



CITY OF
GRAND RAPIDS
IT'S IN MINNESOTA'S NATURE

GRAND RAPIDS POLICE DEPARTMENT

420 NORTH POKEGAMA AVENUE, GRAND RAPIDS, MINNESOTA 55744-2662

To: Tom Pagel City Administrator and Grand Rapids City Council

From: Grand Rapids Police Department Patrol and Sergeants Union

Tom Pagel and Council Members,

Grand Rapids Police Patrol Union #239 along with Grand Rapids Police Sergeant Union #345 wish to formally express extreme interest in approaching City Leadership to consider a commitment to purchase and deploy body-worn cameras (BWC) to all full time police personnel. All members of such union groups recognize the numerous benefits associated with law enforcement's use of BWC. All members also recognize on how the general public has come to expect that law enforcement has appropriate technology and capacity to video capture events occurring within their community.

This professional proposal is intended on focusing on identifying GRPD's history with BWC, GRPD's current need for the technology, the general public's belief that this tool is standard equipment for police officers today. We will cite a 2017 Minnesota Chiefs of Police Association survey along with a follow up survey, also organized by Minnesota Chiefs of Police Association, conducted within the past six months to support our position. We will also provide committee research results for three different BWC systems that will support purchase and deployment of the most current Axon body-worn camera.

In July 2017 Minnesota Chiefs of Police Association conducted a survey exploring state-wide use of BWC by Minnesota police agencies. A total of 179 Minnesota Police Agencies participated in the survey. 22% (41 agencies) report current use of BWC, while the 78% remaining percent of agencies (138 agencies) identify as not having BWC. Of those agencies currently not using BWC, 65 agencies or 51% of agencies indicate that they plan on purchasing and deploying BWC within the coming three years.

The questions, results and report of the [2017 Minnesota Chiefs of Police Survey](#)

On July 8, 2021 Minnesota Chiefs of Police Association published the results of a six-week follow up survey that was conducted in the spring of this year. Again over 300 Minnesota police chiefs were contacted via email and questioned of their department's current use of and / or future intent concerning BWC. A total of 214 agencies responded by completing the on-line survey.

The survey details that 55% (117 agencies) of responding agencies indicate that they currently utilize BWC. Of those agencies currently not using BWC, 53 agencies or 55% of agencies indicate that they intend to purchase and deploy BWC within the coming three years. That supports that of the 214 responding Minnesota police agencies, 79% (171/214) will be utilizing BWC within the coming three years.

The questions, results and report of the [2021 Minnesota Chiefs of Police Survey](#)

Each of the surveys' results were consistent when focusing on overall level of value of BWC associated with "Evidence Collection," Transparency with the Public" and "Complaint Resolution." All "Valuable" or "Very Valuable" answers were found to consistently range from 79% to 99% effective.

In briefly comparing the 2017 and 2021 Minnesota Chiefs of Police BWC survey, it can be easily concluded that as this technology continues to advance, there is a greater interest of police agencies using and intending to use BWC. Use of this technology is becoming an industry standard.

History of video camera's use by police agencies began over 20 years ago and have continued to be implemented and developed as technological advances have occurred over the this time. The Grand Rapids Police Department implemented Mobile Vision patrol cameras in the early 2000's. These cameras were VHS tape based systems that were mounted in patrol vehicles that were accompanied by body worn microphones.

As the Grand Rapids Police Department entered into the late 2000's it began to implement and install digital cameras which were purchased with appropriation funds granted to the police department in 2009. These cameras were manufactured by Digital Ally and installed in all patrol vehicles at the time.

By the 2010's cameras in police vehicles were considered a necessity by the public, courts, and legislature in regards to ethical police, evidence gathering and identifying police misconduct.

In 2012 the Grand Rapids Police Department upgraded its camera's to the newest model offered by Digital Ally. Some of these were purchased and some were taken on over the next few years, gifted by the Itasca County Sheriff's Office. This was done as the sheriff's office was now moving on to another manufacturer as problems with hardware and software were a continued to plague these systems.

