



PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE MEETING

~ MINUTES ~

Monday, June 2, 2025

12:00 PM

Sullivan Chamber

The Public Safety Committee will hold a public hearing for an update and review of the Cambridge Police Department’s use of “Shot-Spotter” technology. Public comment will be allowed if time permits.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	12:04 PM
Ayesha M. Wilson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Catherine Zusy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

A public meeting of the Cambridge City Council’s Public Safety Committee was held on Monday, June 2, 2025. The meeting was Called to Order at 12:00 p.m. by the Chair, Councillor Wilson. Pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023 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.

Vice Mayor McGovern – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Councillor Siddiqui – Absent*

Councillor Toner – Present/Remote*

Councillor Wilson – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Councillor Zusy – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Present – 4, Absent – 1. Quorum established.

*Councillor Siddiqui was marked present and in person at 12:04p.m.

*Councillor Toner went from remote participation to in person at 12:30p.m.

The Chair, Councillor Wilson offered opening remarks and noted that the Call of the meeting was for an update and review of the Cambridge Police Department’s use of “Shot-Spotter” technology. Present at the meeting were City Solicitor, Megan Bayer, Police Commissioner, Christine Elow, Superintendent, Fredrick Cabral, Superintendent, Pauline Wells, Deputy Superintendent, Michael Medeiros, and Public Information Officer, Robert Reardon. Members from the Cambridge Police Department (CPD) that were present via Zoom included Director of Professional Standards, James Mulcahy, Director of Clinical Support Services, Dr. James Barrett, Deputy Superintendent, Peter Vellucci, Sergeant, Sean Norton, and Crime Analyst, Rebecca Leonard. Also present were Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler and Councillor Nolan. The panelists that were present at the meeting were Associate Professor from Boston University, Spencer Piston, from ShotSpotter/Soundthinking, Alfred Lewers, Jr., and Criminal Defense Attorney, Connie Tran. District Attorney Marian Ryan and Professor Robert Maher were present via Zoom.

The Chair, Councillor Wilson recognized Officer Reardon who gave a presentation titled “Cambridge Police ShotSpotter programs”. The presentation was provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet.

The Chair, Councillor Wilson recognized Professor Piston who gave a presentation titled “Forensic Snake Oil, Shotspotter is Untrustworthy and Dangerous” (Attachment A).

The Chair, Councillor Wilson recognized Connie Tran who shared their experiences as a lawyer dealing with ShotSpotter evidence in the court room. Additionally, Connie Tran provided feedback and comments related to the presentation from CPD.

The Chair, Councillor Wilson asked Commissioner Elow if prior to this hearing, has CPD ever used listening technology related to Shotspotter. Commissioner Elow responded by saying no and that CPD has no intention of doing so. Councillor Wilson asked for more information related to the possibility of using a dashboard which would be available for residents and how much ShotSpotter costs per year. Commissioner Elow explained that she is very interested in incorporating a dashboard feature and would need to have further discussions with ShotSpotter on ways to initiate that and added that the cost is \$50,000 a year, all paid through UASI. Councillor Wilson asked for clarification related to the low number of ShotSpotter activations in 2024, with there being 15 shootings citywide and only 5 activations. Alfred Lewers explained that several factors may affect gunfire levels and detections and some of the shooting may have happened outside of ShotSpotter coverage area. Commissioner Elow added that new technology on firearms can also make detection more difficult.

The Chair, Councillor Wilson recognized Councillor Toner who asked if there have been any negative interactions in the community because of a false ShotSpotter activation. Commissioner Elow explained that prior to this hearing her Department investigated complaints within the last eleven years and were unable to find one. Councillor Toner asked if ShotSpotter was taken away as a tool for the Department would it make it easier or more difficult for Officers. Commissioner Elow stressed how important and critical ShotSpotter is with saving lives. Councillor Toner recognized that there is a mistrust with the technology for some community members, but believes that it is a supportive tool.

The Chair, Councillor Wilson recognized Vice Mayor McGovern who shared that he does not see ShotSpotter as a privacy threat but also does not see it as a great tool that needs to be used by the City, noting it does offer some benefits, but the City may be able to manage crime without it. The Vice Mayor asked if ShotSpotter would be able to pick up and record conversations, which Alfred Lewers replied to by sharing that the system only responds to loud sounds like gunfire and that regular speech would not trigger an activation. Robert Maher explained that although it is not the goal of ShotSpotter, the microphones are sensitive enough to possibly pick up nearby voices. The Vice Mayor asked how ShotSpotter is incorporated into the City's Surveillance Ordinance. City Solicitor Bayer indicated that ShotSpotter was bought before the Ordinance existed, it was later approved and included in the City's surveillance reports and shared the process on how the City reviews its surveillance tools. Vice Mayor McGovern shared concerns about data and who it is shared with and why the locations of ShotSpotter are not disclosed to the public and stressed how important it is to include members of the community who are most affected by gun violence in these conversations. The Vice Mayor suggested future meetings happen in those communities, so all voices are heard.

The Chair, Councillor Wilson recognized Councillor Siddiqui who asked if ShotSpotter is funded by a federal grant if the data is being shared with federal agencies. Councillor Siddiqui also echoed concerns about why the locations of sensors are not shared with the public. Megan Bayer noted that ShotSpotter claims they do not share data but she can review the contract to confirm and noted that the locations are kept private to protect the equipment and prevent people from changing their behavior to avoid being detected. Councillor Siddiqui asked if there has ever been a breach of information. Alfred Lewers shared that there has been one case with Cambridge related information that was shared to a news outlet, which they were asked not to share with the public, and they agreed. Councillor Siddiqui added that ShotSpotter is just a tool and questioned whether it is needed and shared that she would like additional information to understand what would happen if the City decided to end their agreement with the company.

The Chair, Councillor Wilson recognized Councillor Toner who pointed out that ShotSpotter is not constantly recording audio around the City, it only captures seconds before and after a gunshot activation. Alfred Lewers explained that the system only sends the Police Department a short audio clip that is tied to the gunfire event.

