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Office of the City Manager

CONSENT CALENDAR  
March 23, 2021

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council  
 From: Dee Williams-Ridley, City Manager  
 Submitted by: Andrew Greenwood, Chief of Police  
 Subject: Contract No. 100692-2 Amendment: Serological Research Institute for DNA Testing Services

#### RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a Resolution authorizing the City Manager to amend Contract No. 100692-2 and any necessary future amendments with Serological Research Institute (SERI) for the Berkeley Police Department (BPD), increasing the contract amount by \$250,000 for a total not to exceed amount of \$1,000,000 and a contract term extension for three additional years, until June 30, 2025.

#### FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

Approval of the recommendation would support the ongoing operational expense for DNA analyses required for identifying suspects and charging criminal cases in a timely manner. The funding for this contract will be allocated from the State Proposition 172 Fund (budget code 126-71-702-805-0000-000-421-612990) and will be appropriated as part of the Second Amendment to the FY 2021 Annual Appropriations Ordinance

#### CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

The Berkeley Police Department currently contracts with the Serological Research Institute for its forensic deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) testing services. It is difficult to estimate the dollar amount required annually, as it can change significantly from year to year, depending on the type and volume of crimes investigated in a given year. For FY 2021, the Department will exceed the current \$750,000 contract limit set when this contract was amended in 2019. This dollar increase and time extension request will allow the Department to continue to obtain DNA testing and analyses for criminal investigations. These lab services support the identification of suspects based on DNA found at a crime scene, and may result in the suspect being taken into custody and charged in a timely manner without the backlogs experienced by other providers.

DNA testing needs are driven by the frequency of serious crimes, the occurrence of which are outside of the control of the department. In 2020, DNA testing was performed on five homicides, at least two attempted homicides, numerous gun violence cases, and several sexual assault cases, including "cold" case sex assault investigations. Further, DNA testing and analysis is generally required by the District Attorney for charging purposes in a variety of cases.

#### BACKGROUND

In 2014, the Berkeley Police Department entered into a contract with SERI to obtain their forensic DNA services. The City entered into a contract with SERI when two other providers, the

Alameda County Sheriff's Crime Laboratory and Forensic Analytical Sciences, Inc. were unable to keep up with increased caseload from the BPD. SERI is accredited through the American Society of Crime Laboratories Directors/Laboratory Accreditation Board. SERI is located in Richmond, CA and provides state of the art forensic services, laboratory analysis and expert testimony for its clients.

While maintaining compliance with the Federal Bureau of Investigations, Quality Assurance Standards for Forensic DNA Testing, SERI has consistently provided the fastest case turnaround times of our contracted vendors. SERI has helped minimize DNA testing backlogs the department was experiencing with other vendors. Fast DNA testing turnaround times help the department identify serious violent offenders and helps solve criminal cases faster. SERI was originally intended to be an additional DNA Laboratory. However, due to the high level of service provided, they have become our primary provider. Currently, the investigative demand for their services has increased based on several factors including improved DNA recovery techniques and new legislative requirements.

At this time, the only other service providers currently available to BPD are the County Sheriff's Office Laboratories'. BPD received grant funding for an additional provider, but that contract has not yet been established, and there are currently no other providers available to BPD.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Serological Research Institute provides and maintains an extensive online test request submission and products ordering option. These online forms reduce the amount of paper required to forward and process requests.

#### RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

The cost associated with DNA testing services is an operational expense for which the Berkeley Police Department is currently responsible. In an effort to solve criminal cases as fast as practical and potentially limit further victimization, the BPD continues to utilize these services. An amendment to increase funds and extend the contract will allow the BPD to continue to meet the DNA testing requirements of its investigations while avoiding significant evidence processing delays due to the county laboratories testing backlogs.

#### ALTERNATIVES

Exclusively utilize the only other resources available at this time, the County Sheriff's Office Laboratories, which has significantly longer processing times, resulting in delays in identifying suspects and providing evidence for timely charging purposes for dangerous crimes.

#### CONTACT PERSON

Andrew Greenwood, Chief of Police, 981-5700

Attachment:

1. Resolution

RESOLUTION NO. ##,###-N.S.

CONTRACT NUMBER 100692-2 AMENDMENT FOR SEROLOGICAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE  
FOR DNA TESTING SERVICES

WHEREAS, the Berkeley Police Department is responsible for the investigation of criminal cases in Berkeley; and

WHEREAS, closure of criminal investigations will bring relief to the families of the victims and reduce fear in the community; and

WHEREAS, the use of forensic deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) testing is essential to solving violent crimes; and

WHEREAS, the Berkeley Police Department primarily enlists the services of Serological Research Institute for the timely processing of DNA evidence testing; and

WHEREAS, it is essential to have an accredited laboratory in order to ensure the consistent processing of DNA evidence; and

WHEREAS, DNA testing and analysis is generally required by the District Attorney for charging purposes in a variety of cases; and

WHEREAS, the Berkeley Police Department has identified DNA testing services as an operational expense for which the Department is responsible and funds from the State Proposition 172 Fund will be the primary source of funding; and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Berkeley that, the City Manager is authorized to execute an amendment the contract with Serological Research Institute to provide DNA testing and analysis services for an additional three years through June 30, 2025, increase the contract amount by \$250,000 from the State Proposition 172 Fund, for an amount not to exceed \$1,000,000.

