

**MINUTES OF THE CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL  
PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE  
Wednesday, April 29, 2026**

**PUBLIC SAFETY  
COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Councillor Al-Zubi, Chair  
Councillor McGovern  
Councillor Nolan  
Councillor Simmons  
Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler

A public meeting of the Cambridge City Council's Public Safety Committee was held on Wednesday, April 29, 2026. The meeting was Called to Order at 3:00 p.m. by the Chair, Councillor Al-Zubi 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, 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 Al-Zubi – Present/In Sullivan Chamber  
Councillor McGovern – Present/In Sullivan Chamber  
Councillor Nolan – Present/In Sullivan Chamber  
Councillor Simmons – Present/Remote  
Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

**Present – 5. Quorum established.**

Chair Al-Zubi offered opening remarks and noted that the Call of the meeting was to review the Cambridge Police Department's use of ShotSpotter technology, also known as SoundThinking, which was referred to the Public Safety Committee through the Annual Surveillance Report, CMA 2026-44, on March 9, 2026. Present at the meeting was Acting Police Commissioner, Pauline Wells, Superintendent Frederick Cabral, Deputy Superintendent John Boyle, City Solicitor, Megan Bayer, First Assistant City Solicitor, and Kate Kleimola. Panelists that were present included Counsel for the Black Response, Mason Kortz, member of the Black Response, Stephanie Guirand, Associate Professor of Political Science at Boston University, Spencer Piston, and from the ACLU, Gideon Epstein.

**Chair Al-Zubi opened public comment.**

Siobhan McDonough, 205 Walden Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in opposition to the use of ShotSpotter.

Marie Hobart, 24 Brattle Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in opposition to the use of ShotSpotter.

Krystyna Wazny McClain, 8 Chauncy Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in opposition to the use of ShotSpotter.

Trinette McDowell spoke in opposition to the use of ShotSpotter.

Marilyn Frankenstein, 75 Holworthy Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in opposition to the use of ShotSpotter.

Alexandra Thorn, 173 Hudson Street, Somerville, MA, spoke in opposition to the use of ShotSpotter.

Virginia Cuello, 28 8<sup>th</sup> Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in opposition to the use of ShotSpotter.

Missy Page, 170 Gore Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in opposition to the use of ShotSpotter.

Shelley Rieman, 201 Franklin Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in opposition to the use of ShotSpotter.

Julie Duncan, 11 Norton Place, Cambridge, MA, spoke in opposition to the use of ShotSpotter.

Caroyln Magid, 71 Reed Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in opposition to the use of ShotSpotter.

Malick Abban, 331A Harvard Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in opposition to the use of ShotSpotter.

Brooke Feinberg, 338 Columbia Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in opposition to the use of ShotSpotter.

Fay Feghali, 63 Magee Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in opposition to the use of ShotSpotter.

Rachelle Ain, 71 Highland Avenue, Cambridge, MA, spoke in opposition to the use of ShotSpotter.

Alex Marthews, 28 Temple Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in opposition to the use of ShotSpotter.

Aicha Belabbes, 25 8<sup>th</sup> Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in opposition to the use of ShotSpotter.

Lois Markham, 316 Rindge Avenue, Cambridge, MA, spoke in opposition to the use of ShotSpotter.

Glenna Wyman, 25 8<sup>th</sup> Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in opposition to the use of ShotSpotter.

Virginia Fisher, 39 Clinton Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in opposition to the use of ShotSpotter.

Andrew Kim, 140 Dudley Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in opposition to the use of ShotSpotter.

Jai Sharma, 165 Hampshire Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in opposition to the use of ShotSpotter.

Lee Farris, 269 Norfolk Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in opposition to the use of ShotSpotter.

Banti Gheneti, 20 Calvin Street, spoke in opposition to the use of ShotSpotter.

Katherine Silvestre, 253 Norfolk Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in opposition to the use of ShotSpotter.

Jocelyn Sobieraj, 465 Putnam Avenue, Cambridge, MA, spoke in opposition to the use of ShotSpotter.

Chair Al-Zubi recognized Stephanie Guirand who gave a presentation titled “Community Sentiment on ShotSpotter”. The presentation was provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet.

Chair Al-Zubi recognized Mason Kortz who offered comments related to efforts obtaining information about ShotSpotter through public records requests, adding that it appears Cambridge does not have a direct contract with SoundThinking. Mason Kortz shared concerns about transparency, challenges obtaining records related to contracts, data access, and the overall performance of the technology. Mason Kortz noted that Courts have also raised concerns about who owns the data collected and whether it can be shared with federal agencies. Mason Kortz encouraged the City to be more transparent with the public in order to fully be able to evaluate how effective ShotSpotter is in the Cambridge community.