The Chair, Councillor Wilson made a motion to extend the meeting to 2:30p.m.

Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

Vice Mayor McGovern – Yes

Councillor Siddiqui – Yes
Councillor Toner – Yes
Councillor Wilson – Yes
Councillor Zusy – Yes
Yes – 5. Motion passed.

The Chair, Councillor Wilson recognized Councillor Zusy who questioned if ShotSpotter is a tool that is needed in a city like Cambridge, where there is a lower rate of gun violence, noting that other cities that use this technology are larger and experience more gun violence. Councillor Zusy asked how often ShotSpotter has directly helped to solve a gun related crime in Cambridge that led to an arrest. Rebecca Leonard shared how ShotSpotter helps by pinpointing the location of gunfire, allowing police to respond faster. Rebecca Leonard added that although there is not an exact number of investigations that have been assisted by ShotSpotter, it is considered a valuable tool that assists with police response and supports investigations.

The Chair, Councillor Wilson recognized District Attorney Ryan who clarified that ShotSpotter is just one tool that is used in investigations and is never the one reason for an arrest or a charge. D.A. Ryan added that it helps Officers respond faster to gunfire incidents, which improves their chances of collecting witness statements and preserving evidence. D.A. Ryan highlighted how ShotSpotter has helped save lives by enabling that quicker response in situations where victims were injured. D.A. Ryan addressed the concerns about privacy, noting that surveillance concerns are valid, but ShotSpotter is used as assistance to public safety in dangerous situations.

The Chair, Councillor Wilson recognized Councillor Zusy who raised concerns about privacy and surveillance, especially under the current federal administration. Councillor Zusy offered the suggestion of freezing or shutting down ShotSpotter during what she mentioned as politically uncertain times. Alfred Lewers indicated that data is only shared with local authorized agencies, like CPD, and never with outside agencies. Commissioner Elow added that it is important to look at the facts and how ShotSpotter is a beneficial tool for CPD and the City. Commissioner Elow noted that spreading fear related to this tool may discourage people from reporting gun violence.

The Chair, Councillor Wilson recognized Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler raised concerns about the effectiveness of ShotSpotter, noting that none of the 2024 alerts led to an arrest or where someone was found with a firearm. Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler questioned why the technology is only deployed in certain areas of the City and asked whether there is any community input or support to continue using ShotSpotter. Commissioner Elow shared an example when ShotSpotter helped save a life by alerting CPD.

The Chair, Councillor Wilson emphasized the importance of transparency in discussions like today, and acknowledged that ShotSpotter, although not perfect, is a tool that is used to assist with big issues in the City, such as housing and bike lanes.

The Chair, Councillor Wilson opened Public Comment.

Stephanie Guirland, 67 Pleasant Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in opposition to ShotSpotter.

Abdul Nasser Rud, 509 Vanderbilt Avenue, Brooklyn, NY, spoke in opposition to ShotSpotter.

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

Danforth Nicholas, 93 Richdale Avenue, spoke in opposition to ShotSpotter.

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

Siobhan McDonough, Walden Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in opposition to ShotSpotter.

Matthew Schreiner, 26 Grozier Road, Cambridge, MA, spoke in opposition to ShotSpotter.

Hope Turner, 32 Vineyard Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in opposition to ShotSpotter.

Vicky Steinitz, 105 Trowbridge Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in opposition to ShotSpotter.

Lauren Leone, 9 Park Place, Somerville, MA, spoke in opposition to ShotSpotter.

Yann Dardonville, 359 Columbia Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in opposition to ShotSpotter.

Krystyna Wazny McClain, 74 Park Street, Somerville, MA, spoke in opposition to ShotSpotter.

Rachel Grashow, 107 Rindge Avenue, Cambridge, MA, spoke in opposition to ShotSpotter.

Lorenzo Bradford, 8 Chauncy Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in opposition to ShotSpotter.

Myles Herbert, 161 Hancock Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in opposition to ShotSpotter.

Harriet Lindeman, 166A Elm Street, spoke in opposition to ShotSpotter.

Andy Nash, 18 Worcester Street, Cambridge, MA, spoke in opposition to ShotSpotter.

The Chair, Councillor Wilson recognized Vice Mayor McGovern who made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.

Vice Mayor McGovern – Yes

Councillor Siddiqui – Yes

Councillor Toner – Yes

Councillor Wilson – Yes

Councillor Zusy – Yes

Yes – 5. Motion passed.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 2:30p.m.

Attachment A – Presentation from Professor Piston

Attachment B – 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:

https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/1037?view_id=1&redirect=true

A communication was received from Kia Benjamin, Office Manager, transmitting a presentation titled "Cambridge Police ShotSpotter Program".

A communication was received from Chair Wilson, transmitting documents related to ShotSpotter.

Forensic Snake Oil

Shotspotter is Untrustworthy and Dangerous

Dr. Spencer Piston

Associate Professor, Boston University

June 2, 2025



Arts & Sciences
Political Science



ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL SCIENCE; DIRECTOR OF
ADVANCED PROGRAMS

Outline of Today's Presentation

- (1) Misleading claims made by SoundThinking
- (2) Unreliable and incomplete data about ShotSpotter
- (3) An overview of the potential harms of ShotSpotter
- (4) Alternatives to ShotSpotter

SoundThinking Makes Misleading Claims

Claim that ShotSpotter reduces gun violence

SoundThinking Claimed It Could Reduce Gun Crime

CEO Ralph Clark, February 2018:

“Our ability to generate revenue retention rates well north of 100% underscores the fact that ShotSpotter’s technology helps reduce gun crime...”

Initial Studies Suggested that
ShotSpotter Does NOT Reduce Gun Crime

SoundThinking Responded by
Attempting to Delegitimize Scientific Research



With that said, there are a number of problematic comparisons and omitted or “cherry-picked” information referenced throughout the *Journal of Urban Health* study titled “Impact of ShotSpotter Technology on Firearm Homicides and Arrests Among Large Metropolitan Counties: A Longitudinal Analysis” regarding the impact of **ShotSpotter technology**, that we feel compelled to address.

