

June 17, 2026

Yi-An Huang, City Manager
Office of the City Manager
Megan Bayer, City Solicitor
Office of the Law Department
795 Massachusetts Ave., 1st Floor
Cambridge, MA 02139

Re: Cambridge City Council Order [PO-2026-115](#) and Discontinuation of ShotSpotter Technology

Dear Manager Huang and Solicitor Bayer,

This letter addresses the Cambridge City Council's failure to follow the requirements of the Surveillance Technology Ordinance ([Chapter 2.128](#)) in its June 1, 2026 vote approving Policy Order [PO-2026-115](#) to discontinue the use of ShotSpotter technology.

[Section 2.128.060\(c\)](#) requires the City Council to make specific determinations before voting to disapprove the use of surveillance technology. The Council did not make these required findings, including whether the benefits outweigh the costs, whether reasonable safeguards exist to address privacy and civil liberties concerns, or consideration of the three required options: recommending modifications, requesting a report from the City Manager, or voting to disapprove further use.

During Public Safety Committee hearings, concerns were discussed including regional data-sharing arrangements involving the City of Boston's contract with SoundThinking (ShotSpotter), which provides coverage for the Metro Boston Homeland Security Region and is funded through a Department of Homeland Security (DHS) grant. Because DHS is the federal agency that oversees Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), a concern was expressed that any acoustic detection data, although not designed for immigration enforcement, could, in theory, be accessed to expose immigrant communities to federal scrutiny. There was no evidence presented that demonstrated active misuse of such data, but the mere possibility of access raised immigration enforcement policy concerns.

An amendment to Policy Order PO-2026-115 had been prepared and was about to be introduced. However, the question was called, reconsideration was moved, and further debate was prevented.

Ordinances are drafted with care and must be followed as written. The failure to comply with the clear and unambiguous language and requirements of Chapter 2.128 renders the June 1, 2026 vote on Policy Order PO-2026-115 invalid.

Respectfully,

Timothy R. Flaherty
Cambridge City Councillor