Chair Al-Zubi recognized Spencer Piston who gave a presentation titled “Can SoundThinking data be shared with ICE?”. The presentation was provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet.

Chair Al-Zubi recognized Gideon Epstein who pointed out that ShotSpotter does not meet the standards that are required through the Surveillance Technology Ordinance and emphasized that the City Council needs to review whether the benefits of ShotSpotter outweigh the costs related to civil rights and civil liberties. Gideon Epstein noted that Cambridge does not have control over data sharing, retention, and access, which creates even more concern about the lack of privacy. Gideon Epstein spoke in support of the City Council discontinuing the use of ShotSpotter.

Chair Al-Zubi recognized Acting Commissioner Wells who gave a presentation titled “Cambridge Police ShotSpotter Program”. The presentation was provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet. During the presentation the Chair made a motion to extend the meeting.

**Chair Al-Zubi made a motion to extend the meeting by twenty minutes.**

**Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.**

Councillor Al-Zubi – Yes

Councillor McGovern – Yes

Councillor Nolan – Yes

Councillor Simmons – Yes

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler -Yes

## **Yes 5. Motion passed.**

Chair Al-Zubi recognized Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler who thanked the presenters and shared that he was interested in the community survey because it provided direct feedback from residents about ShotSpotter. Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler added that residents do request public safety resources, but very rarely has he heard anyone request ShotSpotter or surveillance technology. Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler asked for more information on how the survey was conducted. Stephanie Guirand explained that the survey was created with help from a Tufts University Professor and members of the Coalition who canvassed the community and held educational events where residents were invited to complete the voluntary survey which is why it was a smaller number. Stephanie noted that the survey does not generalize findings. Those who participated shared concerns about profiling and placements of ShotSpotter throughout the City. Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler emphasized his concerns about the accuracy of ShotSpotter and pointed out that it does miss some gunshots and has false alerts, which can make it unreliable for public safety purposes. Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler shared that he remains opposed to the use of ShotSpotter in Cambridge.

Chair Al-Zubi recognized Councillor McGovern who thanked the presenters and community members present at the meeting and pointed out that the Council has discussed ShotSpotter many times over the years. Councillor McGovern acknowledged both sides of the arguments made by supporters and those opposed, and shared concerns about privacy and how the information is shared. Councillor McGovern asked for more information related to when ShotSpotter contributed to a positive outcome. Acting Commissioner Wells provided an example of a Cambridge case and explained how ShotSpotter was an effective tool in the investigation. Spencer Piston shared that he has not seen evidence that ShotSpotter has improved police response times in Cambridge but acknowledged it is possible it may help officers respond faster in some cases. Spencer Piston pointed out that if ShotSpotter was effective, there would be stronger evidence that shows it is directly successful to investigations or convictions. Councillor McGovern had clarifying questions related to the funding of ShotSpotter and if that money could go towards something else if the city no longer used ShotSpotter. Megan Bayer explained that it is funded through a regional grant through the Boston Area Security Initiative and the funds may be able to be used for a different security initiative. Councillor McGovern asked if the city could stop using ShotSpotter if it is through a regional program and who can make the decision to stop using it. Megan Bayer shared that the City Manager determines what public safety tools are used, but the City Council also has authority under the Surveillance Technology Ordinance. Megan Bayer added that the Council can approve or withdraw the use of the technology. Councillor McGovern emphasized that the topic of ShotSpotter has been discussed many times and that the City Council should decide on how they want to move forward.

Chair Al-Zubi recognized Councillor Nolan who asked for clarification regarding the City Council's role in approving ShotSpotter under the Surveillance Ordinance. Councillor Nolan questioned if the positive outcomes from the technology would have happened regardless through reports from the community and police investigations and asked if ShotSpotter is always recording. Megan Bayer provided a brief overview of how ShotSpotter was first implemented after the City Council shared interest in the technology, and provided information on two ways the City Council can move forward with stopping the use of it.