More and More Studies Indicated That
ShotSpotter Does NOT Reduce Gun Crime

Impact of ShotSpotter Technology on Firearm Homicides and Arrests Among Large Metropolitan Counties: a Longitudinal Analysis, 1999–2016

Mitchell L Doucette ^{1 2}, Christa Green ³, Jennifer Necci Dineen ⁴, David Shapiro ⁵,
Kerri M Raissian ⁴

with right-to-carry laws saw a 21% increase in firearm homicide incidence rates. Results suggest that implementing ShotSpotter technology has no significant impact on firearm-related homicides or arrest outcomes. Policy solutions may represent a more cost-effective measure to reduce urban firearm violence.

Document Title: **The Impact of Gunshot Detection
Technology on Gun Violence in Kansas City
and Chicago: A Multi-Pronged Evaluation**

Author(s): **Eric L. Piza, George O. Mohler, Jeremy G.
Carter, David N. Hatten, Nathan T.
Connealy, Rachael Arietti, Jisoo Cho, Emily
Castillo**

Results indicate in Chicago:

- 15.6 more fatal shootings occurred in GDT target areas over the duration of the intervention period, on average.
- 77.5 more non-fatal shootings occurred in GDT target areas over the duration of the intervention period, on average.
- 115 more gun assaults and robberies occurred in GDT target areas over the duration of the intervention period, on average.

Results indicate in Chicago:

- 15.6 more fatal shootings occurred in GDT target areas over the duration of the intervention period, on average.
- 77.5 more non-fatal shootings occurred in GDT target areas over the duration of the intervention period, on average.
- 115 more gun assaults and robberies occurred in GDT target areas over the duration of the intervention period, on average.

Results indicate in Chicago:

- 15.6 more fatal shootings occurred in GDT target areas over the duration of the intervention period, on average.
- 77.5 more non-fatal shootings occurred in GDT target areas over the duration of the intervention period, on average.
- 115 more gun assaults and robberies occurred in GDT target areas over the duration of the intervention period, on average.

In Response, SoundThinking Finally Backed Off Its Claim

CEO Ralph Clark, February 2018:

“Our ability to generate revenue retention rates well north of 100% underscores the fact that ShotSpotter’s technology helps reduce gun crime...”

In Response, SoundThinking Finally Backed Off Its Claim

CEO Ralph Clark, February 2018:

“Our ability to generate revenue retention rates well north of 100% underscores the fact that ShotSpotter’s technology helps reduce gun crime...”

CEO Ralph Clark, May 2024:

“I think the line that we don’t want to go down as much is taking on the responsibility for overall prevention and reduction of gun violence from a singular point of view because we know that gun violence in total is a very complex issue...”

An Additional Misleading Claim

Claim that ShotSpotter does not record conversations

Here's How the NYPD's Expanding ShotSpotter System Works



By [Rachel Holliday Smith](#) | May 18, 2016 5:02pm

Here's How the NYPD's Expanding ShotSpotter System Works



By [Rachel Holliday Smith](#) | May 18, 2016 5:02pm

Is there any scenario in which ShotSpotter would record conversations between people?

The short answer is no. We take the privacy question very seriously and we embrace that privacy question.



***Commonwealth v. Denison*, No. BRCR2012-0029 (Mass. Super. Ct. Oct. 7, 2015)**

In 2015, Paul Greene, a

customer support engineer for SST, testified at a suppression hearing in a Massachusetts criminal case

In 2015, Paul Greene, a

customer support engineer for SST, testified at a suppression hearing in a Massachusetts criminal case where a recorded conversation was being used as evidence against the defendant.¹⁹ Mr.

Greene's testimony revealed several startling facts: (1) ShotSpotter sensors record twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week

In 2015, Paul Greene, a

customer support engineer for SST, testified at a suppression hearing in a Massachusetts criminal case where a recorded conversation was being used as evidence against the defendant.¹⁹ Mr. Greene's testimony revealed several startling facts: (1) ShotSpotter sensors record twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week; (2) each sensor retains seventy-two hours worth of audio recordings; and (3) a conversation at a normal volume may be recorded by a sensor up to fifty feet away.

In 2015, Paul Greene, a

customer support engineer for SST, testified at a suppression hearing in a Massachusetts criminal case where a recorded conversation was being used as evidence against the defendant.¹⁹ Mr. Greene's testimony revealed several startling facts: (1) ShotSpotter sensors record twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week; (2) each sensor retains seventy-two hours worth of audio recordings; and (3) a conversation at a normal volume may be recorded by a sensor up to fifty feet away. In addition, he estimated that the systems are recording human speech hundreds of times a day.

In Response, SoundThinking Made More Misleading Claims

In Response, SoundThinking Made More Misleading Claims



In Response, SoundThinking Made More Misleading Claims



- Human voices and street noise will never trigger a sensor because they do not produce an instantaneous sharp sound and they are not loud enough to be picked up by three or more sensors.

In Response, SoundThinking Made More Misleading Claims



- ShotSpotter acoustic sensors are not positioned, tuned or specialized to pick up human voices. The sensors use ordinary microphones that are similar to ones found in cellphones and are placed high above the street.

ShotSpotter DOES record conversations

[People v. Johnson, No. A131317](#)

[Williams v. City of Chicago](#)

[Commonwealth of Massachusetts v. Rios](#)

Outline

(1) Misleading claims made by SoundThinking

ShotSpotter does NOT reduce gun violence

ShotSpotter continually records conversations.

SoundThinking routinely makes misleading claims about ShotSpotter.

SoundThinking's Black-Box
Gunshot Detection Method:
Untested and Unvetted Tech Flourishes
in the Criminal Justice System

Brendan Max*

B. SoundThinking's Unreliable Performance and Error Claims

In the absence of scientifically-sufficient validation and error testing as the basis for ShotSpotter's performance and accuracy claims, SoundThinking has promoted accuracy claims that have no meaningful scientific bases. As support

Outline

(1) Misleading claims made by SoundThinking

(2) Unreliable and incomplete data about ShotSpotter

Unreliable and incomplete data about ShotSpotter

Proprietary algorithms

Unreliable and incomplete data about ShotSpotter

Proprietary algorithms

False alerts: what percentage of ShotSpotter alerts yield no evidence of gunshots?

