



City of Cambridge

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FIRST IN COUNCIL
August 3, 2026

The Public Safety Committee held a public hearing on May 20, 2026 to review specific items from the Annual Surveillance Report as required under Cambridge Municipal Code Chapter 2.128, Section 2.128.060, CMA 2026-44, submitted to the full City Council on March 9, 2026. In addition, the Committee will also be reviewing CMA 2026-120, relative to a Surveillance Technology Impact Report (STIR) for the Open Architects student data platform.

A true copy;

ATTEST:-

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Paula M. Crane".

Paula M. Crane,
Interim City Clerk

**MINUTES OF THE CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL
PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE
Wednesday, May 20, 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, May 20, 2026. The meeting was Called to Order at 12:00 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, 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 Al-Zubi – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Councillor McGovern – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Councillor Nolan – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Councillor Simmons – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

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 specific items from the Annual Surveillance Report as required under Cambridge Municipal Code Chapter 2.128, Section 2.128.060, CMA 2026-44, submitted to the full City Council on March 9, 2026. In addition, the Committee will also be reviewing CMA 2026-120, relative to a Surveillance Technology Impact Report (STIR) for the Open Architects student data platform. Present at the meeting were Acting Police Commissioner, Pauline Wells, Superintendent Frederick Cabral, Deputy Superintendent John Boyle, Deputy Superintendent, Peter Vellucci, and City Solicitor, Megan Bayer, First Assistant City Solicitor, and Kate Kleimola. Present via Zoom from Cambridge Public Schools (CPS) were Chief Operating Officer, Damon Smith and Chief Information Officer, Lee McCann. Also present from the ACLU was Gideon Epstein.

Chair Al-Zubi opened public comment.

Alex Marthews, 28 Temple Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in opposition to surveillance technologies.

Chair Al-Zubi made a motion to close public comment.

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 shared that surveillance technologies not pulled for discussion would be assumed as support from the Committee and notes that tools can be reviewed in the future since there are many and outlined the order in which the remaining technologies would be reviewed.

Chair Al-Zubi recognized Acting Commissioner Wells who provided an overview of the BRIC dashboard and what the tool is used for. Acting Commissioner Wells noted that access is limited to certified law enforcement personnel and crime analysts and that data older than three years is removed. Acting Commissioner Wells added that the tool is used to help support planning and coordination for large public events and emphasized that it does not collect data.

Chair Al-Zubi recognized Councillor Nolan who asked if the ACLU had any concerns regarding the BRIC dashboard. Gideon Epstein shared that a concern is how the technology is used during large public events and if there are protocols in place to protect First Amendment right activities, such as protests. Commissioner Wells responded by sharing that the BRIC dashboard is not used to monitor First Amendment activities and is used for threat assessment purposes related to public safety at large events.

Chair Al-Zubi recognized Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler who asked for clarification related to who has access to BRIC data. Acting Commissioner Wells explained that the Cambridge Police Department (CPD) uses the Crime Explorer Dashboard feature of BRIC and that federal agencies do not have access to that information, only participating agencies can access the reports they add to the system.

Chair Al-Zubi recognized Councillor Simmons who asked how the people testifying and invited to participate in the meeting were chosen and if they represented a balanced range of views. Chair Al-Zubi explained that the meeting included representatives from the ACLU, the Law Department, CPD, and CPS because they would be able to respond to questions and concerns raised about surveillance technologies and the Surveillance Ordinance. Councillor Simmons shared concerns about the discussion being felt as one-sided and questioned who represented the residents of Cambridge who may support the use of the technologies. Councillor Simmons emphasized the importance of hearing directly from community members who are affected by the policies being discussed. Chair Al-Zubi noted that as elected officials, Councillors were present to represent residents and agreed there is always room for improvement in the future.

Chair Al-Zubi recognized Councillor McGovern who asked if facial recognition technology is used through BRIC and if protests or large gatherings are monitored by facial recognition technology. Acting Commissioner Wells affirmed that no facial technology is used by CPD. Councillor McGovern asked how BRIC would be used if there was a potential threat at a protest or large public event. Acting Commissioner Wells explained that BRIC may be used if CPD becomes aware

of a potential threat related to the event and that the system does not use AI or facial recognition technology.

