



PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE MEETING

~ MINUTES ~

Tuesday, May 23, 2023

12:30 PM

Sullivan Chamber
795 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

I. The Public Safety Committee will hold a public meeting to discuss the 2022 annual surveillance reports

Attendee Name	Present	Absent	Late	Arrived
Quinton Zondervan	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Burhan Azeem	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Marc C. McGovern	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Patricia Nolan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Paul F. Toner	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

A public meeting of the Cambridge City Council's Economic Development and University Relations Committee was held on Tuesday, May 23, 2023. The meeting was Called to Order at 12:30 p.m. by the Chair, Councillor Zondervan. Pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023 adopted by Massachusetts General Court and approved by the Governor, the City is authorized to use remote participation. This public meeting was hybrid, allowing participation in person, in the Sullivan Chamber, 2nd Floor, City Hall, 795 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA and by remote participation via zoom.

At the request of the Chair, Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

Councillor Azeem – Absent

Councillor McGovern – Absent

Councillor Nolan – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Councillor Toner – Present/Remote

Councillor Zondervan – Present/Remote

Present – 3, Absent – 2. Quorum established.

The Chair, Councillor Zondervan offered opening remarks and noted that the call of the meeting was to discuss the 2022 annual surveillance report. Also present at the meeting were Mayor Siddiqui, Vice Mayor Mallon, and Councillor Carlone, as well as Police Commissioner Christine Elow. Commissioner Elow thanked the Chair for calling the meeting and noted the importance of safeguarding the community members' rights to privacy when it comes to all the advanced, modern-day technologies. Commissioner Elow shared that the Police Department is very intentional and thoughtful about the technology the Department uses and works under the Surveillance Ordinance.

The Chair, Councillor Zondervan introduced Alex Marthews, chair of Digital Fourth, who gave a presentation titled "Surveillance Technologies of Concern" (Attachment A). Alex Marthews reviewed three surveillance technologies of concern, which included ShotSpotter, The Boston

Regional Intelligence Center (BRIC), and Thomson Reuters CLEAR, as well as shared technologies of minor concern which were Securly, Cellebrite, Camera-equipped robots, Covert cameras, and Water meters.

The Chair, Councillor Zondervan recognized Councillor Nolan who asked what Alex Marthews thoughts were on using traffic cameras as a tool for traffic enforcement. Alex Marthews shared that they were distrustful of the technology, and noted that often technologies are proposed as solutions for racial bias by Police Officers, but because of underlying biases in society, can reproduce the same or similar biased outcomes. Councillor Nolan shared that she was in favor of red-light traffic enforcement for an area with high pedestrian use. Councillor Nolan shared that she was interested in hearing a response from Commissioner Elow about the three technologies of concern that were presented.

Commissioner Elow noted that ShotSpotter is a tool that is used by the Cambridge Police Department (CPD) to alert Officers of the possibility of gunfire, and shared that a study has shown that CPD has responded quicker to a ShotSpotter activation versus a 911 call, which helps CPD maintain the goal of citizen safety. James Mulcahy, Director of Professional Standards for CPD, offered comments and shared that ShotSpotter is valuable to CPD by having the ability to assist the department with incidents. Commissioner Elow reviewed how CPD uses BRIC and noted that access was limited to authorized personnel and that it is a tool that is used to help identify regional crime trends and patterns. Commissioner Elow spoke on CLEAR and how it is used within the department, sharing that it can help locate suspects and witnesses, assist employment background checks, and background checks for a License to carry (a gun). Commissioner Elow noted the importance of CPD following the Surveillance Ordinance and using these advanced technologies in a way that benefits the community, but also ensuring the protection of privacy.

The Chair, Councillor Zondervan shared that he appreciates the transparency about the surveillance tools that are used to be able to have a better understanding of it. Councillor Zondervan shared that there is currently legislation at the State House that would allow for enforcement using traffic cameras and asked Commissioner Elow if CPD would be interested in using it. Commissioner Elow shared that it would be a great tool that could be used in high traffic and high accident areas throughout the City. Councillor Zondervan asked for clarity from the City Solicitor, Nancy Glowa, on how these tools could be used in the City and alerting motorists of potential violations, even prior to receiving state approval, without issuing any citations. Solicitor Glowa shared that it would be something her Office would need to look at more closely to provide an answer. Councillor Toner shared that he would be in favor of tickets being issued through traffic cameras. Alex Marthews noted that if the City were to take the step of using traffic cameras as an enforcement tool it would be important to review the traffic regulations that are already in place in the City, because blindly enforcing them with cameras might cause other issues of bias and injustice. Solicitor Glowa agreed, and said it would be important to look to see if other rights of people would be implicated. Councillor Zondervan shared that he would be interested in future discussions around this type of enforcement.

The Chair, Councillor Zondervan recognized Councillor Carlone who asked Alex Marthews if there were any technologies that they were comfortable with. Alex Marthews stated that while

reviewing technologies, they felt it was significant to focus on the matters that seemed the most important and most concerning. Alex Marthews shared that the reason why they question some of the advanced technologies is because they do not want there to be circumstances where the collection and retention of information is used by authorities to develop unfair ways and oppressive consequences. Councillor Carlone shared that he would be in favor of traffic cameras for safety reasons.

The Chair, Councillor Zondervan recognized Councillor Nolan who made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

Councillor Azeem – Absent

Councillor McGovern – Absent

Councillor Nolan – Yes

Councillor Toner – Yes

Councillor Zondervan – Yes

Yes – 3, No – 2. Meeting adjourned.

Attachment A – Presentation titled “Surveillance Technologies of Concern”

Clerk’s Note: The City of Cambridge/22 City View records every City Council meeting and every City Council Committee meeting. This is a permanent record. The video for this meeting can be viewed at:

https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/512?view_id=1&redirect=true&h=f7fa69dd8a6b153eb578074fa6359927

A communication was received from Councillor Zondervan, transmitting a presentation titled Surveillance Technologies of Concern.

Attachment A

Surveillance Technologies of Concern

City of Cambridge Public Safety Committee Hearing, May 23, 2023

What are the key surveillance technologies of concern in Cambridge in 2023?

- ShotSpotter
- The Boston Regional Intelligence Center
- Thomson Reuters CLEAR





ShotSpotter Coverage: Cambridge



- No real-time audio monitoring:
- West Cambridge residents
- Harvard students
- MIT students
- Kendall Square workers
- Impact of using historical statistical patterns

Boston Regional Intelligence Center (“BRIC”)

The local mini-NSA that tracks and polices domestic dissent

Thomson Reuters CLEAR

A massive database that contracts with police to help them identify people who have had abortions, have performed “homosexual acts”, or have “anarchist” political leanings

Technologies of Minor Concern

Securly, Cellebrite, Camera-equipped robots, Covert cameras, Water meters