Unreliable and incomplete data about ShotSpotter

Proprietary algorithms

False alerts: what percentage of ShotSpotter alerts yield no evidence of gunshots?

Financial costs: police time and resources

Unreliable and incomplete data about ShotSpotter

Proprietary algorithms

False alerts: what percentage of ShotSpotter alerts yield no evidence of gunshots?

70% in Boston (ACLU study)

Unreliable and incomplete data about ShotSpotter

Proprietary algorithms

False alerts: what percentage of ShotSpotter alerts yield no evidence of gunshots?

70% in Boston (ACLU study)

80-95% in New York City (Comptroller's report)

Unreliable and incomplete data about ShotSpotter

Proprietary algorithms

False alerts: what percentage of ShotSpotter alerts yield no evidence of gunshots?

70% in Boston (ACLU study)

80-95% in New York City (Comptroller's report)

89% in Chicago (MacArthur Justice investigation)

Unreliable and incomplete data about ShotSpotter

Proprietary algorithms

False alerts: what percentage of ShotSpotter alerts yield no evidence of gunshots?

70% in Boston (ACLU study)

80-95% in New York City (Comptroller's report)

89% in Chicago (MacArthur Justice investigation)

In Cambridge - ? **Undisclosed locations**

Unreliable and incomplete data about ShotSpotter

Proprietary algorithms

False alerts: what percentage of ShotSpotter alerts yield no evidence of gunshots?

70% in Boston (ACLU study)

80-95% in New York City (Comptroller's report)

89% in Chicago (MacArthur Justice investigation)

In Cambridge - ?

~50% of alerts between 2023 and 2025

Unreliable and incomplete data about ShotSpotter

Proprietary algorithms

False alerts: what percentage of ShotSpotter alerts yield no evidence of gunshots?

70% in Boston (ACLU study)

80-95% in New York City (Comptroller's report)

89% in Chicago (MacArthur Justice investigation)

In Cambridge - ?

~50% of alerts between 2023 and 2025

Inconsistencies between BridgeStat data and CPD communications

Unreliable and incomplete data about ShotSpotter

Proprietary algorithms

False alerts: what percentage of ShotSpotter alerts yield no evidence of gunshots?

70% in Boston (ACLU study)

80-95% in New York City (Comptroller's report)

89% in Chicago (MacArthur Justice investigation)

In Cambridge - ?

~50% of alerts between 2023 and 2025

Inconsistencies between BridgeStat data and CPD communications

Impossible to verify independently without the raw data

Unreliable and incomplete data about ShotSpotter

Proprietary algorithms

False alerts: what percentage of ShotSpotter alerts yield no evidence of gunshots?

70% in Boston (ACLU study)

80-95% in New York City (Comptroller's report)

89% in Chicago (MacArthur Justice investigation)

In Cambridge - ?

~50% of alerts between 2023 and 2025

Inconsistencies between BridgeStat data and CPD communications

Impossible to verify independently without the raw data

Public records requests have been denied

Unreliable and incomplete data about ShotSpotter

Proprietary algorithms

False alerts: what percentage of ShotSpotter alerts yield no evidence of gunshots?

Undetected gunshots: what percentage of gunshots are not detected by ShotSpotter?

Unreliable and incomplete data about ShotSpotter

Proprietary algorithms

False alerts: what percentage of ShotSpotter alerts yield no evidence of gunshots?

Undetected gunshots: what percentage of gunshots are not detected by ShotSpotter?
2024, in Cambridge:

Unreliable and incomplete data about ShotSpotter

Proprietary algorithms

False alerts: what percentage of ShotSpotter alerts yield no evidence of gunshots?

Undetected gunshots: what percentage of gunshots are not detected by ShotSpotter?
2024, in Cambridge:

CPD presentation: 10 of 15 gunshots were not detected by SS

Unreliable and incomplete data about ShotSpotter

Proprietary algorithms

False alerts: what percentage of ShotSpotter alerts yield no evidence of gunshots?

Undetected gunshots: what percentage of gunshots are not detected by ShotSpotter?

2024, in Cambridge:

CPD presentation: 10 of 15 gunshots were not detected by SS

This is a 67% failure rate to detect gunshots

Unreliable and incomplete data about ShotSpotter

Proprietary algorithms

False alerts: what percentage of ShotSpotter alerts yield no evidence of gunshots?

Undetected gunshots: what percentage of gunshots are not detected by ShotSpotter?

Not clear whether ShotSpotter improves health care outcomes for gunshot victims

Unreliable and incomplete data about ShotSpotter

Proprietary algorithms

False alerts: what percentage of ShotSpotter alerts yield no evidence of gunshots?

Undetected gunshots: what percentage of gunshots are not detected by ShotSpotter?

Not clear whether ShotSpotter improves health care outcomes for gunshot victims

Some studies suggest that response times improve slightly (e.g., by 12%).

Unreliable and incomplete data about ShotSpotter

Proprietary algorithms

False alerts: what percentage of ShotSpotter alerts yield no evidence of gunshots?

Undetected gunshots: what percentage of gunshots are not detected by ShotSpotter?

Not clear whether ShotSpotter improves health care outcomes for gunshot victims

Some studies suggest that response times improve slightly (e.g., by 12%).

Other studies find that quicker response doesn't mean better health outcomes.

Firearm Acoustic Detection in Hartford, Connecticut: Outcomes of a Trauma Center – Law Enforcement Collaboration



Brendan R. Gontarz  • [Usman T. Siddiqui](#) • Brendan Campbell • Jonathan Gates • John Michael O'Hare • Christa Green
• Jacqueline McQuay • David S. Shapiro

Results

Of 387 GSW, 157 (40.6%) presented via EMS and were included in the sample. Of these, 89 correlated to a detection event (56.7%) and 68 had no correlating event (43.3%). These two groups had no difference in prehospital treatment times, scene and transport duration, and injury severity. Further, the need for surgery or transfusion, lengths of stay, and disposition, including mortality, did not differ.

