



Date: February 2, 2021

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Councilwoman Suzie Price, Third District
Councilwoman Mary Zendejas, First District
Councilwoman Cindy Allen, Second District
Councilman Daryl Supernaw, Fourth District

Subject: Police Helicopter Unit Analysis of Budgetary Changes

RECOMMENDATION:

The City Council is directing the City Manager to report back within 90 days with a report with analysis of operational models, practical impacts, and budget differences between various models for the operation of the Helicopter Unit of the Long Beach Police Department.

INTRODUCTION:

During the budget discussions related to the Fiscal Year 2021 City Budget the City Council discussed the potential impacts of a number of proposed changes to City operations in light of the significant budget shortfalls being faced by the City as a result of COVID-19. These discussions involved nearly every department in the City and made changes to significant City services particularly related to our public safety continuum with the Police and Fire Departments. With regard to the changes to the Fire Department's HEART Team, the decision was made to postpone implementation of any changes in their operation until additional information was provided to City Council on the impacts, costs, and models that would be implemented moving forward. However, with regard to a similarly important set of specialized public safety staff in our Police Department, the adopted changes to the Police Helicopter Unit was not discussed in sufficient detail with attention to how the change could result in potential reduction of existing patrol operations.

It has long been established in criminal law that when people commit a law violation, they flee. Flight from a criminal incident is a common occurrence, unfortunately, and police helicopters, operated by trained professionals who know what to look for and how to communicate what they are seeing in the sky to those on the ground, is imperative for the apprehension of these individuals. The addition of helicopters to our available public safety resources provides more options when engaging in all forms of pursuits and allows for more specialized responses when needed. The proposal to modify the Police Helicopter Unit was brought to the City



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Council during the budget session but the council has not had the opportunity to fully examine the proposed operational model and the potential impacts of any new model on the existing, or the reduced patrol operations.

With this in mind, the Council is requesting that the City Manager provide a comprehensive report that analyzes the full range of options, methodologies, and impacts (financial and otherwise) to feasibly operate the Police Department Helicopter Unit.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Due to the urgency of this item no fiscal impact assessment for the preparation of a report has been completed.

This item is not seeking the Police Department's budget be modified or augmented at this time.