

CITY OF LAGO VISTA POLICE DEPARTMENT

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE

5901 Municipal Complex, Lago Vista, Texas, 78645



Exceptional Budget Item Request

Budget Account Number: 10-520-6500

Title of Request: Unmanned Aerial System (Drone) Purchase and Software Subscription

Cost of Request: \$30,000

Justification: The Police Department seeks funding to implement a state-of-the-art drone program to enhance public safety, operational efficiency, and community engagement. The acquisition of an unmanned aerial system (UAS) will significantly augment the department's capabilities across patrol, investigative, and emergency response operations, delivering measurable benefits to both law enforcement and the residents we serve.

Program Objectives and Benefits

The proposed drone program will provide advanced technological support for a wide range of law enforcement activities, with specific advantages tailored to the unique needs of a lakefront community. Key benefits include:

Enhanced Search and Rescue Operations: Drones equipped with high-resolution cameras and thermal imaging will enable rapid and effective searches for missing persons, particularly in challenging lakefront environments such as beaches, marinas, and wooded areas adjacent to the water. This capability is critical for locating individuals in distress, including swimmers, boaters, or hikers, potentially saving lives by reducing response times. The system we are proposing is also capable of delivering small payloads where officers may not be able to reach including but not limited to personal flotation devices or Narcan.

Improved Crime and Crash Scene Documentation: Drones will capture detailed aerial imagery and video, facilitating precise documentation of crime scenes, traffic collisions, and other incidents. This high-quality evidence will enhance investigative accuracy, support prosecutorial efforts, and streamline reporting processes.

Situational Awareness and Officer Safety: By providing real-time aerial intelligence prior to officer arrival, drones will enable safer and more informed responses to dynamic incidents, such as active threats or barricaded subjects. This capability reduces risks to officers and civilians alike by allowing strategic planning and de-escalation from a safe distance.

De-escalation of High-Risk Situations: Drones can monitor volatile situations from above, reducing the need for immediate physical intervention and allowing officers to assess and communicate with subjects remotely. This approach promotes de-escalation and minimizes the potential for escalation in tense encounters.

Support for Lakefront-Specific Challenges: The unique geography of our community presents distinct public safety challenges. Drones will assist in monitoring large gatherings, ensuring water safety, and responding to incidents in hard-to-reach areas.

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Community Engagement and Transparency: The drone program will include a public-facing transparency website, where residents can access flight logs, usage reports, and operational policies. This initiative fosters trust, promotes accountability, and ensures the community is informed about the responsible use of this technology.

Operational Impact

A preliminary analysis of department data indicates that, since October 1, 2024, approximately 187 incidents could have benefited from drone deployment. These incidents include missing persons cases, traffic accident reconstructions, and public safety responses during large lakefront events. The use of drones in these scenarios would have improved response times, enhanced evidence collection, and increased officer safety.

Budget Allocation

The proposed budget encompasses all necessary components to establish a comprehensive and sustainable drone program:

Equipment Acquisition: Purchase of a professional-grade drone with advanced imaging capabilities, suited for both day and night operations in diverse weather conditions.

Training and Certification: Comprehensive training for designated officers to become FAA-certified drone operators, ensuring compliance with federal regulations and best practices.

Digital Evidence Management: Cloud-based storage solutions for securely managing and archiving drone-captured video and imagery, preserving chain-of-custody for investigative and legal purposes.

Equipment Maintenance and Warranty: A multi-year warranty and maintenance plan to ensure the longevity and reliability of the drone system.

Community Transparency Platform: Development and maintenance of a public-facing website to share flight logs, usage statistics, and program policies, reinforcing the department's commitment to transparency.

Conclusion

The implementation of a drone program represents a forward-thinking investment in public safety, operational efficiency, and community trust. By leveraging cutting-edge technology, the Police Department will enhance its ability to protect and serve our lakefront community, addressing both routine and unique challenges with precision and professionalism. We respectfully request approval of the proposed budget to initiate this transformative program.

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Respectfully,

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Exceptional Budget Item Request

Budget Account Number: 10-520-1230 (Salary & Benefits), 10-520-4200 (Travel), 10-520-4300 (Training),

Title of Request: Police Officer Position – Partially COPS Grant Funded

Cost of Request: \$73,351.38 (Salary & Benefits), \$1,500 (Training), \$1,000 (Travel for Training)

Justification: For the past two years, the City has collaborated with the Lago Vista Independent School District (LVISD) to deploy School Resource Officers (SROs) across LVISD campuses. Currently, two SROs are employed by the City, with LVISD funding 71.5% of their total costs. This partnership has proven highly effective in enhancing school safety and supporting the Police Department's operational needs. To build on this success, the City and ISD propose adding a third SRO position in the upcoming fiscal year to further strengthen public safety and community engagement.

