CITY COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

MEETING DATE: JUNE 1, 2021 **ITEM NUMBER: CC-11**

SUBJECT: APPROVAL FOR THE PURCHASE OF THE QUETEL DIGITAL EVIDENCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (DEMS) AGREEMENT

DATE: MAY 13, 2021

FROM: POLICE DEPARTMENT

PRESENTATION BY: ED EVERETT, LIEUTENANT

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: ED EVERETT (714) 754-5395

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends City Council:

1. Authorize the City Manager to execute the purchase of a digital evidence management system, with Omnigo Software, LLC (QueTel), for $169,260.53 (Attachment 1) for the Police Department.

BACKGROUND

Law enforcement investigations conducted by the Costa Mesa Police Department require the collection, photography, and storage of evidence. In addition to physical evidence that the Police Department processes, it also collects a variety of video and audio evidence, such as surveillance and/or cellular phone video. Due to advances in technology, physical evidence has been augmented with digital data. Therefore, it is imperative that evidence management be a critical task in maintaining the custody of evidence throughout the legal process (criminal and civil). The process to collect, transfer, maintain, manage, redact, and release the data must be efficient and streamlined. The evidence management system must have safeguards to ensure integrity of the stored evidence, control user access, provide a method to limit access to sensitive case information, and have an ability to create a retention schedule.

Currently, the Police Department does not have a formal digital evidence management system. Digital evidence is uploaded to a photograph file on the department's computer network. The data file is reviewed to ensure it is formatted with the correct case or incident number. The file is later transferred to the Crime Scene Unit (CSU) photograph file where it is stored until there is a request for the image or video(s). As image/video

requests are received, department personnel will review the CSU file to locate the case and evidence attached to it. Once the image is located, it will be transferred to a DVD or printed on paper. Once a video is located, it will be transferred to a DVD or USB flash drive. The staff time needed to transfer files to paper, DVD, or flash drive varies due to the file size of the image/video and the number of images/videos. In a number of cases, it can take several hours. Department staff then delivers the transferred evidence to the district attorney or court.

There are no current safeguards in place to identify individuals who upload, view, and transfer images/video. The current system is limited on how a file can be searched or located. For example, the system cannot be searched by the individual who uploaded an image/video or for a specific type of incident. There is no way to flag an image/video with a retention date to assist in purging the image/video when it is no longer needed or indicate if it needs to be held for an appellate process.

The QueTel system has an application programming interface that will connect and integrate with the department's new WatchGuard in-car video and body worn camera (BWC) system, Central Square Computer Aided Dispatch and Records Management System (CAD/RMS), and Rimage disc writer/printer systems. The digital evidence management system removes the evidence from the device then uploads the evidence to the system. It is a web based browser application and can be accessed in the field, at the station, or while at court. The images/videos are stored via cloud storage freeing up data storage space on the Police Department network and server. Evidence can be transferred to the district attorney or courts through a secured link.

ANALYSIS:

The current image storage system is antiquated and does not have an application programming interface to connect with the department's WatchGuard, Central Square, and Rimage systems.

The purchase of the QueTel digital evidence management system will enhance the department's ability to collect, verify, manage, store, and transfer digital evidence. It will reduce the overall costs associated with managing and transferring the evidence by reducing staff time needed to process evidence requests. It also adds safeguards to limit, monitor, and review who is accessing the evidence files.

The City conducted its due diligence by identifying a Cooperative Agreement, Software House International (SHI) through OMNIA Partners (formerly National IPA) Contract No. 2018011-02, which was competitively bid. However, SHI's quote was higher than Omnigo's and both quotes were for the same commodity/service. SHI would not match Omnigo's quote or come down on cost.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

The City Council could choose not to purchase the digital evidence management system; however, this alternative is not recommended as a management system is necessary to control and monitor access to digital evidence and reduce staff time and costs associated with the collection, storage, management, and transfer of digital evidence.

FISCAL REVIEW:

Funding for this agreement is included in the Fiscal Year 2020-21 Budget.

LEGAL REVIEW:

City Attorney's Office has reviewed the documents and approved them as to form.

CITY COUNCIL GOALS & PRIORITIES:

This item supports City Council Objective: Maintain and enhance the City's infrastructure, facilities, equipment, and technology.

CONCLUSION:

Staff recommends that the City Council:

1. Authorize the City Manager to execute the purchase agreement of a digital evidence management system with Omnigo Software, LLC (QueTel), for $169,260.53 (Attachment 1) for the Police Department.

ED EVERETT
Lieutenant

JOYCE LAPOINTE
Acting Chief of Police

CAROL MOLINA
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KIMBERLY HALL BARLOW
City Attorney

ATTACHMENTS: 1. Omnigo Software, LLC Quote