Conclusions

Despite limited previous reports demonstrating conferred benefits to acoustic detection of gunshots, Hartford's experience showed no benefit.

Dr. Eric Piza is director of Crime Analysis Initiatives and a professor at Northeastern University. He led what is believed to be the largest study about ShotSpotter, analyzing 15 years of data in Kansas City and Chicago.

"We essentially found the technology offers some procedural benefits, for example police officers arrive on scene a little bit quicker with ShotSpotter calls, however we didn't find any improvements on public safety," Piza said.

Dr. Eric Piza is director of Crime Analysis Initiatives and a professor at Northeastern University. He led what is believed to be the largest study about ShotSpotter, analyzing 15 years of data in Kansas City and Chicago.

"We essentially found the technology offers some procedural benefits, for example police officers arrive on scene a little bit quicker with ShotSpotter calls, however we didn't find any improvements on public safety," Piza said.

Unreliable and incomplete data about ShotSpotter

Proprietary algorithms

False alerts: what percentage of ShotSpotter alerts yield no evidence of gunshots?

Undetected gunshots: what percentage of gunshots are not detected by ShotSpotter?

Not clear whether ShotSpotter improves health care outcomes for gunshot victims

ShotSpotter retains exclusive control over all data

A. RIGHTS IN DATA. All Data created, generated, modified, compiled, stored, kept or displayed by SST through the Subscription Service in the course of providing the Subscription Service and related Services to Customer, remains the sole and exclusive property of SST. Subject to subparagraph (ii) below, SST expressly reserves the rights to copy, publish, display, adapt, modify, translate, perform publicly, make works derived from, transfer, sell, offer for sale, and to use any and all Data for any purpose.

A. RIGHTS IN DATA. All Data created, generated, modified, compiled, stored, kept or displayed by SST through the Subscription Service in the course of providing the Subscription Service and related Services to Customer, remains the sole and exclusive property of SST . Subject to subparagraph (ii) below, **SST expressly reserves the rights** to copy, publish, display, adapt, modify, translate, perform publicly, make works derived from, transfer, sell, offer for sale, and **to use any and all Data for any purpose.**

Unreliable and incomplete data about ShotSpotter

Proprietary algorithms

False alerts: what percentage of ShotSpotter alerts yield no evidence of gunshots?

Undetected gunshots: what percentage of gunshots are not detected by ShotSpotter?

Not clear whether ShotSpotter improves health care outcomes for gunshot victims

ShotSpotter retains exclusive control over all data

SJC supports judicial inquiry into reliability of ShotSpotter, technology used to track gunshots in cities

By [John R. Ellement](#) and [Jeremiah Manion](#)

Updated May 14, 2025

SJC supports judicial inquiry into reliability of ShotSpotter, technology used to track gunshots in cities

By [John R. Ellement](#) and [Jeremiah Manion](#)

Updated May 14, 2025

The state's highest court Wednesday backed a judicial inquiry into the science behind the ShotSpotter gunshot detection system, a move that **could call into question the use of the technology as criminal evidence.**

Outline

- (1) Misleading claims made by SoundThinking
- (2) Unreliable and incomplete data about ShotSpotter
- (3) An overview of the potential harms of ShotSpotter

Potential harms of ShotSpotter

Exposing (Black and Brown) people to involuntary encounters with police

Harvard Professor Jailed; Officer Is Accused of Bias



Share full article



By **Abby Goodnough**

July 20, 2009

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. Colleagues of Henry Louis Gates Jr., Harvard's most prominent scholar of African-American history, are accusing the police here of racism after he was arrested at his

Harvard Professor Jailed; Officer Is Accused of Bias

 Share full article



By **Abby Goodnough**

July 20, 2009

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. Colleague
Harvard's most prominent scholar
accusing the police here of racial

Video Shows Police Tackling and Punching Black Harvard Student

 Share full article



Black Harvard Student Is Punched by the Police During Arrest

Harvard Professor Jailed; Officer Is Accused of Bias

 Share full article



By [Abby Goodnough](#)

July 20, 2009

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. Colleague
Harvard's most prominent scholar
accusing the police here of racial

Video Shows Police Tackling and Punching Black Harvard Student

 Share full article



Black Harvard Student

Cambridge community members mourn UMass Boston student fatally shot by police

January 13, 2023 By [Deborah Becker](#)



Cambridge Police Disproportionately Arresting Black People at Highest Rate in 13 Years, New Database Shows

Cambridge Police Investigate Racist Tweets From Lieutenant's Account

Massachusetts Police Data Points to Racial Disparities in Arrests

In Cambridge, for example, close to 40% of all people arrested during a recent 10-year period were Black, according to data the police departments submitted to the state. Black people comprise a much smaller share of the city's population — a little more than 10%, according to figures from the U.S. Census.

Potential harms of ShotSpotter

Exposing (Black and Brown) people to involuntary encounters with police

Jeopardizing the sanctuary city

Dear Mr. Murphy,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with this technical proposal to convert and expand the City of Boston's ShotSpotter Gunfire Location, Alert and Analysis Service and implement ShotSpotter Flex for the Metro Boston Homeland Security Region (MBHSR). Enclosed is our response to the Request for Proposal.

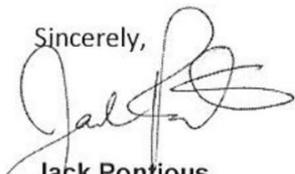
SST is proposing ShotSpotter FlexSM in response to this RFP. Delivered as a managed service, the Mayor's Office of Emergency Management (OEM) and MBHSR Jurisdictions will simply subscribe to gunfire alert data, without the need to procure and maintain costly hardware and software. As a part of the scope of this proposal, SST will convert the City of Boston's ShotSpotter OnSiteTM system to ShotSpotter FlexSM.

Since 1995, SST has grown to employ over 55 of the top scientists and public safety experts to become the world leader in gunshot detection across the United States and around the globe.

