

# **Punta Gorda Police Department Awarded Federal Body Worn Camera Grant**

The Punta Gorda Police Department is one of only thirty-two agencies, in its category, nationwide awarded the Body Worn Camera (BWC) Policy and Implementation Program to Support Law Enforcement Agencies from the U.S. Department of Justice. The grant funding of \$67,019 will be used to offset the cost of the budgeted body camera program scheduled to be implemented in 2020.

The police department began working last year toward developing a body worn camera program and has budgeted \$134,038 over the next five years to fully implement the program. The grant would cover 50% of the entire cost of the program, which is the maximum amount allowed under the grant specifications.

Body worn camera programs have been successful in agencies across the county and have proven to help improve the prosecution of criminal cases and can assist officers in de-escalating situations by neutralizing defiant attitudes and behaviors by individuals who know they are being recorded.

“We also believe that body worn cameras will help increase transparency and ensure that our officers continue to maintain the high level of professionalism that our community has come to expect,” says Chief Pam Davis.

Body worn cameras can also help agencies improve tactics, communication, and customer services by providing training opportunities and identifying areas where additional training may be necessary.

The police department has been researching several camera options and are currently testing the body camera by Axon Enterprise, Inc., the same company that developed Taser.



Punta Gorda officer wearing one of the cameras being tested.