Budget Engagement Commission

City of Arts & Innovation

TO: **HONORABLE COMMISSIONERS** **DATE: APRIL 10, 2025**

FROM: **POLICE DEPARTMENT** **WARDS: ALL**

SUBJECT: **MEASURE Z – ILLEGAL FIREWORKS ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM ENHANCEMENT UPDATE INCLUDING PURCHASE OF SMALL UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS (DRONE) TECHNOLOGY AND PILOT TRAINING COURSE TO ASSIST WITH FIREWORKS ENFORCEMENT IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED $86,106.93**

ISSUE:

Receive and file the Illegal Fireworks Enforcement Program Enhancement Update including the purchase of small, unmanned aircraft systems (drones) and an advanced training course for drone pilots in the total amount of $86,106.93 utilizing Measure Z Funds.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Budget Engagement Commission receive and file the Illegal Fireworks Enforcement Program Update including the purchase of small, unmanned aircraft systems (drones) and an advanced training course for drone pilots in the total amount of $86,106.93 utilizing Measure Z Funds.

BACKGROUND:

On December 17, 2024, the City Council, following discussion, approved with six votes of aye and one vote nay, the Safety, Wellness and Youth Committee recommendations to: (1) receive and ordered filed the update on fireworks enforcement activities for 2024 presented by the Riverside Fire Department (RFD); (2) utilize small unmanned aircraft system (SUAS) technology for fireworks enforcement; (3) provide funding for advanced night operation training; (4) provide funding for the purchase of four new OJI M30 Drones; (5) amend Riverside Municipal Code (RMC) 1.18 to include Social Host Liability; and (6) request that the Finance Department forward all outstanding citations to the City Attorney's Office (CAO) for collection via the Franchise Tax board (FTB) Intercept Program, and that RFD, Riverside Police Department (RPD), and Code Enforcement Department collaborate in assigning resources so the CAO can effectively process the citations.

On February 25, 2025, the City Council introduced an ordinance amending RMC 1.18.10 to include a Social Host Ordinance and to allow the use of SUAS (drone) technology for fireworks

enforcement. The ordinance makes it unlawful for any social host to allow, by invitation or consent, the use of fireworks on their property. It also holds parents or guardians liable for juveniles found in violation of RMC 1.18. The ordinance was subsequently adopted by City Council on March 11, 2025.

On March 25, 2025, the City Council, with five affirmative votes, authorized the Chief Financial Officer, or designee, to record a supplemental appropriation from Measure Z available fund balance in the amount of $86,106.93 to the Measure Z, Police Field Operations, Special Department Supplies account for the purchase of drones and an advance training course for drone pilots to enhance illegal fireworks enforcement.

The approved enhancements for fireworks enforcement were proposed to be implemented in July 2025. Therefore, it was imperative that the Police Department obtain City Council authorization for a funding appropriation as soon as possible in order to purchase the drones and schedule and complete the advanced training prior to the proposed implementation date. The specific funding source was identified shortly before City Council authorization.

DISCUSSION:

On December 17, 2024, the RFD presented an update on fireworks enforcement activities for 2024. The update included recommendations from both RFD and RPD for enhancing RMC Section 1.18 regarding administrative penalties for violations of the City's Fireworks Laws by incorporating SUAS (drone) technology.

Fireworks Enforcement Program Enhancement Recommendations:

- Certified drone pilots will conduct flights during the week leading up to and on July 4th in areas with high incidents of illegal fireworks.
- Pilots will use the drones to monitor and video-record activity to establish connections between illegal activities and specific residences or individuals.
- Written reports will detail observations, enabling the CAO to issue administrative citations based on the evidence.

In order to implement the enhanced enforcement program, RPD will need to purchase several drones and require drone pilots to attend a three-day advanced training course focusing exclusively on nighttime operations. The cost of the drones and the training will not exceed a total of $86,106.93. The funding for the training and the equipment purchases was conceptually approved by City Council on December 17, 2024, and on March 25, 2025, the City Council authorized a supplemental appropriation in the amount of $86,106.93 from the Measure Z Fund Balance. All acquisitions will be made in accordance with City Purchasing Resolution 24101.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This item contributes to Strategic Priority No. 2 Community Well-Being and Goal number No. 2.4 – Support programs and innovations that enhance community safety, encourage neighborhood engagement, and build public trust.

This item aligns with EACH of the five Cross-Cutting Threads as follows:

1. **Community Trust** – Providing enforcement for fireworks keeps the community safe and ensures community trust between the City of Riverside and its residents.

2. **Equity** – The increased fee for violations of RMC 1.18 provides a deterrent to all residents, which will keep all communities within the City of Riverside safe.

3. **Fiscal Responsibility** – The City of Riverside is attempting to reduce illegal fireworks to prevent injuries and fire loss to all residents within the community.

4. **Innovation** – The City of Riverside must constantly change and adapt to meet the community's changing needs and prepare for the future. The proposed enhancements to the Fireworks Enforcement Program recommend the utilization of SUAS or drone technology and administrative citations to keep the community safe.

5. **Sustainability & Resiliency** – Regularly assessing City of Riverside programs, making changes as needed, and adjusting fees to appropriate levels allows the City to meet the needs of the present without compromising the needs of the future and ensures the City's capacity to preserves, adapt and grow.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The total fiscal impact of the proposed action is $86,106.93. Sufficient funds are budgeted in the Police Field Operations, Special Department Supplies account 8000501-426800 in the amount of $86,106.93.

Prepared by:	Adam Levesque, Police Lieutenant
Approved by:	Larry V. Gonzalez, Chief of Police
Certified as to availability of funds:	Kristie Thomas, Finance Director/Assistant Chief Financial Officer
Approved by:	Mike Futrell, City Manager
Approved as to form:	Jack Liu, Interim City Attorney