Operational Benefits of School Resource Officers

The SRO program delivers significant operational advantages to the City's Police Department:

Supplemental Support: When not assigned to school duties, SROs provide critical support to the Police Department by covering shifts, assisting with special assignments, and contributing to other operational needs, thereby increasing departmental efficiency and flexibility.

Preservation of Patrol Resources: The presence of SROs on school campuses allows them to address incidents directly, reducing the need to divert patrol officers from other community responsibilities. This optimizes resource allocation and maintains robust citywide policing coverage.

Community Benefits of School Resource Officers

Expanding the SRO program by adding a third officer would amplify the following benefits to the City and its residents:

Enhanced School Safety: SROs create a secure environment for students, staff, and visitors by proactively addressing potential safety concerns, responding to incidents, and implementing preventive measures, fostering a safer atmosphere conducive to learning.

Strengthened Community Engagement: SROs serve as positive role models and build trust with students, families, and school staff through mentorship, educational programs, and regular interaction. This strengthens police-community relationships and promotes a culture of collaboration.

Youth Development and Crime Prevention: By engaging with students, SROs provide guidance, support conflict resolution, and educate on topics such as drug prevention and responsible decision-making, contributing to reduced juvenile delinquency and positive youth outcomes.

Crisis Preparedness: SROs are trained to coordinate with school staff and emergency responders, enhancing preparedness for critical incidents and ensuring swift, effective responses to protect the school community.

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Financial Considerations

The proposed third SRO position would follow the existing cost-sharing model, with LVISD funding 71.5% of the position's total costs, including salary and benefits. This partnership minimizes the financial impact on the City's budget while maximizing the benefits of expanded school safety and police support.

Recommendation

The City recommends the addition of a third School Resource Officer to the Police Department's roster for the upcoming fiscal year. This expansion would enhance school safety, deepen community engagement, and provide operational flexibility to the Police Department, all while leveraging significant cost-sharing with LVISD. Investing in this program underscores the City's commitment to protecting its students, supporting its schools, and fostering a safer, stronger community.

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Exceptional Budget Item Request

Budget Account Number: 10-520-1230 (Salary & Benefits), 10-520-4200 (Travel), 10-520-4300 (Training),
10-520-9760 (Vehicle)

Title of Request: Police Officer Position – Partially COPS Grant Funded

Cost of Request: \$73,351.38 (Salary & Benefits), \$1,500 (Training), \$1,000 (Travel for Training), \$20,000 (Lease Vehicle)

Justification: The City has submitted an application for the FY25 Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Hiring Grant, which offers up to \$125,000 over three years to support the salary and benefits of a new Police Officer position. This grant presents a strategic opportunity to address critical staffing needs within the Police Department, which has not expanded in proportion to the City's population growth or the increasing demands of public safety services.

Benefits of Adding a Police Officer Position

The addition of a Police Officer position, partially funded by the COPS Hiring Grant, would yield multiple benefits:

Enhanced Public Safety: An additional officer would strengthen the Department's capacity to respond to calls for service, reduce response times, and improve proactive policing efforts, thereby enhancing community safety and security.

Alignment with City Growth: The City's population and service demands have outpaced the Police Department's current staffing levels. This position would help align resources with the growing needs of our community.

Cost Efficiency: The grant funding offsets a significant portion of the salary and benefits costs for the first three years, reducing the financial burden on the City's budget during this period.

Community Engagement: An additional officer would enable the Department to deepen its commitment to community-oriented policing, fostering stronger relationships with residents and local organizations.

Operational Resilience: Increased staffing would improve the Department's ability to manage workload surges, reduce officer fatigue, and maintain high standards of service delivery.

Grant Terms and Financial Commitment

Under the terms of the FY25 COPS Hiring Grant, the City would receive up to \$125,000 over three years to support the new position. Following this period, the City would be responsible for fully funding the position for an additional two years. This five-year commitment ensures long-term stability for the position and sustained benefits for the community.

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Grant Timeline and Contingency Plan

The COPS Hiring Grant is expected to be awarded on or after September 1, 2025. Should the City not receive the grant, the proposed position could be removed from the budget to align with available resources, ensuring fiscal responsibility.

Recommendation

The City strongly recommends pursuing this grant opportunity to fund an additional Police Officer position. The grant's financial support, combined with the operational and community benefits, makes this a prudent and forward-thinking investment in public safety. By leveraging this funding, the City can address critical staffing needs while minimizing the immediate budgetary impact, positioning the Police Department to better serve our growing community.

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Exceptional Budget Item Request

Budget Account Number: 10-520-9760

Title of Request: Add Three Additional Leased Vehicles

Cost of Request: \$60,000

Justification: This budget justification supports the acquisition of three additional police vehicles under the existing agreement with Enterprise to enhance the operational capacity and safety of the police department. The vehicles will replace two aging units and support a proposed new officer position.

