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## Police camera network to double by June

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REDLANDS - The Police Department's surveillance camera system has come in handy lately, and it's about to double in size.

The Police Department has 51 live cameras in its citywide network now, said Police Chief Jim Bueermann. By spring, the department could have as many as 110.

Bueermann called the cameras "force multipliers" - able to extend the abilities of the department's stretched personnel.

"It's a way for us to be more effective," he said.

With the Police Department down 18 sworn officer positions - remaining empty to save money - the department is looking for all the advantages it can get. Councilman Pete Aguilar gave credit to the Police Department for finding ways to enforce the law with less.

"It's definitely out of the box (thinking)," Aguilar said. "This can be a very effective tool in keeping the community safe. I applaud their efforts."

The cameras have been instrumental in a handful of arrests in the last two months.

The cameras are monitored by volunteers and part-time workers, along with police dispatchers. Police Cmndr. Tom Fitzmaurice said the operators are becoming more adept at using the relatively new system.

"I think the operators are becoming much more competent," he said. "It's not an easy thing to just pick up.

"It's taken a while to become really proficient with the system."

Bueermann said police have used the cameras to arrest about 100 people since the department began using the system in September 2007.

The added cameras will watch over Prospect Park, Community Park and Jennie Davis Park.

The Police Department will also install new cameras at Clement Middle School, Moore Middle Lugonia Elementary School, Redlands High School and Citrus Valley High School.

And the department is expanding its network without burdening the city's already suffering General Fund.

The added cameras on RUSD campuses will be paid for with grant money, along with matching funds from the school district.

The Citizen's Privacy Council exists as a check on the Police Department's use of the cameras - making sure they aren't used as tools to pry into

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Redlanders' personal lives.

"I have a great sensitivity to the notion of the cameras being used as an invasion of privacy," Bueermann said.

The Citizen's Privacy Council keeps the department accountable as it uses the surveillance equipment. Council members often help dispatchers monitor the camera footage.

"It's how we balance the public safety need and the local expectation of privacy," Bueermann said.

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