



City of San Antonio

Agenda Memorandum

File Number:15-2971

Agenda Item Number: 2.

Agenda Date: 5/6/2015

In Control: Public Safety Committee

DEPARTMENT: Police

DEPARTMENT HEAD: Anthony L. Treviño, Jr.

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: Citywide

SUBJECT:

Alarm Fee Waiver CCR

SUMMARY:

In January 2015, Council Member Alan Warrick requested City Council consider a waiver of alarm permit fees for victims of domestic violence, child abuse, sexual assault and stalking. Recently, Council Member Rebecca Viagran asked whether alarm permit fees could be waived for senior citizens.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

As mandated by Municipal Code Chapter 25, Article IV, the SAPD Alarms Investigation Office (AIO) regulates all active alarms within the City of San Antonio in an effort to reduce the number of false alarm calls. The AIO is staffed with 12 personnel who process all 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.

Currently there are over 65,900 permitted residential alarms on record. Each alarm system owner is required to pay an annual fee of \$40.00 (\$35.00 for senior citizens, if they are age 65 or older, and eligible for the homestead exemption) to defray the cost of administering the program. Other than the reduced senior citizen permit fee, there are no reduced or waived permit fees.

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 in some way to the offender(s). In cases such as this, reducing or waiving alarm fees would be ineffective.

SAPD reports approximately 1,000 incidents of family violence and sexual assault each month. It is unknown at this time how many victims reside in the City of San Antonio.

Current data bases are not geared to track how many of these victims have alarm permits; therefore, the impact of waiving fees cannot be determined.

Waiving the permit fees for senior citizens also raises several issues for consideration. Only senior citizens who are the property owner and reside at the property are eligible to claim that exemption. These permits comprised 16% (\$408,065.00) of the total new and renewal revenues last fiscal year.

If a senior citizen is renting a home and has a residential alarm, they are not eligible for the exemption. The data bases do not currently track these permit holders, so the impact of waiving fees for them cannot be determined.

Research of alarm permitting policies for the cities of Houston, Dallas, Ft. Worth, Austin, and Corpus Christi indicates that these cities do not provide exemptions or waive permit fees for their citizens

ALTERNATIVES: As an alternative to waiving senior citizen alarm permit fees, the current \$35.00 fee could be reduced.

FISCAL:

In FY14, the senior citizen new and renewal permit fees totaled \$408,065.00. If this fee is waived, the City will realize this amount as a loss of revenue for future years.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff is recommending a one year moratorium on alarm permits fees for victims of domestic violence and provide a recommendation on whether or not to continue the moratorium. After one year, staff will report back to City Council the financial impact. Secondly, staff will provide the City Council an alternative recommendation to reduce the senior citizen alarm permit fee within the FY2016 Proposed Budget. Any proposed change in these fees would be done through the budget process.