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Colonial Heights Police Department First in Area to Equip All Patrol Officers with Body Cameras

The Colonial Heights City Council today approved a request by Police Chief Jeffrey W. Faries to equip all Colonial Heights Police Patrol Officers with body cameras, in an effort to generally upgrade officer safety and enhance public confidence in police operations through greater transparency.

With the implementation of this program, Colonial Heights is believed to be the first law enforcement agency in the Tri-Cities and the Richmond metropolitan area to equip its entire patrol operation with body cameras.

“The acquisition of body cameras for our officers will enable the CHPD to document all enforcement actions and increase personal accountability” said Chief Faries. “Body cameras have also proven to be worth the investment regarding civil claims against other law enforcement agencies.”

The body cameras to be utilized by the CHPD are essentially an audio/video system consisting of three components (head camera, communication hub and tactical computer) worn by an officer to record events during his/her on-duty work shift. The system will be used to document events and capture data that will be preserved in a Cloud-based digital storage facility. Once recorded and downloaded, these recordings cannot be altered in any way and are protected with multiple layers of encryption.

“While recent events involving other agencies have admittedly caused us to review our own police operations and procedures, this is not a reactionary measure” said City Manager Tom Mattis, “We believe this to be an appropriately responsive decision that will enhance both officer safety and public confidence in our operation.”

To implement this program, the CHPD will acquire forty-two (42) body cameras that will equip the entire uniform patrol staff and the Special Operations Unit; and will also allow body cameras to be utilized by off duty personnel. Each officer will be issued a body camera, a license, and storage for their individual content. Recordings remain property of the CHPD and will be randomly reviewed by supervisors to monitor officer performance, training, early intervention inquires, civil claims, or administrative inquiry.

“Body cameras will be the norm in the future for all law enforcement,” said Chief Faries. “They have been shown to reduce complaints, document scenes of crimes and change an individual’s behavior in a positive way. Body cameras will also allow us to document any training deficiencies that we may see in our own police officers.”

Total cost for implementation of the entire system is currently estimated at approximately \$70,000. The funding plan recommended by staff is to divide the cost equally between the Police Asset Seizure Fund and the current-year budget Contingency Fund. However, this program is not anticipated to have an adverse effect on the overall Operating Budget.

“Colonial Heights has a strong history of supporting high-level public safety services for our community” said Colonial Heights Mayor C. Scott Davis. “Embracing the new technology provided by body cameras will maintain that commitment to safety for our residents and businesses.”

It is currently estimated that the CHPD body camera system will be fully operational in the next 45-60 days.

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About Colonial Heights

The City of Colonial Heights is a full-service independent Virginia city that is home to just over 17,000 residents and serves as the market center for the Tri-Cities Area (which includes the cities of Petersburg and Hopewell, Prince George and Dinwiddie Counties and Fort Lee). For more information about Colonial Heights, please visit www.colonialheightsva.gov.