

# Agenda Report



**MEETING DATE:** Tuesday, June 25, 2024

**TO:** City Council

**FROM:** POLICE CHIEF ZAMORA  
POLICE CAPTAIN RADICH

**SUBJECT:** TOW SERVICE AGREEMENT AND TOW FEE STUDY

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## **RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

Approve the form of the comprehensive Tow Service Agreement (“TSA”) between the tow companies listed on the Police Department’s Rotational Tow List and the City of Watsonville; Authorize the number of openings on the Rotational Tow List; authorize the City Manager to execute individual agreements with minor changes; and to allow for a “Tow Fee Study” to be completed to evaluate city tow-related fees to ensure they conform with current rates of other law enforcement agencies operating within Santa Cruz County.

## **BACKGROUND:**

On February 1, 1992, Municipal Code section 4-11.01 (Selection and Towing Service Designation) became effective. To date, the three companies listed effectively meet the needs of the Police Department. The tow companies are used by the Police Department for the removal of vehicles in the following circumstances:

- The vehicle was involved in a traffic collision, and the owner requested a tow.
- Storage of vehicles at arrest scenes.
- Storage of vehicles for evidence.
- Vehicles left unattended which block roadways or pose safety hazards.
- Vehicles that are determined to be abandoned.
- Disabled Police Department vehicles.

The City of Watsonville’s last TSA expired in 2019, and the Police Department has been operating without one since then. To formalize a new agreement and compile a list of tow companies, the Police Department just completed a formal Request For Proposals (“RFP”) process. Only three tow companies submitted proposals under the new RFP. These three respondents will be placed on the rotational list.

## **DISCUSSION:**

Staff requests that the Council authorize a new TSA as well as, pursuant to Municipal Code Section 4-11.01, the number of openings on the list. Section 4-11.02 authorizes the City Manager to enter into separate agreements with each tow company for rotational tow service (all tow companies who submitted RFP’s are eligible), evidence

towing and storage (only one company will be awarded for this service), police vehicle towing and roadside service (only one company will be awarded for this service), and oversized abandoned vehicle towing (only one company will be awarded for this service), so long as those tow companies are on the master rotational list. The term “rotational” means each tow company is sequentially selected for service to tow vehicles. In the past, up to five tow companies were on the rotational tow list. These companies are appointed by the Chief of Police to fill the rotation vacancies. Each tow company and their drivers must meet the minimum standards as required by the vehicle towing ordinance sections Municipal Code sections 4-11.01 through 4-11.30.

The current tow companies on the Rotational Tow List are:

- Auto Care Towing
- Chaz Towing

Two of our previous two companies on the rotational tow list are now out of business, and a third, Speed of Light Towing, which has new majority owners, wants to rejoin the Rotational Tow List.

In addition, staff recommends that the Council authorize a Tow Fee Study. Staff is requesting authorization to conduct a fee study to evaluate tow-related fees. While the fees have been updated throughout the years through a standard CPI increase, staff is concerned that these increases may be insufficient compared to current rates for other law enforcement agencies operating within Santa Cruz County.

**STRATEGIC PLAN:**

The TSA with the tow companies will obligate them contractually. This new TSA is similar to the previous version that expired in 2019, and the TSA which is utilized by the California Highway Patrol (CHP) to ensure compliance with the law. Safety and ethical standards are clearly stated in the TSA. Currently all of the tow companies that submitted proposals are on the CHP’s Rotational Tow List and have signed the CHP’s TSA. Implementation of this agreement will create uniformity and safeguard the City, the tow companies and our community members.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

There is no financial impact on the city or the tow companies.

**ALTERNATIVE ACTION:**

The City Council may elect not to move forward with the approval of the TSA and Tow Fee Study at this time.

**ATTACHMENTS AND/OR REFERENCES (If any):**

None.