

Police looking to buy drone

September 18, 2022



The Crescent City Council unanimously supported a proposal to purchase a military-style drone for use by the city's police department.

The vote will open a public notice time period, after which the issue will come back before the council for final approval.

Police Chief Richard Griffin brought the issue to the council, telling council members the city received a grant to purchase a drone. Once it is received, the drone will primarily be used to respond to emergencies at the Crescent City jetty.

Griffin explained that occasionally emergencies require law enforcement to respond to the jetty, often in life-saving situations. Griffin said the city's police are not trained in search and rescue, so that element moves to the sheriff's office. But the city police often can arrive first, find victims and help the search and rescue effort.

"We had an officer washed off the jetty before, and he had to be helicoptered out," Griffin said. "So my policy is we do not go out onto the jetty. We are are not trained for search and rescue."

Griffin said if the department has a drone, it could be flown over the area to locate any lost or injured people, and that information could be shared with responding search and rescue teams. He said a drone could also be used, when, not if, a tsunami strikes. An officer could fly the drone from a safe area inland and look for lost or stranded people or check wave activity.

Griffin said having the drone could also reduce the city's liability by keeping officers out of dangerous situations. That could actually save the city some money in insurance.

Griffin said without the drone, his officers do their best during emergencies at the jetty, but he admitted it's not ideal.

“Our response now is to flank the jetty,” Griffin said. “We will have a person on either side of it with binoculars. We would be able to direct search and rescue in there.”

Griffin said he has several officers on staff who could be trained as drone operators. The drone could only be run by those trained officers.

Griffin said in addition to events at the jetty, the drone could have other uses that will serve the city and protect officers.

The council voted 4-0, with Mayor Jason Greenough absent, to approve the request and open it for public notice.