



REPORT TO CITY COUNCIL

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Grant Yates, City Manager

Prepared by: Nicole Dailey, Assistant to the City Manager

Date: January 8, 2019

Subject: False Alarm Activations and Service Assessment Fees

Recommendation

introduce by title only and waive further reading AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF LAKE ELSINORE AMENDING AND RESTATING TITLE 9, CHAPTER 9.30 OF THE LAKE ELSINORE MUNICIPAL CODE (LEMC) REGARDING SECURITY ALARM SYSTEMS

adopt A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF LAKE ELSINORE, CALIFORNIA, ESTABLISHING SERVICE ASSESSMENT FEES FOR FALSE ACTIVATIONS OF FIRE, BURGLARY AND ROBBERY ALARMS

Background

On August 14, 1984, the City Council adopted Ordinance No. 715 adding Chapter 9.30 to the LEMC regulating Security Alarm Systems. The municipal code remains in effect today. However, due to former concerns from the community, for several years the municipal code has not been proactively enforced.

Each year, public safety costs for the City have risen substantially. Therefore, the City must find ways to reduce and/or recover costs associated with public safety.

At the direction of the City Council, staff has begun to actively enforce Chapter 9.30 regarding Security Alarm Systems by issuing warnings and encouraging our residents and business to take steps to prevent nuisance false alarm calls.

Discussion

City's law enforcement and fire personnel regularly respond to nearly 3,000 false security alarm calls within our community each year. Many of these calls are often repeat offenders. As a result, both agencies are forced to direct limited resources to these false alarm calls rather than other higher priority public safety calls.

False Alarms Ordinance & Assessment

Currently, the existing municipal code provides provisions and penalties associated with excessive false alarm calls related to robbery and/or burglary calls for commercial businesses. It does not address false alarm calls related to fire alarms or residential calls for police or fire services. In addition, the existing municipal code was established more than 30 years ago.

City staff worked in coordination with our Police Department, Fire Department and City Attorney to review existing municipal codes in a variety of other cities to ensure the proposed municipal code was comparable and enforceable.

Key changes to the City's existing municipal code include removing the tedious permitting process for those with an alarm, removal of specific fine/penalty amounts, and the addition of provisions for residential and fire related false alarms.

In November, the Public Safety Advisory Commission reviewed the proposed changes. The restated municipal code eliminates unnecessary processes related to security alarms and, instead, focuses setting regulations and assessments that aim to reduce excessive public safety responses necessitated by costly false alarm activations.

Upon receiving a call for service related to an alarm activation, first responders will determine whether a false alarm has occurred. If so, the officer responding to the alarm will leave a notice at the premises that includes the date and time of the response and a statement that the alarm was a "false alarm." The notice shall also state that the user should act to correct the causative problems and a warning that more than two false alarms in any 12-month period is excessive. Upon a third false alarm call within 12 months, the City will issue a citation by mail.

The proposed resolution formally establishes service assessment fees for false alarm activations based on the City's overall cost of service for police and fire. The proposed fees were determined based on the average response time and can be reviewed and adjusted annually based on changes in costs for service.

The payment and appeal process related to Chapter 9.30 for False Alarm Activations will follow the City's existing process as specified in Chapter 1.20 regarding Administrative Citations. More specifically, payment will be required within 30 days from the date of the citation and a request for an appeal can be made within 15 calendar days for the citation.

Fiscal Impact

The City would expect a positive fiscal impact due to cost recovery associated with false alarm calls. Cost recovery would vary on a case by case basis.

Exhibits

- A – Ordinance Amending and Restating Chapter 9.30
- B – Resolution Establishing Service Assessment Fees for False Activations