Added to this, the Grand Rapids Police Department also implemented 10 body camera's in 2012 as well which were also manufactured by Digital Ally. At the time of implementation, public data laws in the State of Minnesota were in conflict as far as redaction and public data release. This was also the beginning of public and political pressures on police departments to implement body worn cameras. Due to the issues with the MN Data Privacy Laws these cameras were only in service for approximately one and a half years. These cameras are no longer working nor a viable option in 2021.

Since 2013 the in car video systems used by the Grand Rapids Police Department have slowly stopped functioning. By 2018 none were left operable at the time. The police department budgeted money for implementation of new in car video cameras in the fiscal years 2019 and 2020. This money was not available in 2019 due to Covid-19 and again in 2020. Again, the police department planned to implement the systems in 2021 but it was not appropriated/

Currently, all the Grand Rapids Police Officers are working without the ability to video record incidents by departmental implemented video systems. Police officers are wary of the current political environment, judicial disapproval of lack of evidence and members of the public who expect our department to have this technology.

In early 2021 the patrol officers union along with the patrol sergeants union approached the Chief of Police and the Assistant Chief of Police in regards to securing funding for body worn cameras. This was a two factored reason. First, officers want the ability to protect themselves when members of the public

make false allegations of police misconduct. Secondly, they wish to have the ability to capture evidence relating to criminal behavior for the courts as judicial approval of our current non video practice is not supported. The unions were advised at the time by the chief of police, there was no money for cameras and probably would not be until the year 2025. Officers then advised the chief of police they wished to take the issue to the city administrator for review.

The City Administrator (Tom Pagel) was approached in late May 2021 and advised of our intent. He agreed to meet with the unions for a proposal to purchase and implement body worn cameras at that time.

It should also be noted, body worn cameras are cheaper to purchase and implement than in car video systems. They also have the ability to be brought away from patrol vehicles capturing video whether in a car, house, building, field, etc. The costs of the in car systems which were going to be purchased in 2019 were approximately \$130,000 for the upfront purchase of the equipment followed by a yearly cost of cloud storage for video content of approximately \$15000 yearly.

Quotes for the current body worn camera systems were researched by a committee of union members from three different manufacturers in attempts to find the best viable option. Two of these manufacturers were Axon and Watchguard. The committee looked at several factors when researching these systems to find a system that is not only fiscally viable but also meets the needs of data privacy laws, current technology, ease of usability, cloud video storage and longevity. Along with this the committee looked at the ease of redaction for public data requests and privacy, ongoing costs, security, policy implementation, other agencies with these systems, automatic downloading and interconnectivity with other devices currently in service.

The cost of each system is as follows:

Axon

Year 1 purchase of hardware, software, cloud storage, warranty and redaction	\$22756.00
Year 2 includes software, cloud storage, warranty	\$22756.00
Year 3 includes software, cloud storage, warranty, and new equipment	\$22756.00
Year 4 includes software, cloud storage, warranty	\$22756.00
Year 5 includes software, cloud storage, warranty, and new equipment	\$22756.00

This ongoing yearly cost will continue with new equipment being issued every two and a half years after the initial purchase in year one.

Watchguard

Year 1 includes purchase of hardware, software, warranty	\$54,835.00
Year 3 Warranty including new equipment	\$6750.00
Year 4 Warranty	\$2700.00
Year 5 Warranty including new equipment	\$3525.00
Yearly cost of cloud storage of fifteen cameras for five years	\$28,800.00

Additionally for consideration by the City Council:

In-car video systems are considered standard mandatory equipment in current policing and have been for the last decade. Courts, prosecutors and the public consider it a necessity for criminal prosecution and evidence gathering. Many other agencies such as ambulance services, school district buses, and common carriers use this technology to reduce liability costs and litigation costs.

As mentioned prior the Grand Rapids Police Department had every patrol vehicle outfitted with in car video systems, which have now failed. The benefits of these video systems have captured valuable evidence from suspects that were in custody and freely speaking in the car while officers were not present. This information has led to the convictions or assistance to the attorney's office during the prosecutions of these cases. Unfortunately, we have been unable to obtain this type of evidence without the aid of in car video systems. This places our department in a difficult situation with prosecutors, public members and other interested parties by not having this technology. These systems are commonplace and highly reduce the civil liability of departments and city governments as well.

It should also be noted the Grand Rapids Police Department annually spends approximately \$7000.00 on new Tasers to replace worn out equipment with a life expectancy of 5 years.

