



City of San Antonio

Agenda Memorandum

File Number:15-2607

Agenda Item Number: 6.

Agenda Date: 4/15/2015

In Control: Governance Committee

DEPARTMENT: Police

DEPARTMENT HEAD: Anthony L. Treviño, Jr.

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: Citywide

SUBJECT:

Response to Waiver of Alarm Permit Fees CCR

SUMMARY:

On January 14, 2015, Councilman Alan Warrick requested City Council consider a “waiver of alarm permit fees for victims of domestic violence, child abuse, sexual assault and stalking.”

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The SAPD Alarms Unit is currently responsible for administering the alarm registration program. The Unit has over 48,000 permitted alarms on record. Each alarm system owner is required to pay an annual fee of \$40 (\$35 for Seniors) for the cost of administering the program. Additionally, there is a tiered false alarm fee schedule that starts at \$0 for the first three false alarm responses and increases with the number occurrences thereafter.

The Alarm Unit is mandated by the Municipal Code Chapter 25, Article IV to regulate all active alarms within the City of San Antonio and reduce the number of false alarm calls. The Unit has a crew of 12 personnel who process all payments for new alarm permits, renewal permits, and false alarm fees, along with monthly billing, fielding customer inquiries and complaints and handling all walk up customer business.

ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION:

Domestic violence, child abuse, sexual assault and stalking are complex problems that raise a number of important questions related to an alarm waiver program, including:

- According to the 2013 *Crime in Texas* report, published by the Texas Department of Public Safety, 54.6% of the victims of family violence are either a spouse or child of the offender(s) and 45.3% of the victims of sexual assault either live in the home or are related to the offender(s). In cases such as this, reducing or waiving alarm fees would be ineffective.

- How long would the waiver be in place? (E.g. If the person was a victim of child abuse when they were 5 years of age, and now they are 35 years of age, and/or the offender is deceased, would they qualify for the waiver program?)
- How would the permit holder verify that the victim still resides in a residence where an alarm exists, and how often would the verification need to be renewed?
- The alarm permit fee is somewhat insignificant when compared to the alarm company's maintenance fee. Alarm companies will often install the alarm in a victim's home for free, but the victim still pays the alarm company a monthly fee to monitor that alarm.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The fiscal impact is uncertain, however, SAPD reports approximately 1,000 incidents of family violence and sexual assault each month. If, for example, only 10 percent of the permitted alarms are owned by a victim, the City would realize a loss of \$192,960 in permit fees per year. This could inhibit Alarm Unit staff's ability to effectively manage the program and may reduce the service to the citizens of San Antonio.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Department is sensitive to the impact of family violence, sexual assault and other related crimes, on victims. However, there are many variables to take into account with such a waiver program, therefore, SAPD recommends forwarding this issue to the Public Safety Committee for further discussion.