ShotSpotter is a *designated* and *certified* technology in accord with the Support Anti-terrorism by Fostering Effective Technologies Act of 2002 (the "SAFETY" Act). Also, SST is the only vendor on the RKB approved vendor list for DHS funded transactions.

We stand ready to cooperatively work with you and the mission you serve.

Sincerely,



Jack Pontious
Director, Northeast Region

C: 202-258-0141

jack@sst-inc.com

WHAT'S THE BRIC?

The Boston Regional Intelligence Center (BRIC) is one of nearly 80 “fusion centers” the federal government’s Department of Homeland Security (DHS) funded and built after the 9/11 attacks. The BRIC was established in 2005, as a “counterterrorism intelligence” center meant to facilitate information sharing about terrorism among local, state, and federal agencies. It is one of two “fusion centers” in Massachusetts; the other, the Commonwealth Fusion Center in Maynard, is run by the Massachusetts State Police. The BRIC oversees spying and information sharing for the entire Metro Boston Homeland Security Region (MBHSR), which includes not only Boston but Brookline, Cambridge, Chelsea, Everett, Quincy, Somerville, Revere, and Winthrop. The BRIC receives local, state, and federal funding. Learn [more](#) about BRIC funding.

Potential harms of ShotSpotter

Exposing (Black and Brown) people to involuntary encounters with police

Jeopardizing the sanctuary city

Data flows from ShotSpotter to the fusion center/DHS, bypassing Cambridge

Home | **News**

Federal agents are ‘very active’ around Cambridge and made an arrest outside police headquarters

By **Sue Reinert**

Tuesday, May 20, 2025

ICE Taps into Nationwide AI- Enabled Camera Network, Data Shows

 JASON KOEBLER,  JOSEPH COX · MAY 27, 2025 AT 9:36 AM

Potential harms of ShotSpotter

Exposing (Black and Brown) people to involuntary encounters with police

Jeopardizing the sanctuary city

Possible civil rights violations

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act

‘We need answers.’ Markey, Warren say controversial gunshot detection tech could violate civil rights.

In their letter, **the senators raise concerns that ShotSpotter might violate Title VI of the Civil Rights Act**, which forbids groups that receive federal funding from discriminating on the basis of race.

Potential harms of ShotSpotter

Exposing (Black and Brown) people to involuntary encounters with police

Jeopardizing the sanctuary city

Possible civil rights violations

Potential legal violations

Massachusetts Wiretap Act

***Commonwealth v. Denison*, No. BRCR2012-0029 (Mass. Super. Ct. Oct. 7, 2015)**

“ShotSpotter is a listening and recording system that runs 24/7, attuned to the sound of gunfire. When the system hears gunfire, or what it recognizes as gunfire, it locates it, reports it, preserves the recording, and send the recording to the customer within seconds.” The defendant, charged with first degree murder, moved to suppress a recording made by ShotSpotter of an verbal exchange among numerous individuals before and after the fatal gunshots. The court rejected that the argument that the defendant had a reasonable expectation of privacy under the Massachusetts Declaration of Rights because the exchange was “audible by anyone passing and was in fact heard by a crowd of neighbors and other witnesses.” However, the court found that the exchange was an “oral communication” and that the recording was a prohibited “interception” under the Massachusetts Wiretap Act because the defendant had no knowledge that the exchange was being recorded. The court also found that the interception was “willful” because the police had “purposefully directed the placement of the sensors.” The court granted the motion to suppress: “the continuous secret audio surveillance of selective urban neighborhoods *** is the type of surreptitious eavesdropping as an investigative tool that the Legislature sought to prohibit.”

Potential harms of ShotSpotter

Exposing (Black and Brown) people to involuntary encounters with police

Jeopardizing the sanctuary city

Possible civil rights violations

Potential legal violations

Liability

Williams v. City of Chicago

Attorney(s): [Jonathan Manes](#), [Alexa Van Brunt](#)

The Chicago Police Department's use of untrustworthy data from ShotSpotter, a surveillance technology placed in predominantly Black and Hispanic communities in the South and West sides of Chicago, led to multiple instances of wrongful detainment and unfounded charges.

The MacArthur Justice Center's class action lawsuit takes the City of Chicago to task for its continued usage of a technology that garners discriminatory policing practices through reporting data that, by the city's own Office of Inspector General's assessment, is sorely and dangerously inaccurate.

Outline

- (1) Misleading claims made by SoundThinking
- (2) Unreliable and incomplete data about ShotSpotter
- (3) An overview of the potential harms of ShotSpotter
- (4) Alternatives to ShotSpotter

Ellwood named new BSO major in Pompano; Commission votes against Shotspotter renewal

MARCH 18, 2024

Troy will turn off ShotSpotter

Police chief disappointed with system that is designed to track gunfire

'False alarms' lead Fall River to ditch ShotSpotter system

Charlotte ends contract with ShotSpotter gunshot detection system

San Antonio Ends Use Of Gunshot Alert System

Chicago police no longer using ShotSpotter gunshot detection technology, sensor takedown begins

Durham City Council votes to end controversial ShotSpotter program

ShotSpotter Keeps Listening After Contracts Expire

Alternatives: How to Reduce Gun Violence

Estimating the Effects of Safe Streets Baltimore on Gun Violence

2007-2022

**Daniel W. Webster, ScD, MPH
Carla G. Tilchin, MSPH
Mitchell L. Doucette, PhD, MS**

March 2023



JOHNS HOPKINS
BLOOMBERG SCHOOL
of PUBLIC HEALTH

Center for
Gun Violence Solutions

Examples of State Offices of Gun Violence Prevention

A growing number of states are investing in state level offices of gun violence prevention. These offices build the infrastructure to effectively address the crisis of gun violence in a comprehensive manner grounded in public health. To date, at least five states have created offices of gun violence prevention and multiple states are considering such proposals. Outlined below is a summary of what these offices do:

Forensic Snake Oil

Shotspotter is Untrustworthy and Dangerous

Dr. Spencer Piston

Associate Professor, Boston University

June 2, 2025

Erwin, Nicole

Attachment B

From: Dana Grotenstein <dgrotenstein@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 2, 2025 11:23 PM
To: McGovern, Marc; Nolan, Patricia; Siddiqui, Sumbul; Simmons, Denise; Sobrinho-Wheeler, Jivan; Toner, Paul; Wilson, Ayesha; Zusy, Catherine; City Clerk
Subject: Shotspotter comment

My name is Dana Grotenstein. I am a Somerville resident, but I am a public servant in Cambridge as a digital navigator at CCTV, a Cambridge nonprofit. I'd like to give/echo a few different concerns I have about the use of Shotspotter.

