



CITY COUNCIL MEMORANDUM

FROM: The Office of the City Manager **DATE:** December 10, 2018
SUBJECT: Discussion of Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems (sUAS)
PRESENTER: Jimmy Perdue, Director of Public Safety

SUMMARY:

The North Richland Hills Police Department's first small Unmanned Aircraft System (sUAS) unit is now operational. The aircraft is equipped with advanced thermal and optical camera systems that aid law enforcement in criminal investigations/searches and fire personnel during fire investigations/hazmat incidents. Police staff will demonstrate the capabilities of the system to City Council.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

The use of remotely piloted aircraft is becoming an industry standard in both civilian and public safety operations. Advances in aircraft design and camera technology afford departments access to capabilities once limited to helicopter operations for a fraction of the cost. Thermal cameras allow for increased safety during both law enforcement incidents (barricade persons, missing/fleeing subjects) and active fire scenes (increased visibility through smoke, hot spot detection, personnel accountability). Department pilots complete a local 40-hour sUAS training class and must also pass the FAA Part 107 certification course before becoming operational. Pilots then conduct weekly training flights as well attend regularly scheduled unit training sessions in order to maintain proficiency.

Initial program costs were funded through a budgeted line item in FY18. In addition to being available while on shift, department pilots will be on-call to assist in sustained flight operations during critical incidents. This new Police Department program will offer a highly effective resource to help fight crime and increase fire suppression efficiency while simultaneously making the jobs of public safety personnel safer.