

CITY OF SANTA ROSA  
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL  
FROM: CRAIG SCHWARTZ, CAPTAIN  
POLICE DEPARTMENT  
SUBJECT: SANTA ROSA POLICE DEPARTMENT UNMANNED AERIAL  
SYSTEM PROGRAM  
AGENDA ACTION: STUDY SESSION

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this study session is to provide an update on the unmanned aerial system (UAS) program; what we have done, where we are now, and where we plan to go with this technology. The use of small unmanned aerial systems, also called unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) or drones, has been growing rapidly in the last two years. These devices have proven their value in commercial industry, hobby use, and for governmental purposes many times. They have been especially helpful in the realm of public safety and emergency response. The department began studying how law enforcement agencies could earn or maintain their communities' trust in implementing UAS programs designed to assist in a wide variety of law enforcement and public safety applications. Over the last two years, the exploration of UAS use has matured into the beginning stages of an operational program for the Santa Rosa Police Department.

BACKGROUND

The ability to obtain an aerial perspective is of tremendous value in public safety operations including search and rescue, crime and collision investigations, law enforcement operations, fire suppression, and disaster response and recovery. The use of UAS to perform these tasks is relatively new, but a study from last year showed that at least 347 local law enforcement, fire, and emergency response agencies were using drones. With the adoption of federal aviation regulations covering the operations of UAS, more agencies began using them in 2016 than all previous years combined. That trend is accelerating, with thousands of new FAA approvals being granted to public agencies in 2017 and 2018.

There were many beneficial uses of UAS in Santa Rosa in the wake of last October's wildfires. The Alameda County Sheriff's Office flew their UAS to provide Santa Rosa residents and City leaders detailed photographs of damage to neighborhoods. News agencies used footage from their drones to help tell the story of the fires and provide us all with a better perspective of the events. More recently, the City contracted with an

outside vendor to use UAS for an aerial survey of impacted neighborhoods as a way to aid in recovery efforts.

In our efforts to build a UAS program for the Police Department, a number of city employees from various departments met to conduct a needs analysis. We recognized that input from the Council and the members of our community was critical in creating a successful program, so we embarked on an outreach campaign. We sought out and received feedback from the Council, City officials, our residents, and subject matter experts. Some of the steps we took in our outreach include:

1. Completing a Master's thesis studying law enforcement drone implementation to learn how agencies can earn community trust and support for the technology;
2. Briefing the City Manager and individual City Council Members on the concept for drone use and soliciting feedback;
3. Presenting to the Community Advisory Board (CAB) on August 23, 2017;
4. Attending three CAB Open House events in August and September to gather feedback from the public about proposed drone uses by the City;
5. Conducting community outreach about City drone use via social media and the Santa Rosa Press Democrat;
6. Creating and publishing an online survey to gather community feedback about drone use by the city;
  - a. The survey reached 20,881 people via social media, and 346 completed it. The results showed strong support for the use of drones in a variety of purposes, especially public safety. The survey results can be found here: [City of Santa Rosa Drone Survey Results](#)

#### PRIOR CITY COUNCIL REVIEW

Not Applicable

#### NOTIFICATION

Not Applicable

#### ATTACHMENTS

- None

#### CONTACT

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