 500E police helicopter; and
- 2) Grant the proposed purchase orders exemption from the competitive bidding pursuant to City Charter Section 1002(H), contracts with other governmental entities or their contractors. MD Helicopters Incorporated is a military contractor and the City of Huston, Texas has a purchase order to purchase eight of the same make and model helicopters.

## **BACKGROUND:**

The Police Department's Air Operations Section currently operates an aging fleet of police helicopters with over 12,000 flight hours each, which are in constant need of maintenance and repair. This equates to a standard car reaching the 500,000 mile mark. The police department's fleet also includes two military surplus helicopters manufactured in 1969 and 1971. The age of the current helicopter fleet is a concern and these aircraft are in constant need of repair and routinely taken out of service for unscheduled maintenance. All of the police helicopters use an older design that makes them louder than the quiet technology used by some helicopter manufactures today. The MD helicopter series use a quiet technology design that creates a significantly lower noise signature.

The Police Department's Air Operations Section conducted substantial research on identifying a helicopter that would meet law enforcement needs and operate with

reduced noise. Quiet helicopter technology advances in recent years have contributed to quieter helicopters. Main rotor and tail rotor tip speed is a primary factor in helicopter noise. The MD 500E incorporates a five blade main rotor and a four blade-tail rotor system, cutting rotor noise in half. Noise is measured in decibels (db) and small changes in db levels produce large changes in noise amplitude. Based on Federal Aviation noise data the MD 500E helicopter is rated at 80 db; while the police department's current helicopters are rated at 84 db. The new "quiet" helicopter would be assigned to fly night patrol over Pasadena, since 95% of the noise complaints from residents are during evening hours. The cities of Glendale and Burbank operate a similar series of MD 500 police helicopters.

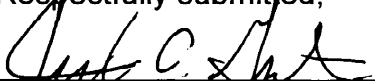
The Police Departments Air Operations Section has been recognized throughout the years for being a leader in airborne law enforcement and safety. The MD series aircraft has also been recognized as being one of the safest aircraft in existence. In addition, the aircraft is also considered one of the best performing light turbine aircraft of all time. Response times to emergency incidents are critical; the MD 500E out performs our current turbine fleet with a maximum speed of 175 MPH compared to our current fleet which tops out at approximately 120 MPH.

The new helicopter will have the same turbine engine and many of the same avionic features as the department's current police helicopters so parts inventory, training and tooling will be kept to a minimum. Additionally, transition training for all of the pilots is included in the purchase price of the new helicopter, eliminating post-purchase training costs.

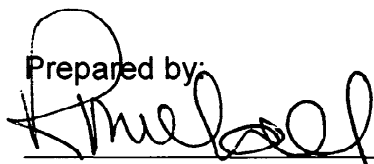
**FISCAL IMPACT:**

The base price of the new helicopter is \$1,578,103 and with the addition of police equipment and California sales tax the total cost is \$2,069,000. Staff proposes to arrange a lease-financing for this purchase prior to delivery to the City. Funds have been included in the Police Department's fiscal year 2009 operating budget to cover estimated debt service payments, actual financing costs will be based on prevailing market rates at the time the financing is concluded. Once the terms are arranged, staff will return to City Council for authorization to enter into the lease financing. Issuance of the purchase order at this time will guarantee the City a place in the production schedule.

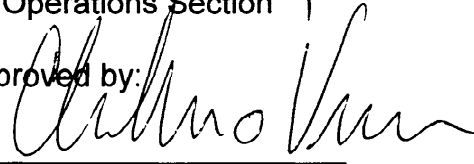
Respectfully submitted,

  
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