Background

The police department currently maintains a fleet of 26 vehicles. A comprehensive fleet inventory, including vehicle age, mileage, and projected maintenance, is available for reference. Two 2017 patrol vehicles are due for replacement: one has exceeded 100,000 miles, and the other is projected to reach 100,000 miles within the next few months. High mileage contributes to increased maintenance costs, reduced reliability, and potential safety risks for officers. Additionally, the department proposes adding one new officer position, requiring an equipped vehicle to support patrol duties.

Replacement of Aging Vehicles:

The two 2017 vehicles have reached or will soon reach the end of their reliable service life. Replacing them with new, fuel-efficient models under the Enterprise agreement will reduce maintenance expenses, improve officer safety, and ensure operational readiness.

New vehicles are equipped with updated technology, including enhanced communication systems and safety features, aligning with modern policing standards.

Support for New Officer Position:

The proposed addition of one officer position aims to address increasing service demands and improve response times. A dedicated vehicle is essential to equip the officer for effective patrol and community engagement.

The vehicle will be configured to match existing fleet standards, ensuring consistency in training and maintenance.

Enterprise Agreement Benefits:

Procuring vehicles through the Enterprise agreement maximizes cost efficiency.

The agreement includes options for vehicle customization to meet police specifications, ensuring immediate operational readiness.

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Conclusion

Acquiring three new police vehicles will replace two high-mileage units and support a new officer position, enhancing the department's ability to serve the community safely and effectively. The Enterprise agreement ensures cost-effective procurement and long-term reliability. The department's full vehicle fleet inventory is available for review to contextualize this request.

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Veh. Year	Unit #	Mileage	Assignment	Potential FY 25-26 Maintenance Cost	Potential FY 25-26 Maintenance Items		
2015	1554	102,382	Patrol	\$6,500	Oil changes Tran Service one set/tires Battery	AC/Work, Brakes	
2015	1555	98,400	Admin	\$3,500	Oil changes,one set of tires and Battery	Brakes	Major overhaul has been done on this unit. 2025
2015	1556	101,249	Patrol	\$6,500	Oil changes Tran Service one set/tires Battery	AC/Work, Brakes	
2017	1761	52,928	Patrol	\$4,000	Oil changes Tran Service one set/tires Battery	AC/Work, Brakes	
2017	1762	94,170	Patrol	\$6,500	Oil changes Tran Service one set/tires Battery	AC/Work, Brakes	
2017	1771	103,752	Patrol	\$6,500	Oil changes Tran Service one set/tires Battery	AC/Work, Brakes	
2018	1859	95,843	CID	\$6,500	Oil changes Tran Service one set/tires Battery	AC/Work, Brakes	
2018	1860	84,933	Admin	\$6,500	Oil changes Tran Service one set/tires Battery	AC/Work, Brakes	
2020	2057	39,491	Patrol	\$4,000	Oil changes Tran Service one set/tires Battery	AC/Work, Brakes	
2020	2064	33,878	Patrol	\$4,500	Oil changes Tran Service one set/tires Battery	AC/Work, Brakes	
2021	2153	55,954	Patrol	\$4,000	Oil changes Tran Service one set/tires Battery	AC/Work, Brakes	
2021	2160	53,075	CID	\$4,000	Oil changes Tran Service one set/tires Battery	AC/Work, Brakes	
2021	2163	31,888	Admin	\$3,500	Oil changes,one set of tires and Battery	Brakes	
2021	2165	22,833	Patrol	\$3,500	Oil changes,one set of tires and Battery	Brakes	
2021	2169	46,995	Patrol	\$4,000	Oil changes Tran Service one set/tires Battery	AC/Work, Brakes	
2023	2301	13,264	Patrol	\$3,500	Oil changes,one set of tires and Battery		
2023	2302	19,413	Patrol	\$3,500	Oil changes,one set of tires and Battery	Brakes	
2023	2303	16,785	Patrol	\$3,500	Oil changes,one set of tires and Battery		
2022	1205	17,009	Code	\$4,000	Oil changes,one set of tires and Battery		
2024	2401	544	SRO	\$1,200	Oil changes,one set of tires and Battery		
2024	2501	6333	Admin	\$2,500	Oil changes,one set of tires and Battery		
2025	2502	158	NYIS	\$2,500	Oil changes,one set of tires and Battery		
2025	2503	181	NYIS	\$2,500	Oil changes,one set of tires and Battery		
2025	2504	181	NYIS	\$2,500	Oil changes,one set of tires and Battery		
2025	2505	207	NYIS	\$2,500	Oil changes,one set of tires and Battery		
2025	2506	201	NYIS	\$2,500	Oil changes,one set of tires and Battery		

NYIS = Not Yet In-Service