



City of Huntington Beach

File #: 21-716

MEETING DATE: 10/19/2021

REQUEST FOR CITY COUNCIL ACTION

SUBMITTED TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

SUBMITTED BY: Oliver Chi, City Manager

PREPARED BY: Julian Harvey, Interim Chief of Police

Subject:

Approve and authorize execution of a three-year agreement with the San Diego County Sheriff's Department to participate in Operation Stone Garden (OPSG)

Statement of Issue:

The San Diego County Sheriff's Department is requesting that the Huntington Beach Police Department, along with various other law enforcement agencies, participate in Operation Stone Garden (OPSG). The project period for this grant began on September 1, 2020, and ends on May 31, 2023.

Financial Impact:

The proposed agreement would entitle the Huntington Beach Police Department to \$192,900 to fund supplemental patrol shifts, payroll costs associated with follow-up investigations, and other associated costs related to the reduction and prevention of crime along the City's shoreline. Further, the funds can be used to facilitate the purchase of 15 cameras to be strategically placed to enhance safety through the reduction and prevention of crime along the City's shoreline and in the areas adjacent to our shoreline.

Recommended Action:

A) Approve and authorize Interim Police Chief Julian Harvey to execute the "Agreement for Fiscal Year 2020 Operation Stonegarden (OPSG);" and,

B) Appropriate \$192,900 in grant funding for Operation Stone Garden.

Alternative Action(s): Do not approve and direct staff accordingly.

Analysis:

The San Diego County Sheriff's Department applied for and received grant funds from the Department of Homeland Security to participate in OPSG. The funds pass through the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (CALOES). The Huntington Beach Police Department's role in OPSG would be to detect, prevent, and investigate incidents of criminal activity associated

with the unauthorized landings of vessels along the Huntington Beach shoreline. Potential criminal activity includes but is not limited to the transport of illicit narcotics and / or other illegal substances, and human trafficking activities. Of note, OPSG is not associated with immigration related activities, and it is neither the mission nor the function of the HBPD to engage in or assist with immigration law enforcement. In its capacity related to this agreement, the HBPD will adhere to all components of SB 54 and all relevant provisions of the California Government Code and Health & Safety Code.

Recognizing that the City's 8 miles of shoreline offer the ability for criminals to traffic people, illicit narcotics, and other illegal contraband immediately into our City limits, the HBPD seeks authorization to participate in this grant opportunity. The supplemental funding will provide for additional personnel resources and equipment to enhance the HBPD's ability to prevent the landing of unauthorized vessels on the shoreline, and to more rapidly involve our federal partners in the joint investigation of suspected trafficking incidents.

In the past twelve months, the HBPD has documented two (2) incidents in which unidentifiable vessels have landed on City beaches. In another incident, the U.S. Coast Guard (U.S.C.G.) stopped and boarded a vessel off the Huntington Beach coast. Their investigation revealed 300 pounds of methamphetamine on board. In each of the events in which a vessel landed on the shoreline, our personnel coordinated with their federal counterparts after the fact. While the whereabouts of the occupants of these vessels and the nature of the cargo onboard remain unknown, we do know that the residents, businesses and visitors in Huntington Beach could certainly have been impacted negatively. In terms of narcotics, the majority of the most dangerous drugs, including fentanyl, enter the country illicitly via Mexico. To avoid border security checkpoints, the trend over the past several years is to use small boats to ferry the drugs into the country.

Beyond the known landings, the HBPD receives regular notifications from the U.S.C.G. of suspicious vessels traveling north from Mexican waters. It is likely that many of these craft are transporting individuals and / or narcotics and contraband. When the trafficking of humans is involved, the often deplorable and dangerous conditions on board leave the victims in need of food, water and medical attention. The spread of disease is also a concern, as many of the victims being trafficked originate from countries where COVID-19 is prevalent. This agreement will provide supplemental funding for proactive police resources to prevent criminal activity associated with unlawful landings, and aid in the investigation into potential suspects. Further, this coordination of the appropriate federal resources will facilitate the more prompt delivery of services to victims.

Environmental Status: Not applicable.

Strategic Plan Goal: Non Applicable - Administrative Item

Attachment(s):

1. Agreement for Fiscal Year 2020 for Operation Stonegarden (OPSG).