



CITY OF MINNETRISTA

REQUEST FOR CITY COUNCIL ACTION/DISCUSSION

Subject: Discussion Regarding Establishment of a Public-Safety Drone/Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Program

Prepared By: Craig Squires, Director of Public Safety

Meeting Date: Sept. 21st 2026

Purpose

Staff is requesting City Council discussion and direction regarding the potential establishment of a public-safety Drone/Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) program.

Staff have identified a need for an aerial platform that could support emergency operations, enhance public-safety response capabilities, and improve officer and responder safety. Given Minnetrista's large rural, wooded, and water-adjacent areas, an appropriately equipped drone could provide a valuable tool for modern public-safety operations.

Operational Need and Intended Use

The primary purpose of a public-safety drone would be to improve the Department's ability to conduct rapid, safe, and effective search and rescue operations.

Minnetrista responds to incidents involving missing or endangered people, including children, elderly individuals, and persons with cognitive or medical conditions. These incidents may occur in terrain that is difficult and time-consuming to search on foot, including dense woods, marshes, open fields, and lakeshore environments.

A properly equipped drone can provide aerial imaging, thermal imaging, a spotlight, and a speaker system. These capabilities would allow officers to rapidly scan large and difficult-to-access areas while providing responders with information that may otherwise require significant time and personnel to obtain.

The use of a drone could also reduce the risk to officers and other responders by allowing potentially hazardous areas to be evaluated before personnel enter them.

Mission Statement:

The City of Minnetrista will deliver quality services in a cost effective and innovative manner and provide opportunities for a high quality of life while protecting natural resources and maintaining a rural character.

Additional Public-Safety Applications

Although search and rescue is a primary anticipated use, a public-safety drone could also support other lawful police operations, including:

Locating suspects who have fled from an incident.

Providing an elevated visual perspective during high-risk incidents.

Assisting officers in maintaining visual containment around a residence or other structure.

Providing situational awareness during emergencies and other critical incidents.

Supporting documentation and crime scene assessment when legally authorized.

Assisting with other emergency-management or public-safety functions as authorized by Department policy and applicable law.

The availability of an aerial perspective could provide officers with real-time information before approaching potentially dangerous situations, thereby improving decision-making and officer safety.

Equipment Research and Selection

Staff researched several drone platforms and obtained vendor information and pricing from Vertex Unmanned Solutions, B&H Photo, Drone Nerds, and DSLRPros.

Based on the capabilities reviewed, staff identified the DJI Matrice 4TD as the preferred platform for further consideration. The platform was identified based on its durability, sensor capabilities, reliability, and suitability for emergency response and investigative applications.

The package reviewed by staff includes:

DJI Matrice 4TD water-resistant platform.

Spotlight module.

Speaker module.

Four batteries.

Landing Pad.

Local Assistance

Staff's identification of the Matrice 4TD is intended as a recommendation for further consideration and is not intended to limit Council's consideration of other comparable platforms.

Vendor Support and Recommendation

Staff recommends further consideration of purchasing the proposed system through Vertex Unmanned Solutions, a Minnesota-based company with personnel available to provide local support, onsite assistance, and specialized consultation for public-safety agencies.

In addition to equipment, Vertex can assist with advice on FAA operational requirements, data-management and data-compliance considerations, and training necessary for safe and effective deployment. The availability of local personnel who can provide in-person

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assistance is an additional benefit when compared with national vendors that may not provide the same level of nearby support.

The quoted cost for the complete package is \$12,260. The quoted price is subject to change based on the date of purchase. The City's current Capital Improvement Program includes \$14,500 for a drone purchase, so the proposed acquisition is currently within the amount budgeted. Remaining funds can be used for operator training.

Training, Regulation, and Policy

Personnel operating the drone for Department missions will receive training consistent with applicable FAA requirements.

The drone would be properly registered with the FAA and MnDOT, as required.

Before deployment, the Department would also establish a written policy governing the operation and use of the UAS. Attached to this packet is a draft policy which has been reviewed by the City Attorney.

