



PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE MEETING

~ MINUTES ~

Tuesday, December 9, 2025

12:00 PM

Sullivan Chamber

The Public Safety Committee will hold a public hearing on December 9, 2025 to further discuss the implications of deploying automatic license plate readers (ALPRs) and to discuss whether adjustments should be made related to the deployment of ALPRs since approval in February of this year, CMA 2025 #257 in City Council October 20, 2025.

Attendee Name	Present	Absent	Late	Arrived
Marc C. McGovern	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Sumbul Siddiqui	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Paul F Toner	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	12:10 PM
Ayesha M. Wilson	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote			
Catherine Zusy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	12:05 PM

A public meeting of the Cambridge City Council’s Public Safety Committee was held on Tuesday, December 9, 2025. The meeting was called to order at 12:00 p.m. by Vice Mayor McGovern. Pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2025 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 Vice Mayor McGovern, Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

Vice Mayor McGovern – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Councillor Siddiqui – Present/Remote

Councillor Toner – Absent*

Councillor Wilson – Present/Remote

Councillor Zusy – Absent*

Present – 3, Absent – 2. Quorum established.

*Councillor Zusy was present in the Sullivan Chamber at 12:05p.m.

*Councillor Toner was present and remote at 12:10p.m.

Vice Mayor McGovern offered opening remarks and noted that the Call of the meeting was to further discuss the implications of deploying automatic license plate readers (ALPRs) and to discuss whether adjustments should be made related to the deployment of ALPRs since approval in February of this year, CMA 2025 #257, which was in City Council on October 20, 2025. Present at the meeting was City Manager, Yi-An Huang, Police Commissioner, Christine Elow, Superintendent, Frederick Cabral, Deputy Superintendent, Peter Vellucci, First Assistant City Solicitor, Kate Kleimola, and Assistant City Solicitor, Sydney Wright. Also present during the meeting was Councillor Nolan and Mayor Simmons. Panelists that were present were Kevin Kane from Flock, Alex Marthiews from Digital Fourth, and Gideon Epstein from ACLU of Massachusetts.

Vice Mayor McGovern recognized the City Manager and Police Commissioner for opening remarks and an important update to the Committee regarding Flock and a recent data breach. Commissioner Elow acknowledged community concerns regarding Flock and the City Council’s decision to reevaluate its use in Cambridge and deactivate the cameras. She reported that the City learned earlier that day that two

additional cameras had been installed pursuant to a request made prior to the November deactivation. Commissioner Elow stated that Flock was contacted immediately and the cameras were turned off, explaining that their installation resulted from a preexisting work order that had not been cancelled after the deactivation request. Deputy Superintendent Vellucci pointed out that ALPR technology can be useful if it is controlled and used properly and how active ALPR systems could have helped a recent incident in Cambridge and surrounding cities involving masked individuals walking in the streets with large capacity firearms. Both Commissioner Elow and Deputy Superintendent Vellucci shared that with this recent update with Flock they have lost trust but stressed the importance of using technology tools in the future that can help the Police Department with investigations.

Vice Mayor McGovern recognized Kevin Kane who shared that the Cambridge Police Department was notified and emphasized that data was not searched or accessed. Kevin Kane added that there are currently no Flock cameras in Cambridge and provided an overview of data ownership. Kevin Kane provided information on the safeguards that are built into the system and pointed out that there is a requirement for every search and that communities can approve or deny requests from Federal agencies.

Vice Mayor McGovern recognized Gideon Epstein who gave a presentation titled “Protecting Civil Liberties and Standing by our Community’s Values”. The presentation was provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet.

Vice Mayor McGovern recognized Alex Marthiews who gave a presentation titled “Next Steps For Surveillance Oversight in Cambridge”. The presentation was provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet.

Vice Mayor McGovern opened public comment.

Alexandra Thorn, 173 Hudson Street, Somerville, MA, spoke in opposition to Flock cameras.

Sue Hyde, 180 Pearl Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in opposition to Flock cameras.

Jerrad Pierce, 2211 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA, spoke in opposition to Flock cameras.

Marzyeh Ghassemi, 57 Kelly Road, Cambridge, MA, spoke in opposition to Flock cameras.

Michael Bono, 7 Sargent Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in opposition to Flock cameras.

Alex Holman, 7 Gladstone Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in opposition to Flock cameras.

Cathy Hoffman, 67 Pleasant Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in opposition to Flock cameras.

John Hawkinson spoke in opposition to Flock cameras.

Ty Bellitti, 301 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA, spoke against technology that puts residents at risk and also spoke in strong support of using tools that have the ability to keep residents safe and help the Cambridge Police Department.

