



City of Maricopa

Legislation Text

File #: PUR 20-03, **Version:** 1

The Mayor and Council shall discuss and possibly take action on approving the purchase for VirTral V-180 and portable building for the Maricopa Police Department. The total cost of these improvements, \$300,000, will be funded from general funds that have been made available due to the AZCARES allocation. Discussion and Action.

The Honorable Mayor Price and members of the City Council,

The purpose of law enforcement in a free society is to promote public safety and uphold the rule of law so that individual liberty may flourish. Trust and accountability between law enforcement and the community they are sworn to protect is essential to advancing these goals. The government holds the power to exercise force in achieving its ends, but must do so in a way that protects the rights of community members and upholds the rule of law. Proper policing practices require that law enforcement build positive relationships with their community, respect civil liberties, and avoid tactics that encourage the use of excessive force against citizens.

Police, by present day expectation, must be more than a reactive force that responds to crimes already committed. Police are expected to be a proactive entity that deal with a broad variety of conditions that tend to disrupt the community peace or adversely affect the quality of life. These requirements give new meaning to the notion of a professional police officer in the modern era.

The changed strategy of policing alters in important ways the content of the police officer's job description. Police responsibilities expand beyond attempting to control criminal activity to preventing crime, promoting order, resolving disputes, and providing emergency assistance in social crises. The officer's methods and resources extend beyond arrests and citations. They now include mediation and negotiation, referrals to other municipal, county or state agencies, and community mobilization. As police activity focuses on the neighborhood, the demands on the basic police officer increase, as do the scope of responsibility and the skills required.

James Q. Wilson has stated that the characteristics of a professional include the exercise of "wide discretion alone and with respect to matters of the greatest importance" and that this is based on a status "conferred by an organized profession" that "certifies that the member has acquired by education certain information and by apprenticeship certain arts and skills that render him competent" to "handle emergency situations, to be privy to 'guilty information,' and to make decisions involving questions of life and death or honor and dishonor."

Proper implementation of community policing requires that officers receive sufficient training on community engagement and collaboration. The most recent data available reveals that police academies spend, on average, 228 percent more time training new officers on firearm skills and defensive tactics than community policing. Therefore, the City of Maricopa and the Maricopa Police Department seeks to ensure that officers are equipped to be effective collaborators with their local communities. We can begin by ensuring that new officers and veteran officers alike are equipped with the skills and knowledge they need to effectively engage community members.

“Thus the introduction of VirTra Police Simulation Training. VirTra helps prepare law enforcement officers for

real-life incidents so they can return home safely after each shift. Each real world, judgement use of force training simulator has real-life scenarios that provide an in-depth look into human performance. The demands on law enforcement to make critical decisions in tense, uncertain and rapidly evolving situations require that the human performance aspect of cognitive neuroscience and human physiology are taken into account as part of the policy training methodology.”

Real life events are rarely simple, which is why VirTra designed each training scenario to be complex. Through extensive branching options, each scenario can unfold based on the decision made by the instructor or trainee. This ability allows a team’s resilience and accuracy to be tested repeatedly with consistent training throughout. These scenarios are designed to teach critical concepts, such as officer presence, communication skills, verbal and non-verbal cues, de-escalation, less lethal, use of force and more. Other training scenarios include:

Mental Illness for Contact	Human Factors in Force Encounters,
Autism Awareness	Active Threat/Active Killer
Taser Targeting	Ambush
Emotionally Disturbed Person	COVID-19 Interactions
Domestic Violence	Etc.

The following specific skills will be a byproduct of these training scenarios.

- (1) Communications skills: the ability to talk effectively with all types of citizens, from community leaders to ordinary residents, as well as the ability to listen and learn effectively.
- (2) Public speaking: the ability to articulate ideas and motivate others, as well as the art of leading meetings in ways to draw out the thoughts and ideas of the participants.
- (3) Problem-solving techniques: how to identify and analyze problems, as well as how to develop effective responses and solutions.
- (4) Conflict resolution and negotiating: how to help citizens resolve disputes within the community, rather than resorting to violence or "self-help," or engaging formal legal mechanisms.

Further, this Simulation program can help with the community conversation and allow others to see the demands of our officers and the many roles they are called on to perform.

The VirTra V-180 comes with an entire library of professionally produced scenarios, filmed and edited explicitly for use on the screens of VirTra’s, fully immersive 180-degree simulator. The system also includes the capability for agency and community specific filming to be imported into the software so scenarios can specifically address the needs of the department’s personnel as reviewed through regular audits. The simulation program (hardware and software) cost \$163,464.91. In addition, the system requires a room (20’ x 30’) for which we do not presently have sufficient space. Therefore, we are also requesting a portable building to place within the gated area of the City of Maricopa Police Annex (dispatch center) to house this equipment and to further serve as a tactical training facility. The total cost of these improvements (\$300K) will be funded from general funds that have been made available due to the AZCARES allocation. The VirTra V-180 is being procured as a sole source in accordance with the City's Purchasing Code and the portable building will be procured in accordance with the City's Purchasing Code.

Disclaimer: It is acknowledged that the men and woman of the Maricopa Police Department are professional, represent the ideals of community policing, and effect their motto, “Making Every Contact Excellent”. However, also recognized is the ever-present need to constantly improve and respond to community needs; to expand upon those things we do well, evaluate those things that need improvement and make necessary adjustments to ensure that sufficient safeguards are established to preserve the integrity, efficiency and effectiveness of the department.

Staff recommends approval of the purchase of the simulation program VirTra V-180 and portable building to place within the gated area of the City of Maricopa Police Annex.