

CITY OF ROCK ISLAND
CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION
County Office Building, County Chambers, 3rd Floor
1504 Third Avenue, Rock Island, IL

8/26/2024 - Minutes

1. Call to Order

Mayor Thoms called the Study Session to order at 6:02 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Mayor Thoms asked City Clerk Samantha Gange to call the roll.

Present: Alderpersons Moses Robinson, Randy Hurt, Jenni Swanson, Dylan Parker, Mark Poulos, Bill Healy and Mayor Thoms.

Absent: Alderperson Kevin Maynard

Staff: City Manager Todd Thompson, Attorney Leslie Day, City Clerk Samantha Gange, and other City Staff.

3. Public Comment

No one was signed up to speak.

4. Presentations

a. Presentation from the Police Department on a Drone Program

Police Chief Tim McCloud shared his proposal on a drone program or small Unmanned Aircraft Systems (sUAS). He said drones are becoming increasingly common throughout law enforcement and most of the surrounding agencies already have a program in place. The sUAS devices are proactive measures to assist law enforcement with monitoring parades, concerts and other special events in real time and can create maps or determine routes and assess traffic and pedestrian flow. Additionally, a drone program can assist with emergency responses, such as a missing person or a rescue operation, as well as assist with investigations.

He explained that according to Illinois law, drones cannot be weaponized, used for facial recognition, used for listening devices or for traffic enforcement, among other things. Also, the monitoring of protected speech such as a protest or march is not allowed. Any information gathered from a drone, such as a photograph or video, must be destroyed within a specific timeframe and follow retention guidelines. He discussed the requirements for transparency and reporting if a drone is used and noted public notice must be posted at least 24 hours before an event and an emergency use of a drone must be reported to the Illinois State Attorney within 24 hours. He discussed the sUAS platforms that can be used and indicated they would like to incorporate both into the program and explained the differences between both the indoor and outdoor drones.

Chief McCloud discussed how officers would be trained on the drones and said he would initially send five

officers for training. He said in addition to the initial training, the department would reach out to other agencies for cross-training and tips and continue to provide ongoing training. He noted a few officers already have the training and are drone pilots. He explained that the drone training is included in the annual tactical training costs and doesn't have an additional cost, and he was not proposing ongoing costs such as annual maintenance fees. It was noted that there is a no-fly zone for drones around Black Hawk State Park.

He explained that the funding for the program would cost approximately \$53,071 total for the three different drones. He said he would like to use the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds allocated to public safety for this program.

Chief McCloud and City Manager Thompson clarified that there is a difference between protected speech and parades and events, but it is a thin line. Chief McCloud acknowledged that line of sight can be a challenge in heavy terrain areas, but the benefits of the drone outweigh the challenges. He noted the drone would not be launched remotely, and that an officer would always have a line of sight.

Concerns were expressed about the drone program as it is another funding request and the department may not utilize the drones very often. Chief McCloud explained it is difficult to borrow another agency's drone and respond in a timely manner. He provided the recent example of how the City of Bettendorf saved a life by deploying their drone to rescue someone from the river. Additional concerns about the cost and maintenance were expressed.

5. Adjourn

MOTION:

Aldersperson Parker moved to adjourn the Study Session; Aldersperson Healy seconded.

VOTE:

Motion PASSED on a 6-0-1 voice vote. Aye: Robinson, Hurt, Swanson, Parker, Poulos, Healy. Nay: None. Absent: Maynard.