**Chair Al-Zubi made a motion to extend the meeting by ten minutes.**

**Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.**

Councillor Al-Zubi – Yes

Councillor McGovern – Yes

Councillor Nolan – Yes

Councillor Simmons – Yes

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler -Yes

**Yes 5. Motion passed.**

Chair Al-Zubi recognized Deputy Superintendent Boyle to respond to Councillor Nolan's questions and comments. Deputy Superintendent Boyle explained that ShotSpotter is always operating, but only sends alerts when it detects possible gunfire, adding that police receive one second of audio before and after the detected gunshot and that data is overridden after 30 hours unless it is needed for investigation. Spencer Piston shared that he did not agree with Deputy Superintendent Boyle and that the microphones are listening and recording, noting that records have shown that conversations before a detection have been recorded. Acting Commissioner Wells shared that audio is only retained temporarily for investigation purposes and that conversations do not meet the sound threshold needed for ShotSpotter alerts. Councillor Nolan agreed that the City Council needs to move forward with a decision on whether they want to continue using this technology.

Chair Al-Zubi emphasized that Cambridge is a sanctuary city and asked about the privacy risks associated with ShotSpotter, questioning if using this technology aligns with the City's commitment to protecting residents. Mason Kortz pointed out that Cambridge does not have a direct contract with SoundThinking and that the contract language gives the company control over the data. Mason Kortz shared concerns about resident information being shared without their knowledge and agreed that the technology does not align with the City's commitment to protecting residents. Acting Commissioner Wells pointed out that if voices are recorded, there is no way to identify who is speaking or where the voice came from. Deputy Superintendent Boyle added that data cannot be shared with other agencies unless there is a formal agreement signed by both parties which is also approved through SoundThinking. Megan Bayer shared that the current contract gives SoundThinking ownership of the data and allows participating agencies to use it for law enforcement purposes and would notify the Police Department if it received a subpoena for data. Chair Al-Zubi shared concerns about who receives the data and who can gain access to it and questioned if the benefits of the technology outweigh the privacy and civil rights concerns.

Chair Al-Zubi offered closing remarks and thanked the participants for their input and noted that the City Council would continue reviewing the use of the technology.

**Chair Al-Zubi made a motion to adjourn the meeting.**

**Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.**

Councillor Al-Zubi – Yes

Councillor McGovern – Yes

Councillor Nolan – Yes

Councillor Simmons – Yes

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler -Yes

**Yes 5. Motion passed.**

**The Public Safety Committee adjourned at approximately 5:30p.m.**

**Attachment A** – Communications from the public.

**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:

[Apr 29, 2026 Public Safety Committee - Cambridge, MA](#)

**From:** Lois Markham <loisamarkham@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 29, 2026 4:51 PM  
**To:** City Clerk  
**Cc:** City Council; TBR  
**Subject:** Public Comment

**Public Comment presented remotely at the April 29, 2026, meeting of the Cambridge Public Safety Committee**

My name is Lois Markham. I live at 316 Rindge Ave., in Cambridge, MA.

I am speaking today to register my strong opposition to the ShotSpotter surveillance system currently deployed in certain neighborhoods of Cambridge.

Others with a deeper knowledge of the research have spoken or will speak to ShotSpotter's ineffectiveness and the racism behind its deployment primarily in Black and Brown communities. I speak as an ordinary citizen. And my question is: Who are we as a community? What are our values? What does it say about us that we have accepted money from the federal Department of Homeland Security, parent organization of the infamous ICE, to pay a private corporation to spy on Cambridge residents? All of that without even having local control of the data generated by this ineffective system.

No matter who pays for it, ShotSpotter does not make Cambridge a safer community for anyone. It makes Cambridge a more oppressive place to live for all of us, but particularly for its Black and Brown residents, who are already targeted by racism in so many other aspects of their lives. Is this what we want the city, to which we pay taxes, to be doing? I don't. And I know a lot of other people who agree with me.

I urge the City of Cambridge to:

- End Cambridge's participation in the ShotSpotter program.
- Equally important, remove all ShotSpotter microphones from the city.
- Require a full City Council vote for any future surveillance technology, regardless of what its funding sources are.
- Invest in community-led, evidence-based approaches to public safety rather than unproven surveillance systems.



