

CITY OF PALM DESERT STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: April 10, 2025

PREPARED BY: Daniel Hurtado, Public Safety Analyst

SUBJECT: RESOLUTION AMENDING THE AMOUNT OF THE DUI DRIVER AND VEHICLE IMPOUND COST RECOVERY FEE PURSUANT TO CHAPTER 10.25 OF THE PALM DESERT MUNICIPAL CODE

RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt a Resolution entitled "A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PALM DESERT, CALIFORNIA, AMENDING THE AMOUNT OF THE DUI DRIVER AND VEHICLE IMPOUND COST RECOVERY FEE PURSUANT TO CHAPTER 10.25 OF THE PALM DESERT MUNICIPAL CODE AND RESCINDING RESOLUTION NO. 2014-95."

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS:

Vehicle Impound Cost Recovery (VICR) fees are imposed by the City to recoup administrative and operational costs incurred when law enforcement impounds vehicles due to legal violations or public safety concerns. These costs typically include law enforcement resources, administrative processing, and storage fees incurred during vehicle impounds, particularly for violations such as Driving Under the Influence (DUI). The fees aim to ensure that the City recovers its expenses incurred to enforce these actions. By aligning these fees with actual operational costs, VICR fees also serve as a deterrent to unsafe driving behaviors, such as driving under the influence, and support public safety efforts.

The City of Palm Desert's VICR fees were last updated in 2014. A review of current administrative and enforcement costs, as well as a comparison of VICR fees across neighboring Coachella Valley cities, indicates a need for an update. The City of Palm Desert applies a single, standard fee (per impound type) for all vehicles.

Fee Type	Current Fee	Proposed Fee
Standard Impounds	\$165	\$275
DUI-Related Impounds	\$705	\$1,190

These adjustments reflect the current actual costs incurred by the City, address inflation and rising operational expenses since 2014, and reaffirm the City's dedication to discouraging driving under the influence. The changes are intended to ensure full cost recovery, promote public safety, and maintain alignment with regional standards.

The City of Palm Desert contracts with the Riverside County Sheriff's Department for law enforcement services. The City receives direct bills for deputies' and supervisors' time, making it essential to align VICR fees with actual costs.

City of Palm Desert
 DUI Driver And Vehicle Impound Cost Recovery Fee

The DUI-related fee increase to \$1,190 accounts for inflation and rising personnel and administrative costs over the past decade. This updated fee will enable the City to recover its actual expenses for processing DUI-related impounds, which require extensive law enforcement time and resources.

To ensure ongoing cost recovery and alignment with operational expenses, staff recommends implementing an annual fee adjustment mechanism. Beginning July 1, 2026, and on each July 1 thereafter, Palm Desert’s Vehicle Impound Cost Recovery (VICR) fees shall be automatically increased by the lesser of: (i) the actual percentage increase imposed on the City by the Riverside County Sheriff’s Department pursuant to the contract rate for services, or (ii) five percent (5%). This adjustment will be applied to the then-current fees without the need for further City Council action or public hearings, unless new fees are adopted or this authority is rescinded by the City Council. This approach provides a streamlined method for maintaining cost recovery while accounting for inflation and contractual cost changes.

Justification for Fee Adjustment:

1. Deputy and Supervisor Time:
 - Processing vehicle impounds requires law enforcement resources, including deputy labor and supervisor oversight.
 - For DUI-related impounds, additional time is required for investigations, field sobriety tests, evidence collection, and administrative follow-up. The fee increase accounts for these costs, ensuring the Sheriff’s Department’s time (representing City resources) is fully recovered.
2. Consistency in Fee Structure:
 - Palm Desert applies a standard impound fee across all vehicle types, unlike other jurisdictions that vary fees based on vehicle size or specialized handling.
3. Cost Recovery Goal:
 - VICR fees are structured to recover the actual costs incurred by the City in contracting with the Sheriff’s Department. The DUI fee increase ensures alignment with current operational costs while avoiding a subsidy from the General Fund.
4. Discouraging Driving Under the Influence
 - The DUI-related fee increase from \$705 to \$1,190 reinforces the City’s commitment to public safety. This higher fee to recover the City’s costs also serves as a financial deterrent to individuals engaging in dangerous behaviors.

Comparative Analysis:

City	Standard Fee	DUI Fee
Riverside County	\$92	<i>Established by Resolution</i>
Rancho Mirage	\$145	<i>Same as standard</i>
Indian Wells	\$150	\$670
Coachella	\$200	<i>Same as standard</i>
Palm Desert	\$275 (Proposed)	\$ 1,190 (Proposed)
Cathedral City	\$245	\$566
La Quinta	\$270	<i>Same as standard</i>

Note: Palm Springs and Indio are not listed in the above comparison due to their tiered fee model.

Commission Recommendation:

The Public Safety Commission reviewed this matter at their March 11, 2025, meeting and recommended approval of the resolution.

Legal Review:

This report has been reviewed by the City Attorney's Office.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

The proposed VICR fee structure will be updated annually to ensure alignment with changes in operational expenses and inflation while reducing the need for frequent adjustments. The recommended increase from \$165 to \$275 for standard impounds and a \$1,190 fee for DUI-related impounds will enable the City to recover costs associated with DUI and vehicle impoundment.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Resolution No. 2025-____
2. Supplemental Information Sheriff's DUI/VICR Fee
3. Resolution No. 2014-95
4. PowerPoint Presentation