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Five Surveillance Cameras Approved For Moraga

By Sophie Braccini

Moraga should have its own surveillance camera system in place by this summer, the last of the Lamorinda cities to do so.

The installation was a Town Council goal for 2016, and on March 9 the council members took the first step by approving a plan for five standing cameras and a few mobile Reconyx proposed by acting Chief of Police Jon B. King. Now, funding needs to be found and individuals who have said they were ready to contribute to the safety device system may be asked to do so. It will take a few months for staff to come up with a Request for Proposal and get a vendor approved.

King made a strong presentation to the council. His most convincing arguments were statistics from Lafayette that showed that in a time of increased crime rate in the county, the neighboring suburb had succeeded in reducing the number of burglaries by half while doubling the number of solved burglaries.

"The number of solved cases rose to 66 percent," said King, linking this success to more cameras installed in the city. The average solve rate is 10 to 15 percent. To further drive his point home King added that during the same period, the crime rate in Moraga had increased by about 30 percent.

The interim chief explained that the system he was recommending was similar to what Orinda and Lafayette have been using. It will include installing five camera systems at exits of the town: Canyon Road, Moraga Way, Rheem Blvd., Moraga Road and St Mary's Road. Each system would include an automated license plate reader camera and two high definition color surveillance cameras. The data collected would be transmitted through a wireless network to the police department.

King also recommended the acquisition of two Reconyx systems, motion activated infrared cameras that can be installed for a short period of time to investigate various situations at specific locations. King estimated the total cost at about \$100,000.

King stressed the fact that safety is a multifaceted effort. Police and city staff have been meeting with homeowner associations, service groups and at Neighborhood Nights Out events to bring awareness to neighborhood safety. The police department has also established a database in which residents can register their individual systems and agree to allow police to review recordings if there is a crime that has occurred in their vicinity.

Three residents came to speak in favor of installing cameras, including Dennis Martel of the Moraga Country Club, who said he has 35 years of experience in law enforcement.

But one resident, Steve Spiker, who works for the Urban Strategies Council as research and technology director, said that he supported Reconyx systems and neighborhood private cameras, but that license plate readers raised huge privacy and liability concern, and were ineffective.

There was unanimous support of the project from the four council members present, with council member Roger Wykle leading the pack and asking Administrative Director Amy Cunningham if the budget operating surplus was enough to purchase the system immediately.

The council directed King to start drafting an RFP while reaching out to a local foundation, such as the Moraga Community Foundation, to raise funds for the project.

Coffee with the Cops

On March 28, Moraga police officers will come to Si Caffè at 910 Country Club Dr. to meet residents and answer any questions they might have. The visit will start at 10 a.m. The department staff said that similar events will be announced and take place in different parts of town.

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[back](#)

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