




Office of the City Manager

INFORMATION CALENDAR

January 27, 2015

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council  
From:  Christine Daniel, City Manager  
Submitted by: Michael K. Meehan, Chief of Police  
Subject: Voluntary Security Camera Database to Help Solve Crimes

INTRODUCTION:

The City Council requested that staff consider whether to implement a voluntary database for residents and businesses to register their private security cameras, similar to a program currently in place in the city of Fremont. Staff recommends that the City monitor other jurisdictions efforts to implement voluntary Security Camera Database Programs to determine their effectiveness before undertaking a similar program in Berkeley. There does not appear to be enough data or experience available at this point to evaluate the value of such programs or their impact on privacy. Therefore, staff recommends an evaluation after one year to review available data and survey local agencies to determine their level of satisfaction with this program.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS:

A number of cities both throughout the nation and within the region have recently implemented voluntary security camera databases in an effort to reduce property crimes. The programs assert that increasing and improving digital evidence availability to law enforcement will increase the likelihood of apprehension and prosecution of offenders. The City of Berkeley continues to have a high, though declining, number of property crimes and the Berkeley Police Department is open to evaluating innovative tools that may help apprehend the suspects responsible for these crimes. Additionally, there is some anecdotal evidence that this type of community partnership may also have the potential benefit of increasing crime reporting rates and increasing positive interactions between law enforcement and community members.

One concern that arises is related to personal privacy. Some jurisdictions have camera feeds from private residences and businesses being monitored directly by members of the police department. Other agencies maintain a list of locations where cameras exist, and make requests for footage as-needed to support criminal investigations. Under the latter system, community members are not required to provide footage as a condition of being listed in the database, though it is reasonable to expect that most would as they have demonstrated an interest in assisting in the crime fighting mission by voluntarily enrolling in a video database.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Staff time to undertake the evaluation of other jurisdictions.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY:

There are no identifiable environmental opportunities or effects associated with the subject of this report.

CONTACT PERSON

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