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Body-worn cameras - an MPD staple for over five years

By Vera Kochan

The Moraga Police Department has used body-worn cameras since February 2015 to record enforcement and other contacts with the public, as well as using them during criminal investigations. BWCs have become a vital tool in providing transparency of any law enforcement agency that uses them - something the American public has come to demand with their own recordings of police activity in recent years.

According to a 2017 report from the National Criminal Justice Reference Service, "The past several years have witnessed significant growth in the number of police agencies using body-worn cameras. It has been reported that over one-third of the 18,000 or so law enforcement agencies in the United States have begun using this technology." The report adds that "BWCs were seen as a remedy for resolving issues of community trust and a way to increase police accountability."

In an Oct. 28 staff report to the town council, MPD Chief Jon King stated, "While body-worn cameras do not tell the complete story of what happens during an incident, they do provide important information that can be used in both criminal and administrative investigations."

MPD's current system is outdated and has experienced software and hardware problems for the past two years. Continual glitches have made the current system ineffectual and bothersome. After researching replacement systems, MPD found that Axon cameras and backup equipment are best suited for the town's needs. Axon, Inc. is the largest provider of BWCs in the U.S. and throughout the world.

The Axon Body 3 unit, which is what MPD would like to purchase to replace the old system, comes with a feature that reduces motion blur during recording. This means, according to Axon, clearer evidence during playback with a near photographic level of detail. The Axon Body 3 will allow you to "see truth in the moment."

The town council unanimously approved Axon's proposed 5-year services and purchasing agreement which includes new cameras, docking stations, software, secure cloud storage and related hardware for a total maximum cost of \$62,874.04 payable over 5 years. The Fiscal Year 2020-21 budget includes \$20,500 for Police Department Equipment Replacement for this purchase.

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