

LRB – RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS SECTION

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE
FILE #090145

JUNE 4, 2009

File #090145 authorizes the Milwaukee Police Department to apply for, accept and fund a Solving Cold Cases With DNA Grant from the United States Department of Justice – Office of Justice Programs in the amount of \$131,040. Proceeds will be used to fund police overtime costs relating to work on unsolved “cold case” homicides within the Criminal Investigation Bureau’s Homicide Division. This 17 month, 100% donor funded grant, is for the period January 1, 2009 through May 31, 2010.

BACKGROUND

At some point, after all leads have been exhausted and extended time has elapsed, an unsolved homicide investigation may be considered “cold”. The Milwaukee Police Department has roughly 500 open homicide investigations from 1990 to present and an undetermined number of cold cases prior to 1990.

For many years, it was the practice of the Homicide Division to assign a cold case or cases to each detective within the Division, to be worked as time permits. Typically though, time did not permit work on these assigned cold cases, as detectives were continuously pulled to work new homicides. The decision was then made approximately five years ago to assign all cold case homicides to two senior detectives. However, the availability of the two detectives to also assist/work new homicides again resulted in cold cases relegated to a lower priority. As a result, a dedicated Cold Case Unit was formed in 2007 consisting of two detectives whose sole responsibility is working cold case homicides.

DNA, or deoxyribonucleic acid, is the fundamental building block for an individual’s entire genetic makeup. It is a component of virtually every cell in the human body, and a person’s DNA is the same in every cell. That is, the DNA in a person’s blood is the same as the DNA in his skin cells, saliva, and other biological material. Recent advancements in DNA technology have improved law enforcement’s ability to use DNA to solve cold cases. For example, evidence that was previously unsuitable for DNA testing because a biological sample was too small or degraded may now yield a DNA profile. Development of the Combined DNA Index System (“CODIS”) at the state and national levels enables law enforcement to aid investigations by effectively and efficiently identifying suspects and linking serial crimes to each other.

File #050366 authorized the application, acceptance and funding of a \$58,142 Solving Cold Cases or Unsolved Homicide Cases with DNA Grant, with grantor funding of \$35,196 and city participation of \$22,946. Grant proceeds contributed to the time spent developing a “resume” of cold cases, with each case assigned a “solvability” factor based on physical evidence and witnesses.

DISCUSSION

This grant provides \$131,040 for police overtime costs relative to identifying, reviewing and investigating homicide cold case that have the potential to be solved through DNA analysis.

FISCAL IMPACT

Acceptance of this grant requires no city participation and has no impact on the tax levy.

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