



MEMORANDUM

TO: Finance Committee Members

FROM: Rich Olson, City Manager
Eddie M. Buffaloe, Jr. Chief of Police

DATE: April 8, 2014

RE: Consideration – Authorization to Submit Application for NRA Grant for Upgrades to Firing Range

BACKGROUND:

The Elizabeth City Police Department is currently seeking grant opportunities to enhance its technology/equipment program and increase the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the Department. The National Rifle Association (NRA), in support of firearms safety and enhancement of marksmanship and public awareness, is offering up to \$25,000 in grant funding for law enforcement and other qualifying agencies.

The Elizabeth City Police Department has been in the process of updating its firing range for the past two budget years and still has a considerable way to go in completion of a fully functioning range. Staff views this NRA grant opportunity as a highly cost effective way to aide in the completion of the firing range. Funds acquired from the grant would be specifically used towards the purchase of turning targets. Project goals also include the addition of an instructional classroom and purchase of a storage shed to be used to properly store costly equipment.

Specifically, if the firing range is updated with the enhanced modifications sought, firearms/hunter safety classes could be offered as part of the Police Department's overall youth outreach goal. Participants of the Department's well established Police Athletic League Program and newly formed Explorer's Program comprise youth of this area that would stand to benefit. In addition, the Department's Citizen Police Academy attendees would also utilize the newly remodeled range, as well as students enrolled in Basic Law Enforcement Training at the College of the Albemarle. Other criminal justice and surrounding law enforcement agencies, including the Department of Corrections and the North Carolina Wildlife Commission would also have the opportunity to make use of the newly remodeled range. To summarize, City staff view's this venture as a great collaborative effort that could have a positive impact on many members of this community and is a win/win opportunity for all involved.

ANALYSIS:

The Elizabeth City Police Department is seeking additional funding to aide in completion of its firing range. Funding has been budgeted in the last two fiscal years for a newly constructed firing range. The former firing range had to be physically relocated from it previous location due to close proximity to the Tanglewood community, which became an area of concern after the completion of Halstead Boulevard Extended/US 17 bypass several years ago. Although City funding has been allotted for this capital outlay project, there is still a considerable amount that needs to be completed to finish the range and equip it with the modern technology needed to be a fully functioning range. Staff believes it would be a fiscally wise decision to seek outside funding to aide in the completion of the range and views the NRA grant as an insightful opportunity in which to acquire the additional funding needed to help complete this project.

Justification for the firing range includes the Elizabeth City Police Department's 59 sworn officers and 7 reserve officers who must certify yearly to maintain their law enforcement certification and protect and serve the citizens of this community. Training is mandated by the North Carolina Criminal Justice Training and Standards Division and members are prohibited from performing their duties as a sworn officer without this critical certification. Other surrounding law enforcement/criminal justice agencies would also benefit from use of the range for their mandated certification and training needs. Public citizens and youth participants in programs offered by the Elizabeth City Police Department would also utilize the range as a means to increase firearms knowledge and public awareness of gun safety.

Turning targets, an instructional classroom, and a storage shed are on the list of items needed for the firing range. These items are costly and the addition of \$25,000 would be beneficial towards the purchase of turning targets. The FY 14-15 budget proposal of \$25,000 for the "firing range line item" would cover the remaining costs associated with the turning targets, as well as the acquisition of an instructional classroom and storage shed.

The NRA supports initiatives that promote firearms and hunting safety; enhancement of marksmanship skills; and education of the general public as it relates to historic, technological, and artistic context of firearms. Attendees of the Elizabeth City Police Department's Citizen Police Academy are law abiding citizens who have a desire to learn about firearms safety and increase their knowledge of education and awareness. In addition, the NRA is a strong supporter of youth programs. If the firing range was updated, it would allow the Elizabeth City Police Department to enhance its existing youth programs with activities including hunting safety training and bow/firearms marksmanship skill building, which is one of the goals of the NRA. In closing, the Elizabeth City Police Department views this NRA grant opportunity as a means to enhance its youth programs and support the idea of safety and awareness of its citizens. In all, the project would have a positive impact on many members of this community.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

By motion, recommend that the City Council authorize the Police Department to submit a grant application to the NRA in the amount of \$25,000 to be used towards the purchase of turning targets and other enhancements to the firing range that would be used to benefit members of the Elizabeth City Police Department and participants in community programs/youth initiatives, as well as surrounding law enforcement and criminal justice agencies.