Request for City Council Committee Action from the Department of Minneapolis City Attorney's Office

Date: 7/13/09

To: Ways and Means/Budget Committee
Referral to:

Subject: American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, Byrne State Justice Assistance Grants

Recommendation: Authorize City Attorney's Office to apply for Byrne State Justice Assistance Grants

Previous Directives: None

Department Information

Prepared by: Michelle Jacobson
Approved by: Susan Segal
Presenters in Committee: Susan Segal, Michelle Jacobson

Reviews

- Permanent Review Committee (PRC): Approval ___ Date _____
- Civil Rights Approval Approval ___ Date _____
- Policy Review Group (PRG): Approval ___ Date _____

Financial Impact *(delete all lines not applicable to your request)*

- Action is within the Business Plan
- Other financial impact: Funding received would provide funding to pay for 3.5 FTEs: including 2 community attorney paralegals, .5 investigator, and a victim witness assistant. This funding can be used for both lay-off prevention and hiring new employees. This funding would also help cover the costs of the e-citation and e-charging initiatives.

Community Impact

- Neighborhood Notification N/A
- City Goals: A Safe Place to Call Home and A Premier Destination
- Comprehensive Plan N/A
- Zoning Code N/A
- Other N/A

Supporting Information

As part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, the State of Minnesota Department of Public Safety is seeking applications for funding under the Recovery Act: Byrne Justice Assistance Grants. The Byrne Competitive Grant Program has seven purpose areas in which applications can be made, and the City Attorney's Office intends to seek

funding in three categories as outlined below. The funding sought will be used to enhance the City's ability to prosecute crimes, to assist and support victims of crimes, and to fund internal system enhancements, e-filing and e-citation designed to improve efficiency. This funding will help support the City's goals of making Minneapolis "A Safe Place to Call Home" and "A Premier Destination." This funding will be used both to fund existing jobs and to provide funding on a contract basis with a community based organization.

Purpose Area II: Prosecution, Public Defender, and Court Programs

The City Attorney's Office plans to submit an application to fund 2 community attorney paralegal positions (retained positions) and 1 investigator position (new position).

The City Attorney's Office currently has 2 investigators working in the criminal division to provide investigative support to criminal division prosecutors. These investigators currently have a very heavy caseload, oftentimes resulting in a backlog of requests for investigative assistance. Many cases pending at Hennepin County Adult Protection for theft and other gross and misdemeanor level crimes cannot be presented for prosecution because of the lack of police resources to investigate the claims. This additional investigator position would provide increased investigative support for prosecutors and for the investigation of vulnerable adult gross and misdemeanor level cases pending at Hennepin County Adult Protection, allowing meritorious cases to be charged and prosecuted.

The City Attorney's Office currently has paralegals working in each of the five police precincts as part of their community attorney program. The support of the paralegals has been instrumental to the success of the community attorney program, as the paralegals provide administrative support to the community attorneys and are instrumental in communicating with the community. With funding under the Byrne grant, the Office would be able to retain these positions. Potential budget cuts to the City Attorney's Office in 2010/2011 threaten the ability of the City Attorney's Office to continue staffing a paralegal in each precinct.

Purpose Area VI: Crime Victim and Witness Programs

The City Attorney's Office plans to submit an application to fund a victim/witness assistant in the City Attorney's Office to work with victims of general crime, focusing on victims of 5th degree assaults, damage to property, graffiti, serious traffic accidents and DWIs.

The City Attorney's Office currently has a victim/witness assistant working with domestic violence victims, and the assistance of the victim/witness assistant has been instrumental in obtaining convictions on those cases, as the victim/witness assistant is able to provide support and assistance to the victim as the case moves through the criminal justice system. The addition of a victim/witness assistant to work with general crime victims will provide these same types of services. The City Attorney's Office will contract with the Council on Crime & Justice to fill this position.

Purpose Area VII: Evaluation, Technology and Training

The City Attorney's Office plans to submit an application to provide funding for the implementation of the e-filing and e-citation initiatives currently in the planning and development stages as part of the Hennepin Justice Integration Project (HJIP). The funding sought would include funding for technology, including enhancement of the City Attorney's Office internal system to improve the storage, searching and sharing capabilities of electronic records, media and objects, and the necessary human support needed to develop and implement the necessary integrations for these initiatives.

The Criminal Division of the City Attorney's Office has been involved with HJIP for several years. HJIP has focused on integrating the computer systems of the many criminal justice

partners so that the systems can share information seamlessly and automatically, thus increasing accuracy and efficiency for all partners. The e-filing and e-citation initiatives will further this integration and allow the City Attorney's Office and its partners to become more efficient in processing complaints, citations and discovery.