



COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT

For the meeting of: 9/15/2020

File #: 20-1139

To: Board of Supervisors

From: Planning and Building Department

Agenda Section: Consent

SUBJECT:

Amend and Extend for an Additional 3 Years the Existing Agreement with Planet Labs, Inc. (Planet) and Add Imagery for the Northernmost Portions of Humboldt County. Approve the Policy for Departmental Use of the Imagery

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That the Board of Supervisors:

1. Authorize the Planning and Building Department Director to sign the amendments to the existing Planet agreement that will extend the agreement for an additional 3 years and add imagery for the northernmost portions of Humboldt County; and
2. Approve the policy on how the aerial imagery is utilized and the department staff who utilize the imagery.

SOURCE OF FUNDING:

Permit application fees and budgeted General Fund allocations

DISCUSSION:

The Humboldt County Planning and Building Department requests approval from the Board of Supervisors to amend the existing agreement with Planet to provide additional aerial imagery services that will encompass the entirety of Humboldt County and extend the agreement for 3 years. The Planning and Building Department also requests approval of the policy regarding use of Planet Labs imagery consistent with previous Board direction.

The Humboldt County Planning and Building Department with Board approval has had an agreement in place with Planet to provide aerial imagery services. The current agreement provides aerial imagery covering approximately 7,000 square kilometers (km) of the southern portion of Humboldt County. Humboldt County has a total area of approximately 11,000 square km and with Board approval, the amended agreement will provide coverage over the entire county by adding the northernmost approximately 4,000 square km.

Planet has provided orthorectified images that are uploaded to the county's geographic information

system (GIS). These orthorectified images result from matching points on the ground in a 1:1 relationship at every location with consistent scale across all parts of the image. This process allows the image to provide spatial accuracy of a map by considering location, elevation, and sensor information. The accuracy of the data provided by Planet allows the Planning and Building Department to upload the images without the need to adjust or otherwise correct the images.

Aerial imagery has been invaluable in verification of activities related to permitted cannabis cultivation. Using Planet imagery, the Planning and Building Department can verify that cultivation sites remain within the limits of the approved permit. The department can successfully measure cultivation square footage and determine buildings and other infrastructure associated with cannabis activities using aerial imagery.

Cannabis permits are approved with conditions that require annual compliance and monitoring inspections to maintain a valid cultivation permit. Without aerial imagery, the Planning and Building Department would be required to maintain the necessary staff to perform inspections for all approved permit sites annually. In addition to staff costs, the department would be required to purchase and maintain vehicles. Staff estimates that it would take an additional seven staff members to conduct the inspections because many of the permitted cannabis cultivation sites are in remote areas of Humboldt County. Driving to these remote sites can take 2 hours or more, thereby limiting the number of inspections that can be performed daily. Staff also estimates that preparation for staff to do the work would be a minimum of four times greater than the cost of the aerial imagery and department fees would reflect significant increases to cover the cost. Aerial imagery allows for multiple sites to be reviewed and the cost savings are substantial.

In addition to monitoring approved cannabis cultivation sites, aerial imagery has been a proven tool in the department's code enforcement efforts. Violations can include junk vehicles, grading, tree removal and unpermitted structures. These are all visible using aerial imagery. The use of aerial imagery also identifies unpermitted cannabis cultivation sites. These unpermitted sites are often associated with environmental violations, water diversion violations, unpermitted grading, and tree removal activities. Code enforcement has successfully utilized aerial imaging to abate these unpermitted activities and was recognized by the California State Association of Counties (CSAC) for the successful use of aerial imagery in enforcement activities.

The aerial imagery is also increasingly being used by building inspectors and permit specialists to issue permits over the counter. Where in the past it has been necessary to visit a site to ensure accuracy of a site plan, the aerial imagery can verify accuracy right at the counter and allow issuance of permits and clearances that previously would require scheduling a site inspection.

Planet Labs will continue to provide a minimum of five satellite collections of cloud-free imagery during each collection period, typically running from May through October. The imagery over the entire county will provide current and historic imagery data that will allow the Planning and Building Department to compare both current and historical parcel activity.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

The cost of the aerial imagery will be \$296,696.49 per year for the 3-year period. The Planning and Building Department has been successful in negotiating the current unit cost for the additional units that will provide aerial imagery to cover the remainder of the county. The cost of aerial imagery has been budgeted in the Planning and Building Department - Building Inspector Division (budget unit 1100-262) for FY 2020-21. No supplemental budget is being submitted with this report. The cost will be covered by permit application fees and current general fund allocations across all Planning and Building Department budget units.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK:

This action supports your Board's Strategic Framework by enforcing laws and regulations to protect residents and creating opportunities for improved safety and health.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

N/A

ALTERNATIVES TO STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Board could choose not to extend the agreement or add the additional imagery to capture the entirety of Humboldt County. This is not recommended because the additional staff that would be required to perform the work would cost significantly more than the imagery services.

ATTACHMENTS:

- (1) Department Policy for Use of Aerial Imagery
- (2) Second Amendment Satellite Imagery Extension
- (3) Planet Labs, Inc. quote
- (4) Initial Agreement with Planet Labs, Inc.

PREVIOUS ACTION/REFERRAL:

Board Order No.: N/A
Meeting of: April 17, 2018
File No.: 18-326