Any use of the drone in criminal investigations would be conducted in accordance with applicable state and federal law. Court orders or warrants would be obtained when required.

The City's use of unmanned aerial vehicles would be guided by Minnesota Statute §626.19.

Public Feedback:

If Council provides direction to continue exploring establishment of a public-safety drone program, State law requires the City provide an opportunity for public feedback before final implementation or acquisition. The City of St. Bonifacius also requests to be a part of this feedback.

Public comment should be accepted through multiple methods, including:

- Written comments submitted by mail.
- Electronic comments submitted to the City.
- Public comment provided in person at a designated future City Council meeting.

Staff could return to Council following the public-feedback period with any comments received for a final recommendation for Council consideration.

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Financial Consideration

The current vendor quote for the proposed equipment and support package is \$12,260, compared with \$14,500 budgeted in the City's CIP for a drone purchase this year.

The current quote therefore provides approximately \$2,280 in available budget capacity. Because the vendor has indicated that pricing is subject to change based on the purchase date, the final acquisition cost could be more or less than \$12,260. Remaining money can be used for training.

Recommendation

Staff requests that the City Council provide direction on whether the City should continue researching and developing a public-safety drone/UAS program, including consideration of the purchase of a DJI Matrice 4TD or comparable platform and associated equipment.

If Council supports moving forward, staff recommend that the next steps include:

- Obtaining updated equipment pricing and confirming the proposed equipment package.
- Providing an opportunity for public feedback through written, electronic, and in-person comments at a future City Council meeting.
- Returning to Council to discuss the public-feedback and a final recommendation for consideration.

<u>Recommended City Council Action:</u> Discussion Regarding Establishment of a Public-Safety Drone/Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Program
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Does Recommended Action meet City Mission Statement? ☒ Yes ☐ No
Does Recommended Action meet City Goals/Priorities? ☒ Yes ☐ N

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MINNETRISTA PUBLIC SAFETY DEPARTMENT

GENERAL ORDER # 470

EFFECTIVE DATE: September 1, 2026

REVISION DATE:

DRAFT



SUBJECT: *Unmanned Aerial System (UAS) Operations*

Fight Crime, Promote Safety

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for the use of an unmanned aerial system (UAS) and for the storage, retrieval, and dissemination of images and data captured by the UAS (Minn. Stat 626.19)
- 1.2 Definitions related to this policy include:
 - A. **Unmanned Aerial System (UAS)** – an unmanned aircraft of any type that is capable of sustaining directed flight, whether preprogrammed or remotely controlled without the possibility of direct human intervention from within or on the aircraft (commonly referred to as an unmanned aerial vehicle UAV)), and all of the supporting or attached systems designed for gathering information through imaging, recording, or any other means (Minn. Stat. 626.19).

2.0 POLICY

- 2.1 A UAS may be utilized to enhance the Department's mission of protecting lives and property when other means and resources are not available or are less effective. Any use of a UAS will be in strict accordance with constitutional and privacy rights and Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations.

3.0 PRIVACY

- 3.1 The use of the UAS potentially involves privacy considerations. Absent a warrant or exigent circumstances, operators and observers shall adhere to FAA altitude regulations and shall not intentionally record or transmit images of any location where a person would have a reasonable expectation of privacy (e.g. residence, yard, enclosure). Operators and observers shall take reasonable precautions to avoid inadvertently recording or transmitting images of areas where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy. Reasonable precautions can include, for example, deactivating or turning imaging devices away from such areas or persons during UAS operations.

