

MIAMI BEACH

COMMITTEE MEMORANDUM

TO: Public Safety and Neighborhood Quality of Life Committee Members

FROM: Eric Carpenter, City Manager

DATE: December 2, 2024

TITLE: DISCUSS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A BLUE LIGHT SAFETY AND EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION SYSTEM ALONG THE BEACHWALK AND BAYWALK.

RECOMMENDATION

The Administration recommends further guidance with regards to features needed and desired locations, taking into account the history and challenges outlined below.

BACKGROUND/HISTORY

At the October 30, 2024 City Commission Meeting, at the request of Commissioner Tanya K. Bhatt, the Mayor and City Commission approved a referral (C4 AK) to the Public Safety and Neighborhood Quality of Life Committee ("PSNQLC") to discuss the implementation of a Blue Light Safety And Emergency Communication System along the beachwalk and baywalk.

ANALYSIS

Many police departments, parks, public transportation facilities, hospitals, and colleges/university campuses utilize emergency call boxes. These devices enable citizens to contact emergency services quickly and directly. Emergency call boxes allow police and fire responders to pinpoint exact response locations and offer nearly immediate assistance to individuals who do not have a cellular phone. Additionally, the mere presence of emergency devices may provide a sense of security and reassurance while deterring potential criminals.

However, these devices also present several challenges. The most significant is the rise in false alarms. One article out of New York City reported that up to 88 percent of all call box activations received were false alarms. The tendency for false alarms places a significant strain on limited police and fire resources who would be required to respond to these often remote and difficult to access locations. False alarms could also divert attention away from genuine emergencies and prolong response times for actual calls for service.

Another concern related to placement near the beach is the impact on wildlife, specifically sea turtles. "Sea turtles nestling and hatchling emergence usually takes place at night. Artificial light can disrupt these natural nesting and emergence cues, causing false crawls and disorientations. Artificial lights can deter adult females from nesting on the beach, resulting in fewer nests, and disorientations can often result in adult and hatchling mortalities" -Sea Turtle Conservatory. This may be a factor to consider when evaluating the use of devices that include a flashing beacon.

Lastly, regular call box tests to ensure functionality are labor-intensive and will require weekly verifications with the 911 Center to ensure each box is operational, physical testing of the units, coordinating maintenance when issues are identified, and following up to ensure proper resolution. The recommended solution would be to find a vendor able to perform the majority of these activities as opposed to using City staff to perform weekly and/or regular maintenance for

the proposed call boxes.

Staff contacted the University of Miami, Florida International University, and the Hialeah Police Department to see which vendors provide their emergency call boxes. The primary vendors involved are Telcom Data, Ramtel, and Talkaphone. Their product offerings include various options for mounting and installation including pedestal, column, wall mount, and pole mount. There are also a variety of accessories available including beacon lights, wired handsets, video cameras, and even an AED defibrillator is an option on one specific device. The units can be powered by solar, 120v electric, or power over ethernet. Communications options include traditional landline telephone, cellular telephone, or voice over internet. Due to the wide range of mounting options, accessories, and communication methods, pricing can vary significantly. The lowest cost options start at approximately \$2000 each and can go up to \$10,000 each or more depending on accessories. These prices do not include installation, maintenance, or ongoing power and communication costs.

Below are depictions of some of the general options available:



FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

Financial impact is yet to be determined based on further direction from this Committee and the City Commission.

CONCLUSION

The Administration requests further guidance regarding general style, features, and locations where emergency communication devices should be installed. This will allow staff to bring a comprehensive cost estimate incorporating the specific device, features, and quantity desired.

Applicable Area

Citywide

Is this a “Residents Right to Know” item, pursuant to City Code Section 2-17?

No

Is this item related to a G.O. Bond Project?

No

Was this Agenda Item initially requested by a lobbyist which, as defined in Code Sec. 2-481, includes a principal engaged in lobbying? No

If so, specify the name of lobbyist(s) and principal(s):

Department

Police/Fire

Sponsor(s)

Commissioner Tanya K. Bhatt

Co-sponsor(s)

Commissioner Joseph Magazine

Condensed Title

Blue Light Safety and Emergency Communication System