Attached is a second quote which would get the Grand Rapids Police Department back on track to be up to date technologically in regards to both **body camera's and in-car video systems**. This quote also includes a bundle package that would include new Tasers that are replaced every 5 years instead of budgeting 3 replacements each year. If the council accepted this quote, it will place the Grand Rapids Police Department on par with the Itasca County Sheriff's Office who have just instituted this technology for their department, just approved by the Itasca County Commissioners.

Quote for In-car, body camera, and Taser:

Axon Inc. provided a quote price of an annual fee of \$65,734.00 which includes In-Car Video, Body Camera, and Tasers. This quote would annually reduce the cost to the police department by approximately \$7,000 spent on replacement Taser units. This quote also includes complete installation of hardware, software, cloud storage, warranties, and associated user training. It also includes new equipment every two and a half years for the body cameras and every five years for the in-car video and Tasers.

Additional Research by Committee

The committee also spoke with the Minnesota State Patrol in regards to the Axon Body Cameras as they implemented the systems this year throughout the state. Captain Jason Engeldinger advised the MN State Patrol went with the Axon system over Watchguard for several reasons and will be moving from Watchguard in-car video system to Axon in-car video systems. He stated during the study of the systems they found Axon to have:

Positive features with Axon

- proven reliability
- interconnectivity with other systems including handguns and Taser for auto activation
- secure cloud storage
- cellular upload capability
- recommendation from the BCA
- future integration of new systems
-

Issues identified with Watchguard were:

- recent company take over by Motorola without positive change
- support is not good
- cloud storage is more expensive
- no future integration options
- no auto triggers
- it uses 3rd party software
- no mobile app
- no audit trail for data redaction
- lack of transparency by the company

The third and final option researched by the committee was Visual Lab currently used by Aitkin County Sheriff Department. Visual Lab body worn camera that is incorporated within their Android cell phones. This application is specific to Android platform and is unable to operate in an Apple device. The original start-up cost for 18 units was under \$15,000. This included subscriptions, training, accessories allowing the unit to attach to the uniform. Captured data is uploaded to the cloud via cellular connection creating a monthly cost of approximately \$50 per active unit. Department leadership is then able to access material as desired. Aitkin County spends approximately \$24,000 annually.

The Visual Lab system requires additional services, at additional administrative cost, to preform required redactions per public data request. Aitkin County reports very few public data requests and is limited on ability to provide cost associated with redactions to BWC footage.

Upon discussing the Visual Lab BWC system with Director of Information Technology Erik Scott, it was quickly decided that transitioning all GRPD Staff Members away from Apple devices to an Android device would have a sweeping effects on other applications heavily used by police staff. With the City of Grand Rapids already established reliance on Apple products, Visual Lab BWC does not seem to be a viable option.

This information was used in the decision to recommend the Grand Rapids Police Department purchase body cameras from Axon instead of Watchguard. The Grand Rapids Police Department Unions are requesting Tom Pagel and the Grand Rapids City Council move to approve this request as the equipment is a necessity for officers working within the City of Grand Rapids. It provides officers with the ability to enhance criminal convictions, inhibits false allegations of police misconduct, protects the city from wrongful lawsuits and enhances public trust.

Our committee also researched current events in the last few years that surely would have created lawsuits to cities in the millions of dollars without the implementation of body worn cameras. One

that stands out was the shooting incident in Brooklyn Center. If the officer would not have been wearing a body worn camera it would have been charged as a 1st Degree Murder with a much higher degree of civil liability. Additional examples of recent events can be located within the attachments of this document.

Sincerely,

Police & Sergeants Unions

Jeff Carlson		Heath Smith	
Robert Stein		Andy Morgan	
Kevin Ott		Brian Mattson	
Gary O'Brien		Jeff Roerick	
Michelle Norris		Justin Edmundson	
Tim Dirkes		Bill Saw	
Matt O'Rourke		Jeremy Nelson	
Ashley Moran		Troy Scott	
Shaun Pomplun		Gregg Lease	

Grant Opportunities

https://webportalapp.com/sp/login/srtbwc_microgrant_program

https://kustomsignals.com/news_and_events/article/bureau-of-justice-assistance-releases-7.65-million-grant-to-support-us-body