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Kent County Board of Commissioners Approves Funding for Sheriff's Office Cruiser and Body Cameras

\$2.2 million expenditure will equip all 200 law enforcement officers and 83 cruisers

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (Sept. 24, 2020) – The Kent County Board of Commissioners unanimously approved a \$2.2 million request from Kent County Sheriff Michelle LaJoye-Young to purchase body cameras for all 200 law enforcement personnel in the Sheriff's Office. The appropriation will also fund replacement tasers for all officers and replacement in-car cameras for all 83 police cruisers.

"The Board of Commissioners strongly supports Sheriff LaJoye-Young's commitment to transparency, accountability and effective law enforcement practices," said Board of Commissioners Chair Mandy Bolter. "Kent County's commitment to excellence in public safety services is a priority to me."

When combined with training and clearly defined protocols for camera use and for public access to video footage, body cameras are shown to be valuable tools to increase the accountability of all parties involved.

"This investment will allow for greater transparency for the residents in our community," said LaJoye-Young. "Body cameras offer real-time information about what happened on a call for service or with any public contact. Plus, the footage from these calls can be used in training and monitoring exercises to strengthen the performance of our law enforcement officers in the field. We're very pleased that the Board of Commissioners agrees this is a valuable investment in strong and accountable law enforcement."

The tasers, in-car video cameras and body cameras are all part of one seamlessly integrated package. The package includes five cameras for the detective bureau interview room and 25 docking stations as well as a service contract at a cost of \$75,000 per year for the 2nd through 5th years. Altogether, this system will allow for a streamlined Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and discovery process, further increasing the Sheriff's Office transparency.

Approximately 200 uniformed and plainclothes deputies and sergeants, community police officers, undercover officers and other personnel performing law enforcement duties will be equipped with body-worn cameras in the first quarter of 2021.

With today's vote, funding will be transferred from the projected Sheriff's Office General Fund lapse to the Fiscal Year 2020 Capital Improvement Program Fund.

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