Chair Al-Zubi asked for clarification regarding how long information is kept in the BRIC dashboard and who has access. Active Commissioner Wells shared that information is kept for three years before being removed and added that only participating agencies that contribute information have access to the dashboard. She noted that outside agencies do not have access to the data. Chair Al-Zubi asked how it was determined that communities are not disproportionately impacted using BRIC. Assistant Commissioner Wells provided an overview of incidents and reports that are being uploaded to BRIC and pointed out that the Department has not received any complaints related to disproportionate impacts related to the system.

Chair Al-Zubi noted that the City was no longer using the Flock license plate reader system and that the equipment had been removed. Chair Al-Zubi asked for an update related to the Automated License Plate Recognition (ALPR) technology and how it is used. Acting Commissioner Wells explained that ALPR technology is used to help assist with investigations after a crime has occurred to help identify vehicles that may be connected to the incident. Acting Commissioner Wells shared that the CPD agreed with the removal of Flock and added that the Department is not currently considering using ALPR technology. Megan Bayer confirmed the removal of Flock and pointed out that the Annual Surveillance Report still includes ALPR because the City Council's approval of the technology category is still in the Ordinance language. Gideon Epstein asked if CPD uses any similar technology to Flock and ALPRs within the Department. Acting Commissioner Wells confirmed that CPD does not use ALPR technology or any technology like it.

Chair Al-Zubi recognized Councillor Nolan who asked if it would be necessary to keep ALPR in the Surveillance Report if the City is not currently using that technology, adding that if there were any future decisions to use the technology it would need to come before the City Council first. Acting Commissioner Wells noted that if the Department did find appropriate ALPR technology, there would be a discussion with the City Council before anything was implemented.

Chair Al-Zubi recognized Councillor Simmons who asked Gideon Epstein if he had spoken to community members that may be affected by the technologies before the meeting and emphasized the importance of who is being represented in the conversation. Gideon Epstein provided an overview of how he prepared for the meeting, adding that he spoke with residents from different backgrounds. Councillor Simmons shared that she welcomed a follow up conversation regarding outreach efforts.

Chair Al-Zubi transitioned the discussion to public safety cameras and asked CPD to provide an overview of the purpose of the technology and how it is used. Acting Commissioner Wells explained that the public safety cameras are visible cameras placed in certain areas to help support public safety efforts. Acting Commissioner Wells added that the cameras were a pilot program in response to concerns being raised in Central Square by residents, business owners, and City leaders. Acting Commissioner Wells shared that the City Council approved six cameras, and five are currently active. Acting Commissioner Wells noted that the cameras do not record audio, use facial recognition, artificial intelligence, or license plate recognition technology. Acting

Commissioner Wells added that the cameras stay in those certain locations, retain footage for 30 days, and that the recordings are only released under specific circumstances or in accordance with public records laws.

Chair Al-Zubi recognized Councillor McGovern who asked if the cameras in Central Square that were installed as part of the pilot program would stay in place and if there were any plans to place cameras in other areas of the city. Acting Commissioner Wells shared that the pilot program has been successful, and the cameras are expected to remain in place. Acting Commissioner Wells added that the Department would like to expand the camera program and discussions with community members in Porter and Harvard Squares have taken place. Councillor McGovern asked who has control over the footage. Acting Commissioner Wells confirmed that all data is maintained and secured by the City.

Chair Al-Zubi recognized Councillor Nolan who asked what the next steps would be to expand the program to other locations and if there is a timeline for possible deployment. Councillor Nolan shared that community members have shared support for additional cameras throughout the City to address public safety concerns. Acting Commissioner Wells explained that expansion of the program would depend on funding, but the Department would like to move forward with deployment as soon as possible if costs can be covered within the current budget, adding that ten additional cameras may cost around \$130,000. Councillor Nolan shared support for expanding the program, especially with the success of the pilot program within Central Square.

Chair Al-Zubi recognized Councillor Simmons who suggested the Police Department meet with representatives from business associations and other organizations to discuss the possibility of camera expansions and receive feedback on community needs. Acting Commissioner Wells agreed that community meetings and feedback would be helpful moving forward.

Chair Al-Zubi recognized Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler who highlighted the importance of being able to balance public safety benefits and privacy concerns when reviewing surveillance technologies. Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler asked for more information related to the effectiveness of the Central Square public safety cameras. Acting Commissioner Wells noted that she did not have the specific statistics with her, but shared examples of incidents when the cameras had been helpful, such as assisting in the investigation of a hate crime at McDonald's and a serious assault near the CPD substation. Acting Commissioner Wells added that the footage is only reviewed when a crime or incident is reported and it is not continuously monitored. Acting Commissioner Wells shared that she could share specific data with the Council after the meeting. Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler noted the importance of understanding the data when evaluating whether the cameras are achieving their intended purpose. Acting Commissioner Wells shared that the Department purposely makes the cameras visible to discourage crime and can provide more information about incidents when the cameras were used.