Helen Gibbons, 208 Third Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in opposition to Flock cameras.

Mark Nahabedian, Cambridge, MA, spoke in support of traffic safety and traffic enforcement.

Susan Moir, Cambridge, MA, spoke in opposition to Flock cameras.

Vice Mayor McGovern recognized Councillor Toner who shared concerns about the conversation and the scope of the meeting. Councillor Toner asked if Flock would be able to provide information on location of cameras, if the cameras are being used to target specific individuals, and if data is being shared with federal agencies and tracking reproductive care. Councillor Toner shared that he does support ALPR technology and pointed out that some of the concerns are if Flock is the right vendor the City of Cambridge. Kevin Kane pointed out that cameras were installed when they were not supposed to be, but there was no data breach. Kevin Kane explained how communities can apply certain search filters, adding that the customer owns the data. Councillor Toner asked how long data is available for. Deputy Superintendent Vellucci shared that Cambridge has a 30-day retention, and then the data is deleted and no longer available to access and provided an overview to Councillor Toner of the recent camera situation with Flock.

Vice Mayor McGovern recognized Councillor Zusy who shared that she understands why Flock could be a resourceful tool for the Police Department but does not think it is the right time to have the cameras activated and would support keeping them off. Councillor Zusy asked if the Police Department had any feedback from the suggestions that were provided by Digital Fourth and those suggestions would affect how the Police Department operates.

Vice Mayor McGovern recognized Mayor Simmons who shared that there has been many conversations related to surveillance since she has been on the City Council. Mayor Simmons emphasized the importance of having those who are impacted the most when it comes to public safety being part of the conversation, such as residents of the Port. Mayor Simmons stressed the importance of community engagement in neighborhoods to receive resident feedback and concerns.

Vice Mayor McGovern recognized Commissioner Elow who shared that public safety is the Police Department's main responsibility, and that there are many threats that can happen across city and state lines. Commissioner Elow explained that it is important to have regional and federal partnerships to help identify and respond to threats, and without partnerships it could harm the Cambridge Police Department's response to certain issues.

Vice Mayor McGovern recognized Councillor Siddiqui who shared that Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler had provided a detailed list of questions in advance of the meeting (included in the Agenda Packet), and that many of them have been addressed in the conversations. Councillor Siddiqui shared that she agrees with comments made by Councillor Zusy and the ACLU related to Flock concerns. Councillor Siddiqui shared she would be interested learning more about ALPR technology in a future Public Safety Committee meeting to discuss what the best technology fit would be for Cambridge while also discussing plans to address gun violence in Cambridge. Councillor Siddiqui shared that she would not be comfortable with maintaining a partnership with Flock at this time.

Vice Mayor McGovern recognized Councillor Nolan who highlighted the importance of addressing public safety needs while not compromising the privacy of residents. Councillor Nolan shared that she is not against using surveillance cameras for the use of traffic enforcement but does not agree with technology that can risk having data being shared outside of the City's control. Councillor Nolan pointed out that even with restricted data sharing, there is always the risk of data being breached or forced to be shared by external authorities, such as federal agencies. Councillor Nolan added that as the surveillance discussion continues it will be important to review specific concerns before moving forward with a new vendor if that is what the City plans.

Vice Mayor McGovern recognized Councillor Wilson who agreed with comments made by Mayor Simmons related to community engagement with those who are most affected by public safety issues.

Councillor Wilson shared that she is not against using surveillance technology but is against using technology that could bring harm to residents or breach of data. Councillor Wilson spoke in support of the Police Department being able to have access to tools that will help them be successful and shared interest in exploring other surveillance vendors. Councillor Wilson asked the City Manager what the next steps should be to address violence in Cambridge and be proactive with creating long-term plans rather than being reactive when incidents do occur. City Manager Huang shared the gun violence prevention is a top priority for the City and is something that is continually discussed with City leadership. City Manager Huang provided examples of current programs that assist and support people who are reentering the community after being incarcerated. City Manager Huang added the importance of creating partnerships with community-based programs that help support and create opportunities for people who are at risk. The City Manager emphasized that early intervention, engagement, and partnerships with the Police Department and community organizations create opportunity to prevent violence before it happens. The City Manager shared support for having additional conversations with the City Council related to efforts towards violence prevention. Councillor Wilson agreed that violence prevention should be a top priority and spoke on the importance of community policing and having the CARE Team and HEART program being valuable resources with the Police Department.