**Erwin, Nicole**

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**From:** Klong <kailongslp@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 29, 2026 1:34 PM  
**To:** City Council; Al-Zubi, Ayah; Azeem, Burhan; Flaherty, Timothy; McGovern, Marc; Nolan, Patricia; Mayor; Simmons, Denise; Sobrinho-Wheeler, Jivan; Zusy, Catherine; Siddiqui, Sumbul; City Clerk; City Manager  
**Subject:** End Cambridge's Participation in ShotSpotter

Dear Members of the Cambridge City Council,

I am writing as a Cambridge community member who is deeply concerned about the City's use of ShotSpotter. ShotSpotter is a network of microphones installed across the Port and Riverside (Coast) neighborhoods. Although ShotSpotter is designed to detect loud sounds and alert police to possible gunfire, the microphones are always listening, operating 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The microphones can and do capture conversations at normal volume from distances of up to 50 feet, including through building walls, which is how the system is designed to function (see *Commonwealth v. Denison*). This is deeply concerning to me.

The ShotSpotter system in Cambridge is funded by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the parent agency of ICE (See RFP from the Metro Boston Homeland Security). This arrangement leaves Cambridge without meaningful control or oversight over how the system operates or how data is used (data section of City of Boston OEM contract). Under the governing agreement, data collected by ShotSpotter can be shared with law enforcement agencies beyond Cambridge, including potentially federal agencies such as ICE. This directly conflicts with Cambridge's longstanding commitments as a sanctuary city and Welcoming Community. It is my position that the City cannot credibly claim to protect immigrant residents against ICE threats while simultaneously deploying surveillance infrastructure that may expose them to federal enforcement.

On Wednesday, April 29, 2026 at 3:00pm, the Public Safety Committee, chaired by Councilor Ayah Al-Zubi, will hold a hearing at Cambridge City Hall on ShotSpotter. I encourage you to attend.

I urge the City Council to take the following actions:

- End Cambridge's participation in the ShotSpotter program.
- Remove all ShotSpotter microphones from the city.
- Require a full City Council vote for any future surveillance technology, regardless of whether it is funded through external sources such as federal grants.
- Invest in community-led, evidence-based approaches to public safety rather than unproven surveillance systems.

Sincerely,

Kai Long, MS SLP CCC

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Pronouns (She, her hers)

## Erwin, Nicole

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**From:** Dana Grotenstein <dgrotenstein@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 29, 2026 11:06 AM  
**To:** City Council; City Clerk  
**Subject:** 4/29 Public Safety Committee Hearing Written Comment

To the Cambridge city council,

My name is Dana Grotenstein – I am a Somerville Resident and a community worker in the City of Cambridge, serving the public for over two years.

I'd like to bring into serious question the technology of ShotSpotter, especially on the grounds of civil rights violations and evidence of collaboration with ICE, violating our Sanctuary City policy.

From the CITY OF CAMBRIDGE ANNUAL SURVEILLANCE REPORT, dated 02/11/2026

"6. Did the department receive any public records requests concerning Surveillance Technology?

- Yes, in September 2025, Public Records Request P251910 was received by the City of Cambridge Law Department in which The Black Response Cambridge ("TBR") requested all documentation (e.g. the agreement records) related to ShotSpotter in the City of Cambridge. However, the BRIC/UASI handles all requests involving documentation (as opposed to the ShotSpotter data itself), so the requesting party was directed to contact the BRIC/UASI instead and, to our knowledge, nothing was provided by the City of Cambridge.

"

BRIC is a huge data center collecting massive amounts of data on all of us. It also frequently applies for grants from the Department of Homeland Security. WGBH recently reported on this here:

"Boston, for instance, in 2025 re-applied for a \$12 million DHS grant called the "Urban Area Security Initiative" to help fund the Boston Regional Intelligence Center, or BRIC, which runs a so-called gang member database. The database collects information on immigrants, often youth, in a point system, often based on what they wear and who they are spotted with.

Citizens for Juvenile Justice argues against its usage, calling it "racially discriminatory and often ridden with errors

The terms of the grant stipulate that 10% of the funds must be "spent on supporting collaborations between state and local law enforcement and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement."

Source: <https://www.wgbh.org/news/local/2026-04-27/cooperation-with-ice-common-among-mass-law-enforcement-new-report-finds>

Cambridge not only puts ShotSpotter sensors specifically in low-income Black and brown communities, exposing our over-policed and over-surveilled community members to more police presence and surveillance *without their consent*, but it also sends ShotSpotter data to BRIC, which is in collaboration with DHS. How is this, in our sanctuary city, allowed?

Not only is this a civil rights violation that people are being recorded without their consent, and only in historically over-policed neighborhoods, but it also doesn't even work! There is so much evidence that shows ShotSpotter is extremely ineffective, and police show up to a situation thinking there might be an active shooter, and instead find nothing. This is dangerous!

