



Comments by Medford People Power
To the Public Health and Community Safety Committee on the
Community Control over Public Surveillance annual report
May 21, 2025

Medford People Power wants to thank the committee for making available for public comment, as required by Community Control over Public Surveillance (CCOPS) ordinance, the Annual Surveillance Report of the Medford Police Department. We are submitting these written comments to Medford City Council before the publishing of the Council's Annual Public Reporting.

First, the purpose of CCOPS is to create a transparent and community engaged process focused on use of surveillance technology by the city. To date, we have body-worn cameras used by the Medford Police Department and the automatic license plate readers used by the Traffic Department. The use policies and the reports help ensure that Medford residents understand what technology is being used in our community and how. We are glad to see that the ordinance is working as intended and that the public is being informed of their use and provided the opportunity to comment. We hope in the future that the timelines stated in the ordinance can be followed as we were prepared to review and comment in April; however, the report was not submitted on time. We did not know that the MPD report was submitted and would be heard until the weekend just before the hearing. We appreciate that we are all adjusting to this ordinance and the reporting requirements. However, Medford People Power did not have time as a group to meet and discuss the report. We request in the future that city agencies meet the timelines laid out in the ordinance.

Second, in the future, we would like to see additional data provided in a few areas, detailed inline with the format of the report, below.

Regarding question #1 (Use/Privacy): The main focus of the ordinance is to ensure that surveillance technology is not being used indiscriminately against the public with no knowledge or input. Medford People Power has not taken a position on body-worn cameras as a technology. Our main concern is that they are not used as a general surveillance tool outside of the investigation of crimes and that the privacy of residents is protected. The report provided by MPD focuses significantly on the use of body-worn cameras for case investigations. However, it could provide more detail on how the privacy of Medford residents is protected and how this technology isn't being used against any particular population in Medford.

The MPD policy allows its officers to request a redaction of a video when it has recorded sensitive information. We'd like to know how many instances of this occurred as most of the redaction requests seem to come from the public.

Regarding question #2 (Efficacy): One of the stated reasons for purchasing and using body-worn cameras was to ensure accountability of the police force to the public. There were several use of force incidents in which the body-worn cameras were activated and are listed as being audited by supervisors. We would like to know if it was the determination of the audit that the use of force was justified. We do not need specifics that would violate privacy, but a high-level summary. Future reports should provide that information to Medford residents.

Regarding question #5 (Complaints): Medford People Power requests that MPD set up a separate complaint process for body-worn cameras to track if there are any complaints about it. While the report states that there have been no complaints, it is not clear that there exists any specific mechanism for submitting or receiving complaints about a technology, as opposed to about an officer or an incident.

Regarding question #6 (Audits):

1. How many instances were there of recording after the fact, prohibited recordings, and improper use of body-worn camera videos?
2. How many times was an officer allowed to review their own footage of a law-enforcement action? This was an area where Medford People Power disagreed with the BWC policy. We do not think police should be allowed to review their own footage before making a statement as defendants are not afforded this same right and this allowance goes against recommended state policy. Is it every time a case is filed?
3. How many times was an officer allowed to review footage before making a statement in a case of possible misconduct by that officer?

Regarding question #7 (Civil Liberties): It is unclear if there is a disparate impact on Medford's residents as race/ethnicity data is not provided for when body-worn camera data is used by officers. Also, we don't have a breakdown of the race/ethnicity in the instances when the camera was not turned on versus when it was on. I understand that the audit and the focus on training is to have the officers turn on the camera every time it is required. We would like to see those numbers improve over time with training and be assured there is no bias in their use. The MPD states they do not believe there has been a disparate impact but we would like to have that statement backed up by data.