Vice Mayor McGovern noted that during the meeting discussion there were two related, but different conversations happening. If the City should continue their contract with Flock, and the bigger question related surveillance and technology in general. The Vice Mayor agreed that those who are most affected by gun violence need to be part of the conversation to understand their concerns and address questions. Vice Mayor McGovern pointed out that many residents in the neighborhoods that are affected are asking for surveillance due to fears of violence and crime in those specific areas of the City. The Vice Mayor pointed out how some past crimes may have been solvable with the help of surveillance, such as the fatal shooting of Charlene Holmes, and addressed the lack of closure for her family, and other families who are victims to fatal crimes. Vice Mayor McGovern shared support for ending the City's contract with Flock and asked the City Manager if the City Council should submit a Policy Order formally requesting the contract be terminated. City Manager Huang responded by sharing that based on past conversations with Flock and Department Leaders, breached data in other communities, and the new information that was received today related to the unauthorized installation of new cameras raises concerns. City Manager Huang noted that there needs to be safeguards and clear boundaries within data-sharing platforms and that the City will be terminating their contract with Flock. City Manager Huang added that he would be interested in having more conversations related to surveillance technology and ALPRs in Cambridge and finding a vendor that will meet the Cambridge standards. Vice Mayor McGovern thanked the City Manager and Commissioner Elow for their transparency related to Flock and supports his decision to end the contract.

Vice Mayor McGovern recognized Councillor Zusy who made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Clerk of Committees Erwin called the role.

Vice Mayor McGovern – Yes

Councillor Siddiqui – Yes

Councillor Toner – Yes

Councillor Wilson – Yes

Councillor Zusy – Yes

Yes – 5. Motion passed.

The Public Safety Committee adjourned at approximately 2:02p.m.

Attachment A – Communications from the public.

Attachment B – Memo received from the Cambridge Police Department on January 13, 2026 in response to questions submitted for the December 9, 2025 Public Safety Committee meeting.

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

https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/1113?view_id=1&redirect=true

A communication was received from Councillor Wilson, transmitting a presentation from the ACLU.

A communication was received from Councillor Wilson, transmitting a presentation from Digital Fourth.

A communication was received from Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler, transmitting questions to the Cambridge Police Department and Flock.

A communication transmitted from Yi-An Huang, City Manager, relative to Awaiting Report Item Number 25-53, regarding a request that the City Manager consult with relevant departments about the implications of deploying license plate readers and provide recommendations as to whether adjustments in plans for deployment should be made in light of changes since approval in February.

Erwin, Nicole

Attachment A

From: Carter Sigl <carter.sigl0@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, December 9, 2025 6:17 PM
To: City Clerk
Subject: Resident comment on Flock cameras

I would like to add my input as a Cambridge resident to the meeting about Flock cameras as I was unable to attend to the meeting in person.

To the Cambridge city council,

I write to express my strong opposition to the City's use of Flock Safety's license plate readers. Flock's nationwide data sharing model puts our community's privacy, civil liberties, and safety at risk.

License plate readers collect data from all passing cars, without requiring police to show reasonable suspicion or probable cause to search drivers' location data. Flock stores that license plate data in a database which is accessible to out of state law enforcement. I am particularly concerned about the risk this poses to our immigrant community, as well as those seeking abortion services or gender affirming care.

I applaud the council's enactment of the Welcoming Community Ordinance, which prohibits Cambridge police from assisting federal immigration enforcement. The possibility of Cambridge license plate data being shared with non-Massachusetts law enforcement undermines this Ordinance and puts our immigrant community at risk.

Although I am not inherently opposed to all license plate readers, as I believe they can be a powerful and useful tool for traffic enforcement and improving public transportation, I am strongly opposed to the usage of any cameras by companies who share their data with any law enforcement agencies outside the city of Cambridge, and the council's stance on this will inform my decision in future elections.

Sincerely,

Carter Sigl, Cambridge resident

Erwin, Nicole

From: Michael Bono <michael.bono2@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, December 9, 2025 2:44 PM
To: City Clerk
Subject: Public Comment for Dec. 9, 2025 Public Safety Committee Meeting

Hello, my name is Michael Bono, and I am a Cambridge resident. I am writing to urge the committee to not use automatic license plate readers run by Flock or other companies with risks of sharing information about our communities with other jurisdictions.

Our community and our nation have been ravaged for several months now by unlawful detentions by federal immigration officers. Immigrants in our communities, including documented immigrants with valid visas, and even US citizens have been kidnapped off of our streets and detained in horrific conditions, sometimes hundreds of miles from their homes.

