CITY OF MENIFEE

SUBJECT: Burglar Alarm Systems Ordinance and Related Fee

MEETING DATE: July 7, 2021

TO: Mayor and City Council

PREPARED BY: David Gutierrez, Police Captain

REVIEWED BY: Pat Walsh, Police Chief

APPROVED BY: Armando G. Villa, City Manager

RECOMMENDED ACTION

1. Introduce an Ordinance establishing regulations for the operations of burglar alarm systems; and

2. Adopt a Resolution establishing false alarm response fees; and

3. Approve a Budget Amendment Resolution for an increase in expenditures and an increase in revenues.

DISCUSSION

Every year, law enforcement responds to a significant number of false alarms. In Menifee, prior to July 1, 2020, the Riverside County Sheriff's Department (RSO) responded to approximately 3,560 security false alarm calls in 2018 and 3,603 in 2019. On average, RSO responded to 9.8 false alarm calls per day.

Between July 1, 2020 and May 31, 2021, the Menifee Police Department (MPD) received 2,912 alarm calls, of which 2,583 were dispatched to patrol officers. Of the 2,583 dispatched alarm calls, only 23, or .89%, were found to be legitimate alarms. Of the 2,912 total alarm calls, 1,387 were for commercial alarms and 1,525 were for residential alarms. On average, MPD officers are responding to 8.3 alarm calls per day, most of which are false.

A false alarm can be caused by a few different reasons, such as faulty/malfunctioning equipment, user error, poor installation, or the lack of maintenance to the equipment. Once an alarm is triggered, the alarm company notifies dispatch to report the activation. Each activation requires an emergency response from the Police Department. The false alarm calls pull from law enforcement resources, which could lead to longer response times to other legitimate crimes, and/or other emergency calls.

The Menifee Police Department wishes to be proactive in minimizing false alarm calls. The Police have previously analyzed false alarm data and have determined that there is a significant cost associated with responding to false alarms. The average time spent responding to and handling a false alarm varies between 30 minutes and one hour, occasionally longer depending on the incident type. All alarm calls require a minimum two officer response for officer safety. The approximate fiscal impact is $200.00 per response. This includes the officers' salary and benefits, dispatch services, vehicle fuel and maintenance, and other clerical duties. In addition to the fiscal impact, there is also lost officer productivity.

The purpose of this Ordinance is designed to minimize the amount of residential and commercial owners who have frequent false alarms. This will be done through a permit process and an escalating fee system. Staff researched fees from other local agencies, including Chula Vista, Citrus Heights, Fullerton, Hemet, Pasadena, San Diego, Vista, and Los Angeles, and propose the false alarm fees as noted below.

Alarm Registration/Permit

The reason for requiring alarms to be registered is to obtain the alarm owner's name, contact, and relevant information to allow false alarms to be turned off. In addition, registration/permitting provides the Police Department with emergency contact information in case of a true emergency.

The proposed Ordinance would require an alarm owner to register the alarm at no cost and obtain a permit once an alarm system is purchased. Based on staff's research, the proposed False Alarm program will not be successful without registration implementation. The registration process around the alarm program is critical to the success of a robust program. First, it drives awareness and compliance in both the residential and commercial community, as awareness and compliance go up, false alarms go down. Second, the permitting process allows the program to garnish updated contact information from the permit holders annually. This assures that alarm notifications are going to the right individual and that invoices for false alarm fines are going to the right individual that has the authority to pay. This process contributes to a high collection rate for the program.

The success of false alarm programs has been proven over time. Glendale California has realized a 17% reduction in false alarms between 2017 and 2020. Cobb County Georgia has realized a 51% reduction in false alarms between 2015 and 2020. Pembroke Pines Florida has realized a 38% reduction in false alarms between 2014 and 2020. Additionally, staff contacted the Menifee Union School District and the Perris Union School District and reached out to the business community via a small business virtual informational meeting, and all were in favor of the proposed Program. Furthermore, staff will conduct community outreach prior to implementation.

Burglar Alarm Registration/Permit Fees per Year

Alarm Type	Yearly Permit	Cost of Fee
Residential	1	$0
Commercial	1	$0
Residential	Non-Compliance Penalty	$50
Commercial	Non-Compliance Penalty	$50

False Alarm Response Fees

False Alarm Type	# of Alarm	Permitted	Unpermitted
Residential/Commercial	First	No Charge	No Charge
Residential/Commercial	Second	$100	$200
Residential/Commercial	Third	$125	$250
Residential/Commercial	Fourth	$175	$300
Residential/Commercial	Fifth	$200	$400
Residential/Commercial	Sixth +	$250	$500

If an invoice for the service charge is unpaid sixty (60) days after mailing, a penalty of ten percent (10%) shall be charged, and an additional one and one-half percent (1.5%) per month shall be charged until the charges and penalties are paid in full.

Alarm owners who accidently set off newly installed alarms will not be penalized, nor will owners of alarms in which there may have been a break-in attempt, but the burglar had since fled. The intent of this proposal is not to penalize those alarm owners who have properly functioning alarms, but to recover some of the costs of responding to repeated false alarms at the same locations. Additionally, Menifee Police Department staff will analyze each circumstance on a case-by-case basis.

False Alarm Tracking

The most common issues with alarm Ordinances include tracking the number and location of false alarms, determining if fees are due, and collecting the fees. Because this takes a great deal of time, the staff has opted to utilize the services of an alarm tracking company. The General Fund will not be impacted, as these services would be performed on behalf of the City for a percentage of the revenues recovered. As proposed, the Police Department would submit false alarm information to the alarm service company. Staff has completed a Request for Proposals (RFP) process and selected PM AM Corporation (PM AM) as our third-party security alarm systems management service. PM AM has a total of 21 years of experience, 17 of which they have provided false alarm management systems to 140 Cities and Counties including 34 in the State of California.

A summary of the RFP evaluation is provided in the table below:

Score Criteria	Max Points	PM AM CORPORATION	PHOENIX INFORMATION SYSTEM GROUP
Qualifications of the Firm:	35	31.00	30.00
Proposed Team and Organization:	20	20.33	19.67
Proposed Project Approach:	30	23.33	22.00
Fee Proposal:	15	13.67	11.67
	100	88.33	83.34

The proposed ordinance is designed to minimize unnecessary burden to City staff and police resources, while promoting the most effective reduction in false alarms. In addition, appeals to the false alarm penalties would be directed to the City Manager or designee for resolution. A hearing filing fee of $25 will apply to cover administrative costs.

STRATEGIC PLAN OBJECTIVE

Safe and Attractive Community

FISCAL IMPACT

The accompanying Resolution will allow the City to recover a portion of the costs associated with responding to false alarm calls by Police. Collection of fees will result in an increase of $7,500 to revenue account number 100-3466 False Alarm Response Fees and an appropriation in expenditures of $5,000 in account number 100-4911-52800 Professional Services.

ATTACHMENTS

1. False Alarm Ordinance
2. False Alarm Resolution and Exhibit A
3. Budget Amendment Resolution