

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
Telephone: (716) 286-4310

December 17, 2021

The City Council
Niagara Falls, New York

*RE: Agreement to Purchase Hardware/Software/Web Services – Axon Enterprises, Inc.
Body Cameras, Tasers, Virtual Reality Training
(Niagara Falls Police Department)*

Council Members:

As you know, we are now at the point where we begin to implement projects that will be funded from the City's share of American Rescue Plan ("ARP") proceeds. It was made clear during the community engagement sessions over the last several months that public safety is a major concern to City residents. Currently, law enforcement agencies throughout the country are in the process of providing their police officers with greater access to enhanced technology to improve services; the City of Niagara Falls should be no exception.

Policing has changed dramatically over the past few years due to several very public events. Body-worn cameras are being adopted by law enforcement agencies around the country to improve transparency, collect evidence, strengthen officer performance and accountability and to investigate and resolve complaints and officer-involved incidents. At this time, the body camera technology utilized by the Niagara Falls Police Department ("NFPD") is 8-10 years old.

The NFPD also understands that it is imperative that their officers have a reliable "less-lethal" option when a situation calls for use of force to effectively stop a threat with minimum exposure to injury for both the subject and the officer. The NFPD currently uses a small number of older generation Taser devices that need to be replaced with current technology.

Additionally, the call for increased transparency and accountability for law enforcement requires a robust method of storage for Taser information (deployments, tests) and captured video. The storage element must also provide dependable retention and access to all captured technology information, along with the ability to share evidence with the District Attorney's Office in full compliance with NY Discovery Laws.

This Administration formed the Social Justice Commission in 2020 which called for building trust and incorporating mandatory training, including de-escalation training, among many other measures. Virtual Reality ("VR") technology can provide the NFPD with a cost effective and time efficient means to provide necessary training. VR Training is the future of law enforcement, where officers can be trained using VR headsets instead of in-person training. VR training is also proven to provide a higher retention of knowledge over a shorter period.

Kennedy _____ Soda _____ Spanbauer _____ Voccio _____ Tompkins _____

After reviewing the credentials and capabilities of several hardware/software providers, the Niagara Falls Police Department has recommended Axon Enterprises, Inc., (“Axon”) as the vendor to provide body camera technology, cloud-based evidence storage, Taser 7 less lethal and Virtual Reality training hardware and software that the Department needs. Axon, founded in 1993, is the world leader in Conducted Energy Weapons (Tasers), Body Worn Cameras and storage and has groundbreaking Virtual Reality Training. Selecting Axon to provide the necessary equipment and technology also allows for a seamless transition to integrate with other Axon users, specifically the Niagara County Sheriff’s Office, the Town of Niagara Police Department, the North Tonawanda Police Department, the Lewiston Police Department, the Lockport Police Department and the New York State Police.

Accordingly, it is hereby proposed that the City enter into an agreement with Axon. Under the proposed five (5) year agreement, Axon will provide the integrated system of hardware, software, cloud-based storage and related services at a cost of \$152,390.80 per year over the length of the agreement. The total cost of the program is \$765,991.49; by bundling services and applying available discounts, this price is \$311,551.40 lower than Axon’s typical rate. Funding for this project is available from American Rescue Plan Funds under the Treasury Guidance Expenditure Category 6.1, which is “Revenue Replacement for the Provision of Government Services”.

Will the Council so approve and authorize the Mayor to execute an agreement satisfactory to the Corporation Counsel in both form and content?

Respectfully submitted,

ROBERT M. RESTAINO
Mayor

Funding Approval:

Daniel Morello, City Controller
City Council Meeting, December 20, 2021