



City of San Antonio

Agenda Memorandum

File Number: 17-1959

Agenda Item Number: 3.

Agenda Date: 3/1/2017

In Control: Criminal Justice, Public Safety and Services Committee

DEPARTMENT: Police Department

DEPARTMENT HEAD: William P. McManus, Chief of Police

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: Citywide

SUBJECT: Briefing on Drone Operations

SUMMARY:

In response to the increased recreational and commercial use of drones, the SAPD recommends that the Criminal Justice, Public Safety & Services Committee discuss the operation of drones within the City of San Antonio as it relates to the safety of operators, the general public and critical infrastructure.

BACKGROUND:

Over the last several years, law enforcement agencies, and communities, across the nation have expressed concerns associated with drone usage in public areas. In addition to privacy concerns, law enforcement has noted the potential threat to public posed by the operation of drones in public venues.

On November 2, 2016, the San Antonio Police Department met with representatives from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), the Aviation Department and the City Attorney's Office to discuss issues related to the operation of drones. Chapter 423 of the State Government Code regulates drone usage as follows:

- Prohibits use of drone with intent to conduct surveillance
- Prohibits intentionally or knowingly operating an unmanned aircraft over a critical infrastructure facility at a height lower than 400 feet or allowing an unmanned aircraft to make contact with a critical infrastructure facility
- Permits capturing images of public real property, or a person on that property, using an unmanned

aircraft from a height of no more than eight feet above ground level in a public place

It is important to note that the SAPD supports the prohibition of drone usage within sight of an ongoing police operation that poses a threat of death or serious bodily injury to any person to include: barricaded individuals, bomb incidents, hostage situations, active shooter incidents and acts of terrorism.

Next Steps

The SAPD is researching the costs associated with developing a drone program to enhance the Department's response in tactical situations. The SAPD plans to schedule a briefing to update the Criminal Justice, Public Safety & Services Committee at a future meeting.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Criminal Justice, Public Safety and Services Committee provide direction with respect to this issue for possible action.