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NORTH MIAMI BEACH

North Miami Beach to experiment with new crime-prevention tool



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SPECIAL TO THE MIAMI HERALD

North Miami Beach will try out a new anti-theft product called SmartWater.

SmartWater is a liquid that can be applied to valuables, where it leaves traces not visible in ordinary light. But police technicians, using ultraviolet light, can detect the traces. And traces from each bottle of SmartWater have a unique signature, enabling police to identify the owner of stolen property.

North Miami Beach will be the first city in Miami-Dade County to test SmartWater.

The City Council unanimously approved using \$156,000 from the city's criminal asset forfeiture program to fund the pilot program and other programs. Three other task forces will receive forfeiture money to increase police presence during the holidays, improve surveillance in the gang/fraud unit and promote domestic violence awareness.

According to SmartWater's website, the company normally sells its product, along with a three-year license and support services, for \$349 per household. But the police will have 500 kits to make available for free.

BUDGET APPROVED

Also on Wednesday, the City Council tentatively approved a 2014 budget of \$116.7 million.

The tax rate will remain at \$6.60 per \$1,000 in taxable property value. That means longtime homeowners can expect to pay about 1.7 percent more in tax because of rising assessed home values.

Council members were effusive in their compliments of new City Manager Ana Garcia, who is the third person in the position in three years. On the job for nearly two weeks, the council members praised Garcia's early efforts reaching out to groups and citizens.

Even Councilwoman Barbara Kramer, who didn't approve Garcia's hiring, was won over.

"I see light at the end of the tunnel. I mean, I don't even see a tunnel anymore," she said.

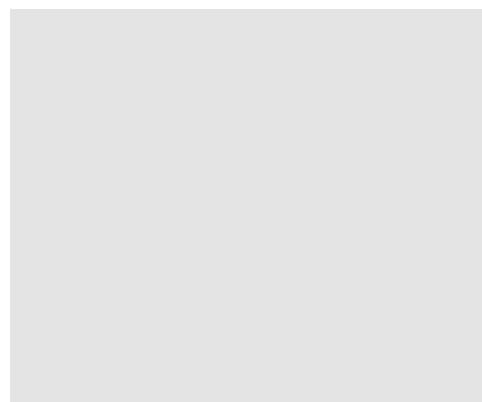
The council will hold a final budget hearing at 5:30?p.m. on Sept 24 at City Hall,17011 NE 19th Ave.

PENSION CHANGES

The council also approved a reduction pension benefits for the city's non-uniformed employees.

Among other things, the new plan will give future retirees a pension payment equal to 2.5 percent of their final working salary per year of service, down from 3 percent. For example, a retiree with 20 years of service would get 50 percent of his working pay, rather than 60 percent.

Employees will keep any benefits they already have earned, however. So a worker who already has



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