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FROM	NAME & TITLE	Robert Cennane, Budget Director	CITY of BALTIMORE MEMO	
	AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS	Bureau of the Budget and Management Research Room 432, City Hall (410) 396-4774		
	SUBJECT	City Council Bill 20-0486—Private Security Camera System Rebate Program-Establishment		

TO

DATE:

The Honorable President and
Members of the City Council
City Hall, Room 400

January 30, 2020

Position: Does Not Oppose

The Department of Finance is herein reporting on City Council Bill 20-0486, Private Security Camera System Rebate Program-Establishment, the purpose of which is to establish a program that will provide rebates for the purchase and installation of security camera systems that are registered with the CitiWatch Community Partnership.

Background

City Council Bill 20-0468 would establish a rebate program providing \$150 to residents who have purchased a security camera after June 1st, 2020 and registered it with the CitiWatch Community Partnership. The legislation establishes a limit of a rebate for up to two cameras for residential properties and up to three cameras for commercial properties.

The Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ), in conjunction with the Baltimore Police Department (BPD), currently manages the CitiWatch Community Partnership. The CitiWatch Community Partnership is a public-private partnership in which residents voluntarily register their privately-owned surveillance systems, which can then be used by BPD in the event of a crime. The registry contains information about the location, residence type, and owner of a camera. Feeds can only be accessed by BPD with the permission of the owner of the camera and in the event of a crime. Participants are contacted directly by BPD if they believe the camera footage could assist in the identification, apprehension, or prosecution of a suspected criminal. This bill aims to increase participation in the CitiWatch Community Partnership, which could potentially materialize in efficiencies and operational costs savings for BPD, while leading to faster, more successful apprehension and prosecution of criminals.

One other nearby jurisdiction, the District of Columbia, has begun a similar program to what is being proposed. In March 2016, the District of Columbia established a Private Security System Incentive Program, intended to encourage residents, business, and local institutions to install security camera systems on their property and register them with the Metropolitan Police Department. Participants in the program can receive a rebate or a voucher for the camera. The rebate program offers rebates of \$200 per camera, with a maximum rebate of \$500 for residential properties and \$750 for all other properties. This rebate only applies to the cost of the camera, including sales tax, but other related costs, such as installation are not covered. The voucher program provides individuals who receive public assistance with one camera system free of charge. To qualify, residents must be the owner or tenant residing on the

property and receive the public assistance. As of December 2019, the District's Private Security System Incentive Program has issued 7,400 rebates and vouchers, which have helped to fund 17,408 cameras.

Fiscal Impact

The fiscal impact will depend on the number of participants in the program. At a cost of \$150 per camera, every 1,000 cameras would cost the City \$100,000, excluding administrative cost. Finance intends to work with MOCJ to first establish a pilot program to assess the effectiveness of the program. We believe grant funding could be a source of further support for this program.

Other Considerations

City Council Bill 20-0486 calls for the Director of Finance or his designee to receive, review, and approve these applications and then issue rebates with the collaboration of the Department of Planning and MOCJ. Finance currently issues refunds to individuals, when appropriate, but does not currently operate a rebate program. The specific functions and needs to establish such a process would require more in-depth assessment of current resources and possible additional resource needs. Finance recommends that a partner agency, such as MOCJ or BPD coordinate the application process, with support from Finance in issuing the actual rebates.

Conclusion

Finance recommends the Camera System Rebate to be initially implemented as a pilot program to ensure it is cost effective and equitable, as well as exploring grant funds. If passed, Finance plans to help develop the proper processes for issuing rebates, but prefers that a partner agency with expertise in this subject area manage the application process.

For the reasons stated above, the Department of Finance does not oppose City Council Bill 20-0486.

cc: Henry Raymond
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