Under the current administration, federal immigration agencies have shown a flagrant disregard for both our constitution and the will of the local jurisdictions in which they operate. It is unlikely that these federal agencies will elect to obey any state or local legislation to limit their activities, so one of the most effective ways that we can protect our communities is to make sure that federal immigration agencies do not have access to information that will enable their campaign of harassment and unlawful detentions.

The presence of Flock cameras in our neighborhoods poses an unacceptable risk to our community. Despite statements from Flock regarding who owns data collected in Cambridge, if Flock has access to that data, then there is a pathway for federal agents to access that data via searches or subpoenas.

We cannot give nationwide access to Cambridge license plate images and comply with our community values as embodied in regulations such as the Welcoming Community Ordinance. Beyond the risks of data access by federal immigration officials, nationwide access to Cambridge automatic license plate reader data creates unacceptable risks of enabling prosecution of residents of other communities who come to Cambridge for healthcare access.

The only way to ensure that license plate and other surveillance data is owned by the City of Cambridge is to ensure that only Cambridge officials have access to that data, and that there is continuous civilian oversight of what data is collected and when data is irreversibly deleted to prevent any unwanted use.

As a Cambridge resident, I don't want Flock cameras in my community. I don't want images collected here used to harm my immigrant neighbors. I don't trust a company that sees that cameras have been removed by the city, after being informed by the city that we have paused all Flock data collection, and erects new cameras based on an obsolete work order. I appreciate the city council's commitment to our values in pausing Flock data collection, and I urge them to make that pause permanent by discontinuing all presence and use of Flock cameras within Cambridge. Thank you.

Erwin, Nicole

From: Catherine Hoffman <catherinebhoffman@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, December 8, 2025 10:45 PM
To: Wilson, Ayesha; Azeem, Burhan; cathie zusy; City Clerk; Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler; Sobrinho-Wheeler, Jivan; McGovern, Marc; Patricia Nolan; Nolan, Patricia; Toner, Paul; Simmons, Denise; Siddiqui, Sumbul; sumbul siddiqui; City Clerk
Subject: FLOCK off

Dear Council,

I imagine the information you are getting about Automatic License Plate Reader (ALPR) and FLOCK proposal is already frightening enough to defeat its presence in Cambridge.

I want to share just some pieces of research I learned 2 days ago.

Illinois is the closest state with abortion access to 10 prohibition states. They are already receiving thousands of requests from Florida for license plate info. Boston has received thousands also. For people wanting to track potential abortion seekers, or gender care seekers or immigrants, this is a windfall.

Even with guarantees that Cambridge would own the data and/or agree to destroy it quickly, there are no guarantees in this current political environment of intense surveillance. If the data is collected it can be extracted. The capabilities of digital technology are limitless.

The only wise decision is to keep these readers out of Cambridge.

Thank you

Erwin, Nicole

From: Sue Hyde <sjhyde15@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, December 8, 2025 6:28 PM
To: City Clerk
Subject: Committee Hearing re: deploying LPRs in Cambridge 12/9/25

Hello,

Please see my attached comments.

Please enter my comments in the public record.

Let me know if the link below does not work for you.

Thank you,

Sue
Sue Hyde
617/320-6635

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1srrq_JcQwC4cJDa4ZfrRb0E4ce3OelpAAxfi6llkOVc/edit?usp=sharing

To: Public Safety Committee, Cambridge City Council
From: Sue Hyde, Cambridge Resident
Date: December 9, 2025

Mr. Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Sue Hyde. I reside at 180 Pearl Street, 02139. I have been a Cambridge resident since January 1983.

I rise to address the matter before the Committee today: The Public Safety Committee will hold a public hearing on December 9, 2025 to further discuss the implications of deploying automatic license plate readers (ALPRs) and to discuss whether adjustments should be made related to the deployment of ALPRs since approval in February of this year, CMA 2025 #257 in City Council October 20, 2025.

I urge that the City Council simply reject the use of ALPRs in our city. Reject these intrusive cameras immediately and for the foreseeable future.

The mere fact of placement of APLRs in specific neighborhoods leads to skepticism regarding their actual purpose. Multiple cameras have been installed near public housing developments, including Newtowne Court, Washington Elms, and Roosevelt Towers. Concerns were raised that these locations could also monitor access to the Cambridge Health Alliance's Windsor Street Care Center, which offers reproductive healthcare services. Were these locations chosen to target public housing residents and patients seeking reproductive health care?

While I can understand that the ALPRs may assist the Cambridge Police personnel in solving crimes, I have great confidence that our Police Department can solve crimes as they always have: by shoeleather investigations and good detective work.