I urge you all to invest in non-surveillance solutions to gun violence if that is what you all really seek to address. I work with our residents every day who are struggling to get by, struggling to find work, struggling to pay rent, struggling to find and create community in a city where people need to work all the time just to be able to continue to live in our city. Invest in our communities so they can thrive, and divest from oversurveillance. Thank you!

## Erwin, Nicole

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**From:** Richard Krushnic <rkrushnic@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 29, 2026 11:04 AM  
**To:** City Council; Al-Zubi, Ayah; Azeem, Burhan; Flaherty, Timothy; McGovern, Marc; Nolan, Patricia; Mayor; Simmons, Denise; Sobrinho-Wheeler, Jivan; Zusy, Catherine; Siddiqui, Sumbul; City Clerk; City Manager  
**Subject:** No to Shotspotter

Please end Cambridge use of Shotspotter. It is a network of microphones installed across the Port and Riverside neighborhoods. Although Designed to detect loud sounds and alert police to possible gunfire, the microphones are always listening 24/7 and capture conversations at normal volume from distances of up to 50 feet, including through building walls (Commonwealth v. Denison). This is deeply concerning to me.

ShotSpotter is funded by the Department of Homeland Security) in a way that leaves Cambridge without meaningful control or oversight over how the system operates or how data is used (data section of City of Boston OEM contract). Under the governing agreement, data collected by ShotSpotter can be shared with law enforcement agencies beyond Cambridge, including federal agencies such as ICE. This conflicts with Cambridge's commitments as a sanctuary city and Welcoming Community. The City cannot claim to protect immigrant residents against ICE threats while simultaneously deploying surveillance infrastructure that exposes them to federal enforcement.

The City Council should:

- End Cambridge's participation in the ShotSpotter program.
- Remove all ShotSpotter microphones from the city.
- Require a full City Council vote for any future surveillance technology, regardless of whether it is funded through external sources such as federal grants.
- Invest in community-led, evidence-based approaches to public safety rather than unproven surveillance systems.

Sincerely,

Richard Krushnic  
20 Oak Street

**Erwin, Nicole**

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**From:** Shannon Canavin <shannon.canavin@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Monday, April 27, 2026 4:54 PM  
**To:** City Council; Al-Zubi, Ayah; Azeem, Burhan; Flaherty, Timothy; McGovern, Marc; Nolan, Patricia; Mayor; Simmons, Denise; Sobrinho-Wheeler, Jivan; Zusy, Catherine; Siddiqui, Sumbul; City Clerk; City Manager  
**Cc:** general@theblackresponsecambridge.com  
**Subject:** End Cambridge's Participation in ShotSpotter

Dear Members of the Cambridge City Council,

I am writing as a Cambridge community member who is deeply concerned about the City's use of ShotSpotter. ShotSpotter is a network of microphones installed across the Port and Riverside (Coast) neighborhoods. Although ShotSpotter is designed to detect loud sounds and alert police to possible gunfire, the microphones are always listening, operating 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The microphones can and do capture conversations at normal volume from distances of up to 50 feet, including through building walls, which is how the system is designed to function (see Commonwealth v. Denison). This is deeply concerning to me.

The ShotSpotter system in Cambridge is funded by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the parent agency of ICE (See RFP from the Metro Boston Homeland Security). This arrangement leaves Cambridge without meaningful control or oversight over how the system operates or how data is used (data section of City of Boston OEM contract). Under the governing agreement, data collected by ShotSpotter can be shared with law enforcement agencies beyond Cambridge, including potentially federal agencies such as ICE. This directly conflicts with Cambridge's longstanding commitments as a sanctuary city and Welcoming Community. It is my position that the City cannot credibly claim to protect immigrant residents against ICE threats while simultaneously deploying surveillance infrastructure that may expose them to federal enforcement.

On Wednesday, April 29, 2026 at 3:00pm, the Public Safety Committee, chaired by Councilor Ayah Al-Zubi, will hold a hearing at Cambridge City Hall on ShotSpotter. I encourage you to attend.

I urge the City Council to take the following actions:

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- Remove all ShotSpotter microphones from the city.
- Require a full City Council vote for any future surveillance technology, regardless of whether it is funded through external sources such as federal grants.
- Invest in community-led, evidence-based approaches to public safety rather than unproven surveillance systems.

Sincerely,

Shannon Canavin

182 Third St, Cambridge, MA 02141

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Shannon Canavin (she/her/hers)

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