

Policy Briefing Summary

City Council



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| Regarding: | Resolution to appropriate Virginia State Police FY 26 HEAT Equipment Reimbursement Funding - \$10,000 (2nd reading) |
| Staff Contact(s): | Holly Bittle, Management Analyst III |
| Presenter: | Michael Kochis, Police Chief |
| Date of Proposed Action: | September 15, 2025 |

Issue

The Virginia Department of State Police's Help Eliminate Auto Theft ("HEAT") Program reimburses Virginia law enforcement agencies for equipment, training, software, or recurring costs to combat the theft of vehicles and vehicle parts in their respective jurisdictions. The Charlottesville Police Department ("CPD") was awarded \$10,000.00 for FY 2026 through the HEAT program to reimburse the City for its annual subscription fees and training expenses for additional detectives on the BERLA system. The BERLA system, along with other interventions, is expected to continue to help CPD to reduce the number of vehicle thefts in calendar years 2025 and 2026.

Background / Rule

The BERLA system gives CPD the ability to perform forensic downloads from stolen vehicle computer systems to collect detailed evidence to more effectively prosecute stolen vehicle cases. CPD had seen an increase in motor vehicle thefts over the past several years. In calendar years 2022 and 2023, vehicle thefts totaled 168 and 172, respectively. In 2024, that number dropped dramatically - down to 125 - after funding from the Virginia Department of State Police's HEAT Program allowed CPD to implement the BERLA system. In 2025, CPD continues to use its updated BERLA system and trained an additional detective on how to use the system with funds from the FY 2025 Virginia State Police's HEAT Program. With continued funding from the FY 2026 Virginia State Police HEAT Program for the BERLA system's annual fees and training for additional detectives, auto thefts are forecast to decrease to approximately 80 stolen vehicles for calendar year 2025.

Analysis

Appropriation of these funds are expected to help CPD continue to reduce the number of vehicle thefts by allowing CPD to train additional detectives to use the BERLA system and to pay for the BERLA system annual fees outside of its annual FY 2026 appropriated General Fund operating budget.

Financial Impact

This will not impact the General Fund. No matching funds are required.

Recommendation

Staff recommends approval and appropriation of this funding.

Recommended Motion (if Applicable)

Attachments

1. Resolution VA State Police FY 26 HEAT Equipment Funding