But even if our coppers were incompetent, which they are NOT, the data-sharing operations of Flock Safety raises alarms for me and for other residents of our city. Flock's business plan does not only rely on selling surveillance cameras to cities, but it also relies on re-distributing data to other entities. Many of us are concerned that data from Flock Safety could be shared with federal agencies such as the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) or law enforcement in states that outlaw activities protected in Massachusetts (e.g. abortion or gender-affirming care). The end result would bypass local "Welcoming City" ordinances and state "Shield Laws."

For these reasons and reasons raised by privacy advocates, I strongly believe any use of automatic license plate readers in Cambridge should cease permanently and immediately. In other words, FLOCK OFF!!

Thank you for your consideration of my views.



Christine Elow
Police Commissioner

City of Cambridge Police Department

Office of the Police Commissioner

TELEPHONE
(617) 349-3300

WEB
www.cambridgepolice.org

FACEBOOK
facebook.com/CambridgePolice

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Yi-An Huang
City Manager

To: Councillor Patricia Nolan
CC: Councillor Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler
From: Dominic Warren, Chief of Staff
Date: January 13, 2026
Re: 12.09.2025 Public Safety Meeting Response to Outstanding Questions

Background

This memorandum responds to questions raised by Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler in advance of the Public Safety Committee meeting held on December 9, 2025. These questions followed the Cambridge Police Department's (CPD) response memorandum that was shared prior to the October 20, 2025, City Council meeting.

Although the Department was prepared to address these questions during the December 9th meeting, the Committee reached a unanimous decision early in the discussion to discontinue the use of Flock license plate reader (LPR) devices. At the conclusion of that meeting, Councillor Nolan requested that CPD provide written responses to the outstanding questions for the record.

The responses below reflect the information prepared in advance of the December 9th meeting.

Responses to Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler's Questions

1. Will CPD share PII-redacted Flock audits with the Council and the public for transparency?

Flock's SOC 2 audits are conducted by a reputable, independent third-party auditor on Flock's behalf. Flock represents that it meets stringent industry standards for security and auditing. CPD would recommend that Flock share a personally identifiable information (PII)-redacted version of its SOC 2 audit with the City Council and the public in the interest of transparency.

2. Does the decision not to implement single sign-on mean that Cambridge officers cannot search the nationwide Flock database?

a. Does it mean that external departments contracted with Flock can still access LPR data collected in Cambridge?

The decision not to implement single sign-on requires users to log into a City computer and then separately log into the Flock platform, adding an additional layer of security. This decision does not affect CPD's ability to search within Cambridge's authorized dataset.

External departments that use Flock do not have access to LPR data collected in Cambridge.

3. Why would Flock notify the City when a third party (e.g., a federal agency) seeks access to Cambridge LPR data if Flock does not own the data?

If a federal agency were to issue a subpoena directly to Flock, Flock would refer the request to the Cambridge Law Department for review and response. Under the contract, the City of Cambridge retains ownership of all LPR data collected in the City.

4. What is the significance of “restrictive administrative settings” if external officers cannot access Flock’s database?

Restrictive administrative settings further limit access within CPD by controlling who may conduct searches, what data may be searched, and under what circumstances. These controls ensure that even internal access is tightly restricted, logged, and auditable, providing safeguards beyond the prohibition on external access.

5. How would third-party agencies be barred from accessing data when they provide generic or non-descriptive reasons for a search?

Third-party agencies are not provided access to Cambridge’s LPR data. Even if an external agency uses Flock in another jurisdiction, it cannot view Cambridge cameras or data. Access to Cambridge’s LPR system is limited to a small number of authorized CPD personnel.

During the pilot period, fewer than ten individuals conducted searches, and all searches were logged and auditable.

6. Please provide more information on the process for determining external agency access, including when no specific reason is provided.

External agencies do not have direct access to Cambridge’s automated license plate reader (ALPR) system. Any law enforcement agency seeking information would be required to submit a request stating the reason for the inquiry. CPD would conduct a search only if the request met established criteria, such as a criminal investigation, missing person case, or stolen vehicle report.

Any such search would be documented, including the justification and the requesting agency. It is important to note that during the period Cambridge operated ALPRs, no data was released to any outside law enforcement agency.

7. Funding of Flock LPRs

a. Has the Trump Administration decreased Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) funding for FY26?

b. Can the Council rely on UASI grants to fund Flock LPRs?

UASI funds were appropriated for the first year only and supported the deployment of eight cameras. These funds are not recurring and cannot be relied upon for ongoing operational costs. Each camera carries an annual cost of approximately \$3,000, which includes installation, training, and customer support.