Through community outreach, we have most often seen that once people actually learn about what Shotspotter is and what it does, they immediately are concerned. I mention this because the community at large does not know they are being listened to, which I believe to be the reason there have been few complaints. The biased deployment of Shotspotter devices in predominantly Black, brown, and low-income neighborhoods in Cambridge, exacerbates over-policing of these neighborhoods and brings into question this surveillance system's ability to effectively reduce crime without disproportionately targeting marginalized communities. We also know and have seen that people have attempted to use dialogue captured through Shotspotter in court as evidence. This shows Shotspotter is listening, not only to gunshots but to conversations, and can do what they want with this information. This is an extremely dangerous precedent and a violation of wiretap ordinances that Cambridge and our state of Massachusetts have developed. Even so, since the technology is funded by UASI, a federal initiative part of DHS, and the contract specifically states Shotspotter can do whatever they want with the data, I question what power we even have as Cambridge to control what is done with this data.

Also, this further stokes my fear of the potential for misuse of surveillance technologies like Shotspotter being repurposed for new and nefarious objectives beyond their original intentions, especially in our current political climate. I also want to note that the Privacy Advisory Commission of Oakland actually recommended against the use of Shotspotter

Lastly, we know Shotspotter generates many false positives, as demonstrated by data collected by the ACLU of Massachusetts stating that 70% of Shotspotter alerts in Boston lead to dead ends [1][2]. False alerts lead to officers responding to loud noises with the attitude there may be an active shooter. The technology also wastes police time, and therefore taxpayer dollars, investigating false positives and dead ends. This money would be so much better spent investing in things that actually address root causes of gun violence, such as housing and food insecurity, unemployment, and mental health concerns. I completely agree that exposure to gunfire is traumatic. Finding ballistic evidence of a shooting doesn't prevent shootings or prevent this exposure. Addressing community needs prevents gun violence. Fund RISE UP. Fund public internet. Fund digital navigation services. I'd also like to call out that a city meeting with police and sound-thinking present, at noon on a Monday, might not be the most accessible space for people to express how they feel about being surveilled.

Erwin, Nicole

From: J. Palin <jgpalin@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 2, 2025 10:44 PM
To: City Clerk
Cc: McGovern, Marc; Zusy, Catherine
Subject: Shot Spotter Public Safety comments

Hello all,

I went to the public safety meeting today, and hoped to speak, although time ran out before I had a turn.

Points that were hinted at, but that I wanted to raise more fully:

The sales rep from Shot Spotter insisted that the police department only gets 2 second snippets of sound, but did not deny that the microphones are always on and always recording. The NYU Policing Project research suggested that Shot Spotter should not save audio logs indefinitely, and should reduce storage time from 72 to 30 hours. Ignoring details of how long ShotSpotter does retain audio recordings, they have the capacity to store audio, from throughout the city, and they can report it to a requesting party before they might delete it

I accept that the Cambridge Police department does not want to misuse Shot Spotter data *and* I can accept that the Shot Spotter parent company does not divulge audio recordings except as legally required to by law enforcement agencies, but herein lies the elephant in the room. The third and most likely potential source of abuse of our surveillance is our federal government.

We learned 12 years ago, in a *very* different Obama administration, that the telecoms were spying on the US public. They had been given demands for collecting surveillance data, and gag orders to prevent them from talking about how they were illegally wiretapping the US public. Rather than fight the illegal orders against the US public, the telecoms acquiesced.

In contrast to the telecoms, Lavabit was running an encrypted email service. When the government insisted on decryption keys, and preemptively put a gag order on Lavabit, the service shut down rather than comply and violate the privacy rights of their customers.

With these two examples, we have insight into dealing with an abusive federal government. If you collect information about the public, the federal government can and will demand it from you. If you don't want to go to jail for not providing it, you must comply or close your business.

In our current federal regime, where the methodology is to do whatever the executive wants, regardless of whether it is legal, and worry about repercussions only if someone can fight back and take the government to court and win, it is wholly possible that Shot Spotter has already received an illegal warrant and gag order for collecting and funneling all of their audio recordings to DHS.

Looking at the bigger picture, as the federal government has recently rescinded billions of dollars in funding to Harvard because it won't release student protest and conduct records, it would be naive to think that *if* the federal government hasn't already requested all audio data from Shot Spotter, that they won't make such a request when they realize such data exists. Our free speech rights, our freedom of assembly rights, and our privacy rights are very much *actively* under attack in Cambridge. This attack is starting with our immigrants and our universities, but there's no force yet to stop it from going further, to you and me.

If you want to protect Harvard, Harvard's students, next MIT, its students, and then every other academic institution in Cambridge; if you want to protect me and the concerned members of Cambridge who showed up today, the only way to not have audio recordings turned over to the federal government is to not make the recordings to begin with.

I would urge you, as strongly as possible, to protect our right to free speech and free thought; we need to both rescind the Shot Spotter contract *and* remove their hardware from our city.

If we don't remove Shot Spotter from our city, we are complicit in the degradation and destruction of our universities, the robust local economy our research centers afford us, and most importantly, our *essential* civil liberties.

As a parting thought, there is a maxim that usually pertains to social media, but that I feel is apt here: if a service is free for you to use, you are not the customer; you are the product. In the case of Shot Spötter, DHS and the federal government is the customer, and Cambridge is the product.

