

**To the Mayor and Members of the City Council****September 15, 2020**

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SUBJECT: ALARM SYSTEM PERMITS AND RENEWAL NOTIFICATION PROCESS

The purpose of this report is to address concerns regarding City notice for alarm permit renewals. Chapter 12 of the City Code addresses Emergency Reporting Equipment and Procedures, including the requirements for alarm permits, alarm systems and alarm system companies.

Alarm systems can be either monitored or unmonitored. Unmonitored systems do not automatically summon a Police response and do not require a permit. Monitored alarm systems provide either direct or indirect reporting to the Police Department. Residential and most commercial alarm systems provide indirect alarm reporting to the Police Department, meaning that the notification of an alarm goes through an alarm company prior to notifying the Police Department of activity indicative of an emergency situation that the alarm system is designed to detect. Property owners that install a monitored alarm system and wish to have a Police response to an alarm activation must have an alarm permit issued by the Development Services Department.

There are currently 16,974 active alarm system permit holders. Residential alarms make up 12,274 of these permits with the remainder being commercial alarms. Alarm permits generated \$1.8M in revenue in FY19 from permitting and false alarm fees.

An alarm permit is valid for one year and has an annual cost of \$50 for a residential alarm system permit and \$100 for a commercial alarm system permit. Until January 2020, renewal notices for expiring alarm system permits were sent out the month prior to the permit expiration by mail, or by e-mail if the customer provided an e-mail address. In the process of answering the City Council's concerns about alarm permit renewals it was discovered that since January 2020 only the automated email renewal notices have been sent. This failure to mail hard copy courtesy renewal notices occurred due to a poor transition of duties between a retiring employee and the supervisor. Approximately 67% of residential alarm permit holders and 56% of commercial alarm permit holders were still receiving the automated e-mail renewal notifications. September and future renewal notifications will go out both by mail and email.

On April 7, 2020, the City Council approved M&C 20-0219 authorizing a contract with CentralSquare Technologies to manage the City's alarm permitting process. City staff is currently working with CentralSquare on the implementation of this project, which is on schedule for them to go live at the end of September. The intent of outsourcing is to reduce false alarms, provide false alarm education, increase fee and fine collections, and improve responder and citizen safety. CentralSquare will process alarm permits, send out all renewal notices 30 to 45 days prior to alarm permit expiration and collect fees and fines online. They will retain 12% of the alarm permit revenue. The City will continue to conduct hearing to appeal the assessment of false alarm fees, revocation or refusal to issue or renew a permit and to process walk in alarm permits requests in the Development Services Department.

For any questions on alarm system permitting, please contact Allison Gray, Assistant Development Services Director, at 817-392-8030.

David Cooke
City Manager