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New software to assist Edwardsville police

By Larry Ingram

A new computer software system will give the Edwardsville Police more tools for tracking squad cars and seeing crime trends in the city.

Approved by the City Council Tuesday night at a cost of $55,559.30, Police Chief James Bedell said the new system would help the department in some very big ways.

"It's a new way for us to gather our reports and do crime analysis," Bedell said. "It's a big upgrade from what we have."

The software, from Crimestar of San Jose, Calif., is a record management system that also provides a computer-aided dispatch system, so dispatchers can see where squad cars are in the city.

"It will allow us to be able to dispatch the closest car to a call," Bedell said. "That will reduce our response times."

Ordinarily calls are given to officers depending on the zone they are patrolling.

But according to Bedell, that may not mean they are the closest car to the call.

With the new system, the dispatcher will be able to see exactly where an officer's car is on a map of the city.

"That will also reduce our response times," Bedell said.

Bedell said the current software system, Emergitech, does not provide for reporting and evaluating crimes, crime trends and calls for service.

"With the new system, I will be able to find (information) in about 30 seconds," he said. "The queries are much more user friendly than what we currently have. I expect a lot out of this software."

Public Safety Committee Chairman Dorothy Hummel said the department came up with list of items needed for the new system.

"They saw three different proposals," Hummel said. "They were sent a package from Crimestar to test out. Everyone was pleased with the recommendation to purchase Crimestar."

The bid from Crimestar was also more than $200,000 less than bids from two other firms, New World

Systems and Spillman Systems, according to the city.

"We looked for who could provide (a system) at a cost that we could afford," Bedell said.

Crimestar has an annual maintenance fee of $15,000, Hummel said.

But that fee less than the current maintenance fee from Emergitech, she said.

The records management part of the system will also allow the department to see crime patterns in crime and deploy police depending on that information, Bedell said.

"We'll be able to see the times and dates of burglaries and motor vehicle thefts, with location," he said. "That will help us to deter and prevent those crimes."

Bedell said it was time to look at purchasing a new system; the current system was installed in 1999.

He had been looking into a new system since December of last year.

"I asked for it in the budget," he said. "It was in the budget this year."

Bedell became police chief in September of last year after the retirement of the previous police chief, Dave Bopp, last year.