Chair Al-Zubi asked if expanding cameras to other areas of the City would require approval by the City Council or if it was already authorized through the current STIR. Megan Bayer explained that CPD can continue using approved technology through STIR, but if the technology being used changes, then additional approval may be required under the Surveillance Ordinance. Acting

Commissioner Wells affirmed that the Department would not install any additional cameras without discussion and feedback from the City Council.

Chair Al-Zubi recognized Damon Smith and Lee McCann to review the Open Architects Student Data platform. Lee McCann explained that the system is a platform used by the schools to bring together information from multiple systems into one location. Lee McCann added that the tool allows teachers, administrators, and district staff to view student, classroom, school, and district level data over multiple years, which helps staff to identify trends and make data driven decisions.

Councillor Nolan asked whether Open Architecture replaces the educational software already used by teachers and students and raised questions about data ownership and student privacy.

Lee McCann explained that Open Architecture does not replace existing systems. Instead, it brings data from multiple platforms into one place so staff can more easily view student, classroom, school, and district information. He stated that Cambridge Public Schools retains ownership of the data and has a student data privacy agreement with the company. He added that the platform helps staff analyze information such as assessment results and attendance trends over time. Councillor Nolan asked if the system has any HR functions or connections with the City's planned ERP system. Lee McCann confirmed that it is not connected to the ERP system and is not used for HR purposes. Councillor Nolan asked if the annual cost was expected to remain the same after the free pilot or if costs would increase over time. Lee McCann shared that they do not expect any major cost increases and pointed out that the system is used by many school districts across Massachusetts. Councillor Nolan shared that she hopes the system provides the benefits as they have been described and helps support decision making.

Chair Al-Zubi asked for more information about the student data privacy agreement. Lee McCann explained that vendors follow strict requirements regarding student information through a Massachusetts educational data alliance, adding that the agreements clearly state that student data remains property of the school district and cannot be shared. Chair Al-Zubi asked where the data is stored and who has access to it. Lee McCann shared that the system is cloud-based and hosted by the vendor, but access is controlled by the school district. Lee McCann shared that access is limited based on staff roles and responsibilities and the need for reviewing the data. Gideon Epstein asked if the system handles student behavioral data and if CPS is planning on using Open Architecture's AI features. Lee McCann explained that existing data access rules would apply and only authorized staff would be able to view behavioral information data. Lee McCann added that the system has limited AI features and that the ones that are available are used as a help tool. Gideon Epstein asked whether CPS has policies that would guide the use of AI-related tools in the future. Lee McCann shared that the district has already issued guidance on AI and continues to develop policies as the technology evolves.

Chair Al-Zubi transitioned the conversation to bus video recorders and GPS devices related to transportation technology. Damon Smith explained that school buses have video recording systems to help monitor safety, document incidents, and review concerns involving students, drivers, or monitors. Damon Smith shared that the GPS tracking systems allow families to monitor school bus locations and receive updates related to transportation services. Chair Al-Zubi asked how the bus cameras have been useful. Damon Smith shared that the recordings have helped staff review incidents involving student behavior, accidents, and questions about student transportation. Chair

Al-Zubi asked if the cameras record both inside and outside the bus. Damon Smith reviewed the positions of the cameras, with one inside the bus, one located near the driver, and another at the back of the bus. Damon Smith added this allows staff to view activity throughout the bus. Chair Al-Zubi asked how long the footage is retained and who is authorized to access it. Damon Smith shared that recordings are stored for a limited period and are not retained forever and can provide additional information regarding the exact retention period after the meeting. He explained that when recordings are needed, the Transportation Director will find the recording and provide it to school administration to review.

Chair Al-Zubi recognized Councillor Nolan who asked how often the recordings are reviewed and if there are a lot of incidents that require staff to request access to the footage. Damon Smith provided information on staff reviewing footage and noted that requests do happen regularly, more than once a week.

Chair Al-Zubi offered closing remarks.

Chair Al-Zubi recognized Councillor Nolan who made a motion that the Public Safety Committee refer the STIR for Open Architects student data platform to the full City Council with a favorable recommendation to include in future STIR's.

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 McGovern who 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 meeting adjourned at approximately 4:10p.m.

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:

[May 20, 2026 Public Safety Committee - Cambridge, MA](#)