



Staff Report

September 15, 2025-Council Regular Meeting-Consent Agenda

Axon Contract Early Renewal
Presenter: Tina Jones, Chief of Police
Time Estimate: 5 minutes

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BACKGROUND: In 2021, the Washington State Legislature passed a new police reform law that mandated law enforcement interrogations of juveniles and adults be recorded in many situations and those recordings are required to be maintained for several years. City Council approved a 5-year contract for Axon body-worn camera and tasers, along with the redaction software and data storage services. This contract ends December 31, 2026.

There is an opportunity to renew the contract one year early and add two functions, which will result in future cost savings compared to renewing once the contract is up. This contract renewal would add body-worn camera Redaction Assistant technology (new AI assisted technology), which will assist the Records Division to be more efficient with public records requests and meet state law required redactions. The other function is the Community Request tool, which will streamline our patrol and investigative workload and provide better service to the community by providing a direct link for community members to share photographs and videos with our team.

SUMMARY: The Axon body-worn cameras and Tasers provide huge benefits to our team and the community by providing transparency to police interactions with the public, providing a less-lethal option in situations where force may be required, and lower the overall risk liability to the city. The technology continues to evolve rapidly and there is an opportunity to upgrade some of the features and renew the Axon contract to provide future savings versus waiting and paying more once the contract is up.

Redaction Assistant

With the advent of body-worn camera footage has come an increase in the number of public records requests for video. There are laws that restrict what video and audio is releasable to the public, for example, images of juveniles and their voices must be redacted. Currently, our Records Division staff has to watch videos from beginning to end to identify where redactions are required, then do a frame-by-frame redactions, then watch the video again to make sure all of the appropriate redactions were made. This is a time consuming and tedious process. One event has, on average, three body-camera

videos to redact and these events can be several minutes or several hours in length for each video.

Axon has developed new technology that utilizes artificial intelligence to search a video file for specific items to redact. These redactions can be selected by type and ran in the background while other work is being done by the records clerk. An email from the Axon system is sent to the records clerk alerting them once the redaction identifications are done. The records clerk then reviews the items identified by the AI review and verifies which ones are relevant by accepting the correct ones, then applies the approval. The records clerk then watches the video to make sure the appropriate redactions are complete. A video on how to use the Redaction Assistant can be located here: https://myaxon.com/s/article/Using-Redaction-Assistant?language=en_US (Note-there are more redaction options now than when this video was created).

Our team is participating in a 30-day trial of the Redaction Assistant program and has experienced time savings by utilizing the tool. Without a lot of experience with the program yet, our records staff clerk handling body-worn camera redactions estimated the time spent on redactions was reduced by 25% for most cases and reduced by 50% for Driving Under the Influence videos. Each case is unique, and some calls may have multiple officers on them, which means several videos to redact. Without more concrete data, it is difficult to pinpoint exactly how much time will be saved but early indicators show reductions of 25-50% time spent would be significant when compounded over hundreds of videos annually.

We anticipate having 284 body-worn camera videos to redact in 2025 based upon current trends. To fulfill public records requests for these videos can take hours and sometimes days for just one request. Increasing the efficiency of our Records Division will help provide information to the public sooner, assist with identifying items that should be redacted to decrease liability, and help free our team members up for other important tasks.

Community Request

Currently, when our officers respond to calls for service, they encounter community members who have photographs or video evidence to share. The officers request for the video and photographic evidence to be emailed or put on a storage device, then the officers must come to the office to upload the material to the evidence portal, which takes them off the street. This is not a modern or efficient way of conducting business with this important evidence.

The Community Request feature will allow our officers and investigators to share a QR code and/or link with a community member so the evidence can be uploaded directly. Once the evidence is uploaded, the investigator will get notice and can log into the system to verify the evidence before it is officially added to the case evidence file. This is a quicker process than what is currently happening.

This new system provides several benefits. First, it helps free up our officers from having to come back to the office to download video and photographic files, then uploading them to the evidence system. Second, it reduces the number of public records related to a file, which requires attention and retention, since it will cut down on the number of emails and texts with evidence an officer receives. Finally, it provides more modern and streamlined services to our community members, which they come to expect in a digital age.

Additionally, if we had a major event, we could create an event QR code and link and send that in a press release to the public and media and anyone with evidence can directly upload it to our system. This will generate an alert to the investigators and provide tips and evidence more quickly to our investigators. This can increase safety for the community if we are more quickly able to identify and apprehend dangerous criminals.

Taser

We have decided to continue with the current Taser platform we have been using based upon the features it provides and our team member's familiarity with the device. The contract renewal indicates continuing with the same platform and supporting equipment.

BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY: The community continues to benefit with our modernization of tools that help us to be more efficient, accountable, transparent and continue to provide excellent customer service. There are several benefits to our community, including:

- Decreased time to fulfill public records requests for body-camera videos,
- Increased efficiencies for the Records Division so the team can handle other tasks, some of which involve the public,
- More streamlined process to provide video and photographic evidence to investigators,
- Enhanced ability for investigators to get evidence quickly and identify and apprehend criminals, which can increase public safety,
- Continued transparency for police interactions,
- Continued capacity to have officers equipped with an important less-lethal tool for force interactions.

STRATEGIC PLAN: The renewal and update to the Axon contract is aligned with the following Strategic Plan Goals:

- Safe and Accessible Community-Body-camera tools increase transparency and support case prosecution by providing critical evidence, which increases public safety. Increasing capacity for leads from video and photographic evidence from the public increases public safety by helping speed up investigations and apprehensions. Having less-lethal options when force is necessary increases

safety for everyone. Freeing up officer time from administrative tasks increases public safety by having them more readily available in the field for calls for service.

- Stewardship of City Assets-Providing more accurate and quicker redactions to public records requests reduces financial liability to the city. Having less lethal options for use of force situations decreases financial liability for the city.
- Engaged Workforce-Providing tools to streamline work processes and improve public service has a positive impact on employee morale.

POTENTIAL CHALLENGES: There will be some training involved with our staff to make them familiar with the new tools. For the trial of the Redaction Assistant, we have learned it is intuitive and simple to navigate so the training should be less time consuming than what is currently happening without the tool. We will create a training bulletin for our commissioned staff to teach them how to generate the QR codes and links for evidence sharing.

BUDGET IMPACT: There is a slight increase in fees for 2025 and 2026 from the original contract, but by renewing a year early, there is an overall budget savings over the course of the contract versus waiting until the contract expires. The following additional impacts will be seen:

- 2025-increase of \$1,350 for the year from the current contract rate. This includes the addition of the two new tools and accounts for \$19,917 in credits provided with the early renewal.
- 2026-2029-\$82,323 per year. This is an increase for the 2026 allocated budget of \$19,220 for the year.

If we wait to renew until the end of 2026, we will pay for the annual increase in fees for 2026 and 2027, which usually is about 8-10% for Axon services upon renewal. With the early renewal, the contract is \$76,459.62 annually starting in 2026 (pre-tax) versus an estimated \$83,758.17 annually (pre-tax). **This is a savings of \$53,413 over the course of the contract if we renew early versus wait to renew.**

The Finance Committee reviewed the information in the August 21 meeting and was in support of adding this to a Consent Agenda for City Council. The contract retains a clause about termination by either party as previously included (page 4 of the contract).

The Finance Director has been consulted and there are identified funds in the General Fund to cover the increases for 2025 and 2026.

RECOMMENDATION: It is recommended for Council to approve the Mayor to sign an early renewal of the Axon contract.