

By ROBERT PIERCE • Leader & Times In a continuing effort to upgrade its equipment, the Liberal Police Department is looking to purchase some new gear.

Some of that new equipment will be bulletproof vests, which police chief Al Sill said are paid for through a partnership grant from the U.S. Department of Justice.

That grant, Sill said, will reimburse the LPD for 50 percent of the purchase price of each vest, with the exception of SRT tactical level III vests, and it will only reimburse for concealable vests.

Sill said in a letter to the Liberal City Commission, in 2013, the police department budgeted \$7,000 for 10 replacements of concealable Level II vests.

“At this time, we need to replace nine vests at a cost of \$5,625, of which we will get reimbursed half of that at \$2,812.50,” he said. Sill said the grant money has already been credited to the LPD, but since the new grant application process is open, the vests must be ordered and delivered by August in order to use the money.

“We are in the process of making application for this year’s grant and should have new money available later in the year,” he said. “As we hire new officers, it will become necessary to purchase new vests, at which time we plan to utilize the remaining budget money, along with the new grant money.”

Sill said in the pasts, vests have been purchased at \$686 each, but this year’s vests could cost less.

“We have found them at the cost of \$625 each through Alamar,” he said. “After making the purchase, we will get reimbursed 50 percent.”

Also in 2013, the LPD budgeted for the purchase of four tasers, devices Sill said are carried by uniformed officers on a daily basis and are subject to daily function tests.

“When they become inoperable, they are sent in for repair until eventually, they become non-repairable,” he said in a separate memo to the commission. “These devices have significant importance in officer safety, which is why they have been placed on a rotational replacement program enabling the LPD to keep them operational.”

Sill said there are currently six tasers that have been reported as non-repairable and inoperable, and therefore, needing to be replaced. He said since 2006, LPD officers have used the X26E taser model, but that weapon is being phased out because of technology problems that are decreasing the reliability of the devices.

“The X26E has the programming in the external battery back, thus exposing it to excessive abuse from daily use,” Sill said. “As the battery pack gets bumped, it causes connectivity issues

resulting in the electrical arching of the unit, which creates irreversible damage to the programming.”

Two new models have been developed by the maker, Taser International, to correct these problems. The Taser X2 and X26 P, Sill said, are more rugged and water resistant than its predecessor, and LPD officials believe the X2 is the best choice.

“The X2 has two cartridges that are loaded inside the taser, allowing the simultaneous discharge of the probes without reloading the unit,” he said. “The probes are position in the unit in such a manner that they are more protected from inadvertent abuse from daily wear.”

Sill said with the current unit, the second cartridge probes are exposed to unnecessary abuse, sometimes causing the probes to be damaged before use, resulting in premature replacement and added expense.

“The X2 has a dual laser system that shows where both probes are estimated to impact, unlike the X26 which only showed the impact location of the one probe,” he said.

Sill said this year, \$3,400 was budgeted for the LPD to replace four X26Es, but there are now six units that are inoperable.

“With the trade of the old AR-15s, the LPD was able to save \$2,750 from the original budget amount and is now requesting to transfer that remaining money and add it to the \$3,400 for the purchase of five Taser X2s,” he said. “In addition to the Taser purchases, it will be necessary to purchase a battery, holster and two cartridges for each unit.”

Sill said each X2 package is \$1,152 for a total purchase price of \$5,760.

The city commission is scheduled to hear from the police chief regarding the purchases at its regular scheduled meeting at 6:30 p.m. today in the city commission chambers at 325 N. Washington.