4.0 PROGRAM COORDINATOR

- 4.1 The Chief of Police will appoint a program coordinator who will be responsible for the management of the UAS program. The program coordinator will ensure that policies and procedures conform to current laws, regulations, and best practices and will have the following additional responsibilities:
- A. Coordinating the FAA Certificate of Waiver or Authorization (COA) application process and ensuring that the COA is current, and/or coordinating compliance with FAA Part 107 Remote Pilot Certificate, as appropriate for department operations.
 - B. Ensuring that all authorized operators and required observers have completed all required FAA and department-approved training in the operation, applicable laws, policies, and procedures regarding use of the UAS.
 - C. Developing uniform protocols for submission and evaluation of requests to deploy a UAS, including urgent requests made during ongoing or emerging incidents.
 - D. Coordinating the completion of the FAA Emergency Operation Request Form in emergency situations, as applicable (e.g.; natural disasters, search and rescue, emergency situations to safeguard human life.)
 - E. Developing protocols for conducting criminal investigations involving a UAS, including documentation of time spent monitoring a subject.
 - F. Developing operational protocols governing the deployment and operation of a UAS including but not limited to safety oversight, use of visual observers, establishment of lost link procedures, and secure communication with air traffic control facilities.
 - G. Have a protocol for fully documenting all missions.
 - H. Developing a UAS inspection, maintenance, and record-keeping protocol to ensure continuing airworthiness of a UAS, up to and including its overhaul or life limits.
 - I. Have an established protocol to ensure that all data intended to be used as evidence are accessed, maintained, stored, and retrieved in a manner that ensures its integrity as evidence, including strict adherence to chain of custody requirements. Electronic trails, including encryption, authenticity certificates, and date and time stamping, shall be used as appropriate to preserve individual rights and to ensure the authenticity and maintenance of a secure evidentiary chain of custody.
 - J. Have a protocol that ensure retention and purge periods are maintained in accordance with established records retention schedules.
 - K. Facilitating law enforcement access to images and data captured by the UAS.
 - L. Recommending program enhancements, particularly regarding safety and information security.
 - M. Ensuring that established protocols are followed by monitoring and providing periodic reports on the program to the Chief of Police.

- N. Maintaining familiarity with FAA regulatory standards, state laws and regulations, and local ordinances regarding the operations of a UAS.
- O. Developing protocols for reviewing and approving requests for use of the Department UAS by government entities (Minn. Stat. 626.19).
- P. Preparing and submitting the required annual report to the Commissioner of Public Safety (Minn. Stat. 626.19).
- Q. Posting the Department policies and procedures regarding the use of UAS on the department website, as applicable (Minn. Stat. 626.19).
- R. Reviewing the program and UAS use for compliance with Minn. Stat. 626.19.

5.0 USE OF UAS

- 5.1 Only authorized operators of the Minnetrista Public Safety Department who have completed the required training shall be permitted to operate the UAS. Deployment of a UAS shall require written authorization of the Chief of Police or the authorized designee, depending on the type of mission. This policy shall be followed when assisting other jurisdictions.
- 5.2 Use of vision enhancement technology (e.g.; thermal and other imaging equipment not generally available to the public) is permissible in viewing areas only where there is no protectable privacy interest or when in compliance with a search warrant or court order. In all other instances, legal counsel should be consulted.
- 5.3 UAS operations should only be conducted consistent with FAA regulations.
- 5.4 The Department shall not use a UAS without a search warrant, except (Minn. Stat. 626.19):
 - A. During or in the aftermath of an emergency situation or disaster that involves the risk of death or bodily harm to a person.
 - B. To document evidence that is at imminent risk of destruction.
 - C. Over a public event where there is a heightened risk to the safety of participants or bystanders.
 - D. To counter the risk of a terrorist attack by a specific individual or organization if the agency determines that credible intelligence indicates a risk.
 - E. To prevent the loss of life or property in natural or man-made disasters and to facilitate operation planning, rescue, and recovery operations.
 - F. To conduct a threat assessment in anticipation of a specific event.
 - G. To collect information from a public area if there is reasonable suspicion of criminal activity.
 - H. To collect information for crash reconstruction purposes after a serious or deadly collision occurring on a public road.

