Memorandum

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

Date: September 28, 2015

To: Honorable Chairman Jean Monestime
and Members, Board of County Commissioner

From: Carlos A. Gimenez
Mayor

Subject: Restoration of Miami-Dade Police Department Mounted Patrol Unit – Directive 150628

The following information is provided in response to Resolution No R-519-15, adopted by the Board of County Commissioners on June 2, 2015, regarding the restoration of the Miami-Dade Police Department's (MDPD) Mounted Patrol Unit (MPU).

A feasibility study was conducted by the MDPD that showed that a MPU is an effective and efficient tool in law enforcement, but it remains a support and secondary entity to the duties and responsibilities of uniformed patrol. Therefore, the MDPD will continue to reevaluate the findings of this resolution and will seek appropriate restoration of the MPU as funding opportunities develop and staffing options permit. As part of the study, attached are the responses to each enumerated item in the resolution.

Per Ordinance 14-65, this memorandum will be placed on the next available Board of County Commissioners meeting agenda.

Attachment

c: Robert A. Cuevas, Jr., County Attorney
Russell Benford, Deputy Mayor, Office of the Mayor
J.D. Patterson, Jr., Director, Miami-Dade Police Department
Charles Anderson, Commission Auditor
Christopher Agrippa, Clerk of the Board
Eugene Love, Agenda Coordinator

1. The efficacy of a Mounted Patrol Unit (MPU) to control crowds.

A MPU is indeed an effective tool for law enforcement crowd control in certain types of situations. The mere presence of police on horseback can effectively calm and control passive crowds. However, controlling volatile crowds is not as proven. Additionally, historical events throughout the Nation have demonstrated how MPU deployment at civil disobedience events can be perceived as a negative show of force. As a result, neighboring police departments utilizing MPUs have implemented the practice of not deploying horseback personnel during any volatile situation.

Aside from the aforementioned ineffectiveness and negative connotations, deployment of horseback personnel at events calling for crowd control has other drawbacks. The mounted personnel are unnecessarily placed at risk, by situating themselves as high mounted visible targets amongst cluttered crowds. The Miami-Dade Police Department's (MDPD) response plan to such crowd control situations has evolved to a personnel configuration that no longer includes a Mounted Patrol component. Instead, police officers trained in bicycle response tactics are utilized in their place, providing equal or greater results.

2. The efficacy of a MPU as a crime deterrent as suggested by available statistical data.

The referenced available statistical data was provided to the MDPD as an electronic correspondence attachment with this resolution. It is a RAND-Europe study dated March 10, 2015, comparing the effectiveness of a mounted versus foot patrol. The study highlights mounted as a more effective tool for community policing and citizen engagement. However, the statistical data is non-random in nature, as it compares specific findings unique to the European geography and police department polled. Additionally, the study proposes but does not confirm that police on horseback have an impact in high-crime areas and overall quality of life. Consequently, the MDPD concludes that mounted police do facilitate an advantage to crime deterrence, as well as, draws citizen engagement through its unique presence. Nevertheless, a crime reduction comparison specific to the MDPD cannot be made with the currently existing studies. In the absence of systematic testing of crime reduction deployment of MPUs, any conclusions are speculative.

3. A review of the MPU in the MDPD disbanded in 2009.

The MDPD MPU was disbanded as a result of the 2009-2010 fiscal year budget reductions and the subsequent departmental restructuring that followed.

4. The costs associated with restoration of the MPU including, but not limited to, expenses for obtaining, training, feeding, stabling, and outfitting horses.

A cost analysis encompassing the aforementioned expenses, with the exception of training, projects the MPU's startup cost to be approximately $1,089,126.00 and the annual recurring cost to be approximately $827,126.00.00. Funding a police horse is decidedly expensive. This projection entails a Unit composed of one (1) police sergeant and four (4) police officers, procurement of five (5) horses, specialty vehicles, equipment, office space, materials, as well as, stabling and zookeeper services for the animals. Training could not be projected at this time, because much of the training is dependent on rider experience, which is unknown at this point. Nevertheless, most of the needed and recurring training is regularly accomplished through in-house means and any expense for outside training will be the exception and not the norm.

5. An identification of a funding source for the restoration of the MPU.

Funding would be borne by MDPD's general fund budget allocation.

6. An examination of grants or donor programs available as an alternative funding source.

There are no known grants to originate or sustain a MPU. Donor programs are an available option to attain horses for the Unit, but sustainability would not be included. Whether donation or procurement, all horses require specific training and testing, to prove functionality in an urban and police environment. Donated animals could present additional challenges, should they not be found suitable. Liability issues are also a factor to consider when assuming control of a donated animal. The procurement process facilitates specific safeguards that cannot be accomplished via the donation acceptance process. For example, the pedigree, temperament and medical history of an animal are far better screened via the procurement method. Moreover, should an issue surface after an animal is received; purchase contracts provide safeguards and vendor obligations that cannot be demanded of in donated animal situations. The absence of contractual obligation is a considerable matter when opting for the less costly donation option.

7. The potential manpower savings in terms of sworn law enforcement officers and civilian staff, if any.

None. Restoration of the MPU enables a support component, but it will not preserve or replace the already strained manpower needs of MDPD. The Unit would facilitate specific specialized police services that were voided at the beginning of the 2009-2010 fiscal year, adding a unique police presence throughout the County. The MPU's support capabilities

would include serving the community-policing concept, conducting neighborhood and park patrols, responding as back-up assistance to police calls for service within their immediate areas, and effecting some degree of parking and/or ordinance enforcement.

In summary, although a welcomed component under optimal staffing circumstances, the Department's current manpower constraints make this endeavor an undesirable venture. Funding for this project is better allocated to increase police officer new hires, until such time as the current personnel goals are met.