

## \$182,450 proposed for body cameras

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Bentonville's City Council on Tuesday will consider buying body cameras for the Police Department.

Chief Jon Simpson said he's asking the council for a budget adjustment. The plan is to buy 60 body cameras for \$182,450, which includes \$18,000 for data storage and \$30,000 for installation and setup.

The cameras will be issued to patrol division officers and can be integrated with patrol car dashboard cameras, Simpson said.

About a dozen cameras will be kept in reserve as spares, he said.

The City Council will consider a policy on use of the cameras before officers start wearing them, Simpson said.

"The body-worn cameras will provide protection for both our officers and the public," he said. "They will also improve transparency and accountability."

According to a poll by the Cato Institute, 89% of Americans support requiring police officers to wear body cameras, while 11% are opposed.

Cassi Lapp, spokeswoman for Bella Vista, said its police don't have body cameras, but do have dash cameras in patrol vehicles.

"There aren't plans to purchase them in the immediate future, although the chief does think they would be beneficial," she said.

The Rogers Police Department hasn't changed its policy.

"Body cams are something we have looked into, but have decided not to pursue at this time," said Sgt. Keith Foster, department spokesman. "We feel there are still too many concerns and unknowns surrounding their use. We continue to monitor developments with this technology and issues related to it."

Privacy concerns for both the public and the police need to be ironed out before a significant investment of taxpayer dollars into a system that is unproven, Foster said.

"We have audio/video capability in all of our marked units that record contacts now," he said.

Lt. Jeff Taylor, spokesman for the Springdale police, said the department got its first batch of body cameras in late 2017 or early 2018. They were purchased with a federal grant, and the department bought more as money became available.

Officers were fully outfitted with the cameras by late 2018, Taylor said.

"There was obviously a learning curve for officers to get used to using them, but the officers are used to them now," he said.

Greg Dawson, spokesman for the Fayetteville Police Department, said officers began using body cameras in December 2017.

Kelly Cantrell, spokeswoman for the Washington County Sheriff's Office, said there has not been any discussion of body cameras for deputies.

Benton County Prosecutor Nathan Smith strongly favors body cameras. He believes it is always better to have more evidence.

"While not all police departments can afford to absorb the significant expense of equipment and data storage that comes with body cameras, I believe they will become more widely used as the technology and affordability improve," Smith said.

"In almost every case," he said "body-camera footage helps remind the public of the incredible job our law enforcement officers do and how grateful we should be for the safety their work provides for our community."