- I. Over a private area with the written consent of the occupant or a public area, for officer training or public relations purposes.
 - J. For purposes unrelated to law enforcement at the request of a government entity, provided the request is in writing and specifies the reason for the request and a proposed period of use.
 - K. To facilitate the active search for a missing person.
- 5.5 Each use of a UAS should be properly documented by providing the following (Minn. Stat. 626.19):
- A. A unique agency case number.
 - B. A factual basis for the use of an UAS.
 - C. The applicable exception, unless a warrant was obtained.

6.0 PROHIBITED USE

- 6.1 The UAS video surveillance equipment shall not be used:
- A. To conduct random surveillance activities.
 - B. To target a person based solely on actual or perceived characteristics such as race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, economic status, age, cultural group, or disability.
 - C. To harass, intimidate, or discriminate against any individual or group.
 - D. To conduct personal business of any type.
- 6.2 The UAS shall not be weaponized (Minn. Stat. 626.19).
- 6.3 Unless authorized by a warrant, a UAS shall not be deployed with facial recognition or biometric-matching technology (Minn. Stat. 626.19).
- 6.4 Unless authorized by a warrant or for purposes of a permitted use outlined in this policy, a UAS shall not be used to collect data on public protests or demonstrations (Minn. Stat. 626.19)

7.0 RETENTION OF UAS DATA

- 7.1 The Program Coordinator shall ensure that data collected by the UAS is disclosed or deleted as required by Minn. Stat. 626.19, including the deletion of collected data as soon as possible, and in no event later than seven days after collection, unless the data is part of an active criminal investigation (Minn. Stat. 626.196).



Quote #D10179
Sep 14, 2026

SHIPPING ADDRESS

Chad Griggs
Minnetrista Public Safety
Department
7651 County Road 110 West
Minnetrista MN 55364
United States
Tel. +19522412570

BILLING ADDRESS

Chad Griggs
Minnetrista Public Safety
Department
7651 County Road 110 West
Minnetrista MN 55364
United States

ITEMS		PRICE	TAX	QTY	ITEM TOTAL
	DJI Matrice 4TD Standalone Combo	\$15,450.00 \$9,820.00	\$0.00	1	\$9,820.00
	DJI Matrice 4D Series Battery	\$430.00	\$0.00	4	\$1,720.00
	DJI AS1 Speaker - Matrice 4	\$290.00	\$0.00	1	\$290.00
	DJI AL1 Spotlight - Matrice 4	\$430.00	\$0.00	1	\$430.00
	Landing Pad (3FT)	\$69.99 \$0.00	\$0.00	1	\$0.00

NOTES	Matrice 4TD Drone with 4 flight batteries,	Subtotal	\$12,260.00
	controller, WB37 Controller battery, AL1	Shipping	\$0.00
	Spotlight, AS1 Speaker, charging hub, DJI Case	MN COUNTY TAX	
	***Pricing valid while in-stock / 14 days -	- HENNEPIN	\$0.00
	Potential pricing increases due to potential	0.0%	
	Tariff increases after 9/3 - CONFIRM STOCK	MN SPECIAL TAX	
	AND PRICING AT TIME OF PO / INVOICE***	- METRO AREA	\$0.00
		TAX FOR	
		HOUSING 0.0%	
		MN SPECIAL TAX -	
		METRO AREA	\$0.00
		TRANSPORTATION	
		0.0%	
		MN SPECIAL TAX	
		- TRANSIT	
		IMPROVEMENT	\$0.00
		(HENNEPIN CO)	
		0.0%	
		MN STATE TAX -	
		MINNESOTA	\$0.00
		0.0%	
		TOTAL (USD)	\$12,260.00

By signing below, the customer acknowledges and agrees that this quote constitutes an authorized purchase order. Upon signature, Vertex Unmanned Solutions will proceed with fulfillment and the customer will be invoiced accordingly.

