



CITY OF LAKE FOREST PARK

CITY COUNCIL

AGENDA COVER SHEET

Meeting Date	July 27, 2023
Originating Department	Police Department
Contact Person	Mike Harden, Police Chief
Title	Possible purchase of rifles for the Police Department

Legislative History

- First Presentation July 13, 2023 Work Session
 - Second Presentation July 27, 2023 Regular Meeting
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Attachments:

1. SENATE BILL REPORT SHB 1240
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Executive Summary

Due to recent legislation, the Lake Forest Park Police Department has taken the step of withdrawing personally owned rifles from on-duty use by their police officers. This decision has created an urgent need for the Department to acquire patrol rifles to ensure essential emergency equipment is available.

The Department is comprised of 21 commissioned officers, including administrative staff like the Chief of Police, Lieutenants, and detectives, all elements of which may require patrol rifles during emergency callouts in the field. Therefore, it is crucial to purchase 21 patrol rifles to address this critical equipment shortfall and maintain the standards of public safety within our community.

Unlike most police departments that already issue rifles to their officers, we need to bridge this gap promptly to ensure the safety and effectiveness of our officers in emergency situations. Additionally, our current SWAT operator had been utilizing a personally owned patrol rifle, further highlighting the necessity for official equipment.

Background

On April 25, 2023, SHB 1240 officially took effect, implementing a prohibition on the manufacture, importation, distribution, sale, or offer for sale of any assault weapon, including conversion kits and parts that could be used to create or modify an assault weapon. Despite these restrictions, there are

specific exemptions allowing licensed firearms manufacturers to produce, import, distribute, and sell assault weapons to the United States or Washington armed forces, law enforcement agencies for official purposes, or non-residents of Washington.

As a consequence of SHB 1240, police officers have pulled their personally owned patrol rifles out of service. The terms of SHB 1240 provide such that if an officer's personal patrol rifle malfunctions or requires parts, they can no longer make individual purchases for their firearms; only law enforcement agencies are allowed to do so. Moreover, in the event of an officer-involved shooting, SHB 1240 could be interpreted such that when the personally owned rifle is seized for investigation, there is potential for legal complications during the transfer process of returning the firearm to the officer.

Currently, the police department possesses six department-owned patrol rifles that have been in service for over 20 years. While these rifles have undergone periodic upgrades throughout the last decade, they have mainly been utilized for training purposes. Since the approval of personally owned rifles in 2014, officers have primarily relied on their own equipment for training, especially those without a personal patrol rifle. While this practice has helped save costs and provided officers with higher quality, personalized equipment, it has its downsides, such as increased demand and decreased accountability for equipment maintenance.

Rifles and handguns are essential tools in law enforcement, and individualizing each weapon to match an officer's specific needs and preferences is crucial for optimal accuracy, a process known as "zeroing in."

At present, the police department comprises 15 patrol officers and six administrative units (Chief, Lieutenants, Detectives, Support) with three open officer positions. The department seeks approval to purchase 21 patrol rifles. An alternative approach could involve purchasing 13 rifles for the current deployed officers, assigning the older six rifles to Support, and obtaining additional rifles for new officers after completing field training. As officers retire or leave the department, the remaining eight rifles could be obtained through attrition, facilitating a replacement plan for rifles nearing the 10-year mark, depending on wear and tear. Each rifle comes at an approximate cost of \$4,505, fully outfitted with the required equipment. Exploring law enforcement-only distributors and bulk purchases can lead to additional cost savings. This approach ensures that our officers are equipped with the necessary equipment while optimizing the allocation of resources.

Fiscal & Policy Implications

Choosing not to acquire this essential equipment puts both our officers and the community at risk. It is also crucial to move away from pooled or personally owned equipment to ensure accountability and proper maintenance.

Assigning individual patrol rifles to officers can have several benefits, which are primarily aimed at ensuring the safety and effectiveness of law enforcement personnel.

Familiarity and Training: When officers are assigned their own patrol rifles (or handguns), they have the opportunity to become intimately familiar with their weapon. Consistent training with the same firearm allows officers to develop muscle memory, improve accuracy, and become more proficient in their use. This can be crucial in high-stress situations where split-second decisions are required.

Consistency in Handling: Patrol rifles or handgun models may have variations in design, weight, trigger pull, and other features. Officers who carry the same assigned patrol rifles or handgun can maintain a consistent experience, reducing the chance of fumbling or misusing the weapon during critical moments.

Accountability: Assigned patrol rifles or handguns are registered to individual officers, creating a chain of custody and accountability. If a firearm is lost or stolen, it can be traced back to the officer responsible, encouraging them to take greater care of their weapon.

Maintenance and Customization: Officers can take better care of their personally assigned patrol rifles and handguns, ensuring they are well-maintained and regularly serviced.

Comfort and Confidence: Carrying an assigned patrol rifle that an officer is familiar with, and trusts can contribute to their overall comfort and confidence while on duty. This can positively impact their performance and decision-making in the field.

Reduced Disputes: In shared weapon systems, disputes may arise over issues like weapon malfunctions or preferential treatment in weapon distribution. Assigned patrol rifles help mitigate such disputes since each officer is responsible for their own firearm.

Health and Safety: Personalized patrol rifles or handguns can be ergonomically tailored to fit an officer's hand size, reducing the risk of injury or fatigue during prolonged use.

Psychological Factor: Knowing that they have their own assigned patrol rifles can provide officers with a sense of ownership and responsibility, potentially leading to increased care and attentiveness in handling their firearm.

Options for purchase:

- Requesting a budget adjustment and allow full purchase (\$94,605)
- Purchase 15 rifles (\$67,574) – Current 6 rifles assigned to Chief, Admin, Detectives.
- Purchase current staff levels (13) on patrol (\$58,565), and purchase future rifles as new officers are solo in the field (likely in future years/budget)

Staff would lower the initial cost of the proposed outfitted patrol rifle system (find the same equipment at lower negotiated prices) and buy in bulk for increased savings.

Alternatives

<i>Options</i>	<i>Results</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Purchase 21 patrol rifles outfitted	All commissioned officers would have required equipment.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Purchase 15 patrol rifles outfitted	Remaining staff would have older, worn equipment that would need replacement in near future.

Staff Recommendation

Purchase 21 patrol rifles outfitted.