

**CITY OF CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA**



Agenda Date:	June 20, 2023
Action Required:	Adoption of Ordinance
Presenter:	Michael Kochis, Police Chief
Staff Contacts:	Eric Thomas
Title:	Charlottesville Police Department Firearms Buyback Program and Destruction of Surrendered Firearms Ordinance (1 of 2 readings)

Background

Virginia law (15.2-915.5) authorizes localities to participate in firearm buyback programs where individuals may be given a thing of value in exchange for surrendering a firearm to the locality.

Although many localities in Virginia have not implemented an ordinance authorizing participation in a firearm buyback program, the Charlottesville Police Department (CPD) recognizes that reducing gun violence requires a multi-faceted approach.

As of March 20, 2023, the City of Charlottesville has seen a 150% increase in murder and nonnegligent manslaughter offenses in 2023 over the entire calendar year of 2022. Since 2019, annual violent crime offenses in the city have increased steadily year over year by a total of 59.3% from 2019 to the end of 2022.

Discussion

In general, voluntary firearm buyback programs allow gun owners to surrender their firearms to government entities for a thing of value. These programs have three main objectives.

1. Help to reduce the availability of firearms in a community.
 - a. Keeping firearms out of the hands of children and others who are prohibited from lawfully possessing a firearm.
2. Provide an opportunity for the safe disposal of firearms.
 - a. Option for responsible community members who wish to get rid of firearms in a safe manner
3. Community engagement.
 - a. Initiate conversations about responsible gun ownership
 - b. Relationship building amongst community partners working to reduce gun violence.

If authorized, CPD's firearm buyback program would partner with private and/or other governmental entities through memorandums of understanding to allow citizens to voluntarily surrender firearms to

CPD which may give the individual surrendering the firearm a thing of value. Through the firearm buyback program, the surrendered firearms shall be received and destroyed by the CPD, consistent with Virginia law.

Virginia localities such as Norfolk, Richmond, and Roanoke have all implemented successful Firearm Buyback Programs similar to the one proposed by CPD.

Alignment with City Council's Vision and Strategic Plan

This project supports Goal 2 of the Strategic Plan, to be a Healthy and Safe City. Furthermore, this project supports the mission and vision of the Charlottesville Police Department, which states: In partnership with our community, we strive to improve the quality of life of those who live, work, and visit our city. We will do this by creating a safe and secure environment through professional, empathetic, relational, and accountable policing practices. With community policing as our foundation, we strive to maintain trust and legitimacy through respectful, transparent, and impartial public safety practices.

Community Engagement

A firearm buyback program is an important community safety initiative that will help gun owners and their family members safely dispose of unwanted firearms to help reduce the risk of homicides, suicides, and unintentional shootings. Partnering with private and/or other governmental entities will help the Charlottesville Police Department keep guns from getting into the wrong hands - such as children and others who are prohibited from lawfully possessing a firearm.

Budgetary Impact

Currently, there are no known budgetary impacts. The City of Charlottesville will enter into memorandums of understanding with private and/or other governmental entities to assist with funding.

Recommendation

Adopt the proposed ordinance authorizing the Charlottesville Police Department to participate in firearms buyback programs.

Alternatives

The City of Charlottesville may decide not to participate in the voluntary program but a proactive approach needs to be taken to reduce the increase in gun violence.

Attachments

1. Firearm Buyback 2023 Ordinance