AUTHORIZED BY

DATE

Vertex Unmanned Solutions, LLC
14212 23rd Ave N, Plymouth, MN, 55447, United States
sales@vertexunmanned.com



YOUR SHOPPING CART

PRODUCT	QUANTITY	TOTAL
 DJI AL1 SpotLight for Matrice 4 Series SKU: CP.EN.00000579.01 <i>Please note this item is backordered.</i>	1	\$473.00
 DJI AS1 Speaker for Matrice 4 Series SKU: CP.EN.00000578.01	1	\$319.00
 DJI Matrice 4D Series Battery SKU: CP.EN.00000636.01	4	\$2,092.00
 DJI Matrice 4TD (DJI RC Plus 2 Enterprise) SKU: CP.EN.00000662.01	1	\$9,820.00

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1 Year \$1574.99	2 Years \$1664.99
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ORDER SUMMARY

Subtotal**\$12,704.00**



The Professional's Source Since 1973

420 9th Ave. at 34th St. in New York City
www.bhphotovideo.com

Sales: 212-444-6615
Customer Service: 212-239-7765



DJI AS1 Speaker for Matrice 4 Series

BH # DJAS1SPEAKER | MFR
#CP.EN.00000578.01

Free 2-Day Shipping

In Stock

Ready to Ship

1

\$290.00

[Save for Later](#) | [Remove](#)

☒ Protect Your Gear

- ☐ Allstate 2-Year Drops & Spills \$42.99
- ☐ Allstate 3-Year Drops & Spills \$54.99

[See All Options](#)

Item Total: **\$290.00**



DJI AL1 Spotlight for Matrice 4 Series

BH # DJAL1SPLGHT | MFR
#CP.EN.00000579.01

Free 2-Day Shipping

In Stock

Ready to Ship

1

\$430.00

[Save for Later](#) | [Remove](#)

☒ Protect Your Gear

- ☐ Allstate 2-Year Drops & Spills \$59.99
- ☐ Allstate 3-Year Drops & Spills \$82.99

[See All Options](#)

Item Total: **\$430.00**



DJI Flight Battery for Matrice 4D

BH # DJMR4DBAT | MFR
#CP.EN.00000636.01

Free Standard Shipping

In Stock

Ready to Ship

4

\$420.00

Accessories

[Save for Later](#) | [Remove](#)

Estimated Shipping & Tax ⓘ

☐ NYC Pickup [See Details](#)

UNITED STATES ▾

Zip Code

55049

Subtotal: **\$12,151.20**

Shipping **FREE**

Est. Tax: ⓘ **\$956.91**

Total: \$13,108.11

Your Cart ID # 615 575 119 10

 Protect Your Gear

- ☐ Allstate 2-Year Drops and Spills **\$54.99**
- ☐ Allstate 3-Year Drops and Spills **\$79.99**

[See All Options](#)

Item Total: **\$1,680.00**



DJI Matrice 4TD (RC Plus 2 Enterprise)

BH # DJMTR4DTSPPR | MFR
#CP.EN.00000662.01

Free 2-Day Shipping

 Packaging Reveals Contents: M... 

 Important Notice!

 Accessories

In Stock
Ready to Ship

1

\$9,751.20

[Save for Later](#) | [Remove](#)

 Protect Your Gear

- ☐ CPS 1-Year Accidental Damage Protection **\$999.99**
- ☐ CPS 2-Year Accidental Damage Protection **\$1,499.99**

[See All Options](#)

Item Total: **\$9,751.20**

Get 15% Off

Your cart

×

PRODUCT	TOTAL
 DJI Matrice 4D Series Battery \$459.00 − 4 + 🗑 \$1,836.00	
 DJI AS1 Speaker for Matrice 4 Series \$288.00 − 1 + 🗑 \$288.00	
 DJI AL1 Spotlight for Matrice 4 Series \$449.00 − 1 + 🗑 \$449.00	
 DJI Matrice 4TD with RC Plus 2 Enhanced Controller (Standalone Unit) \$9,800.00 − 1 + 🗑 \$9,800.00	

Order special instructions

▼

Estimated total

\$12,373.00 USD

Taxes, discounts and shipping

calculated at checkout.

Check out