



Legislation Text

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Resolution Authorizing The Execution Of A Revocable License Agreement Between The City Of Hampton And The Longbow Group, LLC To Use A Portion of 100 Stilwell Drive for Unmanned Systems Testing and Research From Two Launch Pad Sites in the Vicinity of the Fort Monroe Community Center

PURPOSE/BACKGROUND:

Mr. Marius Sterk is the owner of the Longbow Group LLC located in Hampton's REaKTOR Business Accelerator in the Hampton Roads Center North business park. The company was established in 2006 and provides aviation consulting services. He relocated the company from Tennessee in 2018 based on Hampton's focus on Unmanned Systems as well as the close proximity to NASA Langley. His previous experiences includes 5 years as an engineer with Airbus and 13 years with FedEx as a Chief Development Engineer and Program Manager. Additionally, Mr. Sterk also founded Express Drone Parts in 2015 to serve the specific needs of the commercial Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) industry.

Longbow Group is seeking to commercialize technology from NASA Langley, a strategic goal of Hampton's, in a targeted industry, Unmanned Systems. Researchers at NASA's Langley Research Center have developed an assured safety net technology for Unmanned Aircraft Systems. They are calling their breakthrough technology "Safeguard." Safeguard can alleviate the dangers of unmanned aircraft flying beyond their authorized perimeters and into no-fly zones, taking action to guarantee the perimeters are not breached. The system does this with the use of geo-fencing technologies. Geo-fencing prohibits UAS flight operations in predetermined restricted areas. Combined, these emerging technologies are groundbreaking and critically important as Unmanned Systems become highly integrated into all aspects of transportation, industry and economic growth nationwide.

This technology will be tested at a proposed Unmanned Systems Research and Test Center (USRTC) being established at Fort Monroe. The center will conduct research, education, training and workforce development in Air-Land-Sea Unmanned Traffic Management (UTM) and related Artificial Intelligence (AI). The center will bring awareness to Hampton on a national level, attract private companies and investment, while creating high-paying jobs and provide training for new workers in this growing field. Furthermore, UAS services will also be provided to the Hampton Police and Fire Departments as well as creating educational outreach opportunities for our citizens thru our Hampton Parks, Recreation & Leisure Services Department.

To establish the center, Longbow is pursuing a \$1.5 million GO Virginia Grant and teaming with Hampton University, Old Dominion University and the Hampton Economic Development Department. This initiative has a goal to attract \$100 million in federal research grants within 10 years and create as many as 500 direct jobs and 1,750 indirect jobs in Hampton Roads.

To begin initial operations, Longbow obtained a temporary License Agreement with the City of Hampton to operate in the police station located at 100 Stillwell Drive on Ft. Monroe and to launch UAS devices from two sites near the community center, which are leased by the City from the Fort Monroe Authority. Approval of this resolution would extend the initial agreement for a 2 year term, with 3 one-year extensions available that could be executed administratively by the parties.

Recommendation:

Conduct a public hearing and approve the Resolution

WHEREAS, the City leases from the Fort Monroe Authority (“FMA”) certain real property addressed as 100 Stilwell Drive (a portion of LRSN 13003672) containing approximately 11.55+/- acres and a Community Center building (the “Rec Center Lease Property”), pursuant to that certain lease agreement dated October 10, 2011 (“Rec Center Lease”);

WHEREAS, the City also leases from the FMA certain real property also addressed as 100 Stilwell Drive (a portion of LRSN 13003672) containing approximately 0.14+/- acres and a building (the “Law Enforcement Lease Property”), pursuant to that certain lease agreement dated October 10, 2011 (“Law Enforcement Lease”);

WHEREAS, Longbow Group LLC (“Longbow”) is in the process of establishing an Unmanned Systems Research & Test Center (“USRTC”) at the former Bowling Center building at Fort Monroe, which is intended to be used by NASA Langley, Hampton University, Verizon, REaKTOR, National Institute of Aerospace and other universities and private companies as a Center-of-Excellence for Unmanned Systems;

WHEREAS, Longbow, in cooperation with the REaKTOR Business Technology Innovation Center and Peninsula Technology Incubator, desires to use a portion of the Rec Center Lease Property for unmanned aerial vehicle (“UAV”) test flights, as well as a portion of the Law Enforcement Lease Property for office and storage needs in connection with the UAV test flights;

WHEREAS, to begin initial operations, Longbow obtained a temporary license agreement with the City of Hampton in February of 2020;

WHEREAS, approval of this resolution would extend the temporary license agreement for a two (2)-year term, with three (3), one (1)-year extensions available, should the City and Longbow mutually agree to so extend the term;

WHEREAS, in accordance with section 15.2-1800 of the Code of Virginia, the City Council has held a duly advertised public hearing on the proposed license agreement; and

WHEREAS, the City Council finds that granting the license agreement is in the best interest of the City of Hampton and its citizens.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the City Council of the City of Hampton, Virginia, as follows:

1. That execution of the license agreement, in substantially the same form and content as Exhibit A is hereby approved; and

2. That it authorizes and directs the City Manager to execute and deliver the license agreement as described above and to execute any other documents as may be needed or desirable for the purposes identified herein.