Sincerely,
Joe Palin

Erwin, Nicole

From: Natalie Elliott <nataliee63@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 2, 2025 9:48 PM
To: City Clerk
Subject: Public Safety Committee Hearing 6/2 Comments: Calling to End Contracts with ShotSpotter

Dear City Clerk,

I am reaching out to share with you my thoughts for the Public Safety Committee hearing on June 2nd about the use of the surveillance technology ShotSpotter in Cambridge. I was not able to attend the hearing today but care about this issue deeply as a resident and member of this community.

I call upon you the City of Cambridge to immediately begin developing a plan to end all contracts with ShotSpotter. In this plan I also urge the City to ensure that all devices on public and private property in Cambridge are promptly removed, and to invest in programs that have been proven to reduce gun violence instead of an unreliable, harmful, hidden surveillance technology that brings heavy police responses to our most vulnerable community members.

I speak both as an individual and as part of a larger movement of community members. Through being among others who share a belief that the recording of everyday life by government-funded surveillance devices, including ShotSpotter. Constant monitoring in public spaces raises serious concerns about privacy, civil liberties, and the normalization of surveillance, particularly in communities that are already over-policed.

Through working together, I have learned a number of concerning things about ShotSpotters acoustic detection technology and its use in Cambridge specifically, including:

- Voice recordings from ShotSpotter devices have been used as evidence in multiple criminal trials, including in the 2015 case *Commonwealth of Massachusetts vs. Denison* where it was found that the recordings violated Massachusetts wiretapping laws
- SoundThinking, the company that produces ShotSpotter devices, perpetuates misleading claims about its technology, using flawed science that does not stand up to actual data
- False positive ShotSpotter alerts are very common in Cambridge (and across the country in communities where devices are located) meaning that the CPD routinely shows up to the Black and brown neighborhoods where these devices are located expecting an active shooter, leading to overly aggressive police responses and wasted resources
- ShotSpotter devices are funded by DHS and the company can share data from these devices with federal immigration enforcement agencies, conflicting with the letter and spirit of Cambridge's Welcoming/Sanctuary city ordinances.
- The City of Cambridge and CPD has over and over again refused to release relevant data to the public about the impacts of this technology over the 11 years it has been present in our community

I once again ask for our City to NOT continue to invest in ShotSpotter and technology that will not make our communities safer in the long run.

In community,

Natalie Elliott
125 Hampshire Street, Cambridge MA

--

she/her, they them

Erwin, Nicole

From: Derek DuPont <derek.ryan.dupont@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 2, 2025 8:00 PM
To: City Council; Azeem, Burhan; McGovern, Marc; Nolan, Patricia; Siddiqui, Sumbul; Simmons, Denise; Sobrinho-Wheeler, Jivan; Toner, Paul; Wilson, Ayesha; Zusy, Catherine; City Clerk
Subject: Public comment: 6/2 Public Safety Committee Hearing

Hello Cambridge City Council,

I am a Somerville resident, but I want to send you my thoughts on today's Public Safety Committee hearing because both of our cities have ShotSpotter contracts.

ShotSpotter has a "spotty" track record -- research performed by Northeastern University professor Eric Piza shows that "none of the procedural benefits [of getting officers to the scene faster] translated to any public safety gains." **We shouldn't use ShotSpotter because it doesn't work, full stop.**

Beyond that, there are serious risks to using ShotSpotter. Local organization The Black Response has documented these in extensive detail but I want to specifically mention how it threatens our immigrant communities. I am a volunteer ESOL teacher with immigrant students from both our cities. Somerville and Cambridge are now regularly targeted by ICE abductions and surveillance technology like ShotSpotter produces data that the federal government can exploit to track and identify immigrants.

We should resist the reprehensible immigration policies of the Trump administration every way we can -- and that includes ending our ShotSpotter contracts. Please lead the way so that Somerville and other Massachusetts cities can follow!

Derek DuPont,
12 Craigie St,
Somerville, MA

Erwin, Nicole

From: Ayah Al-Zubi <ayahaalzubi@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 2, 2025 7:49 PM
To: City Council; City Clerk; Azeem, Burhan; McGovern, Marc; Nolan, Patricia; Siddiqui, Sumbul; Simmons, Denise; Sobrinho-Wheeler, Jivan; Toner, Paul; Wilson, Ayesha; Zusy, Catherine; City Council
Subject: Shotspotter

Hi all,

I hope you're having a great Monday! I wanted to reach out and share a quick note on ShotSpotter because I was unable to make public comment today.

You all heard a multitude of reasons why ShotSpotter is a concern to our community. I want to focus on naming the importance of where they are concentrated—disproportionately amongst our Black, Brown, and immigrant communities. Especially in the time we're in today, I hope you see the risk that puts on our neighbors. We can't say we are not cooperating with ICE and, then, turn to continue surveillance like this that comes from the DHS which houses ICE.

When we say we stand with Harvard against the attacks on academic freedom and, more specifically, the freedom of speech, I hope you all recognize the hypocrisy in stifling that same freedom in this situation (through the continued use of ShotSpotter).

Peace and blessings,
Ayah Al-Zubi

Erwin, Nicole

From: Krysia Wazny McClain <krysiawaz@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 2, 2025 6:14 PM
To: City Council; Azeem, Burhan; McGovern, Marc; Nolan, Patricia; Siddiqui, Sumbul; Simmons, Denise; Sobrinho-Wheeler, Jivan; Toner, Paul; Wilson, Ayesha; Zusy, Catherine; City Clerk
Subject: 6/2 Public Safety Committee Meeting - ShotSpotter comment

Dear Cambridge City Council,

My name is Krystyna Wazny McClain, and I live in Somerville, just over the border with Cambridge, at Park and Beacon. I spend a lot of my time in Cambridge, as a community member and an organizer with Showing Up for Racial Justice Boston and The Black Response.

Today, I call on the Cambridge city council to end the contract with SoundThinking and remove all ShotSpotter devices. These devices supposedly increase safety in our most vulnerable communities, while in actuality increasing harm. In Black and brown neighborhoods, where the devices are concentrated, they dispatch police to already overpoliced areas, with flimsy evidence that law enforcement is called for. In some cases, the police then take it upon themselves to find evidence of violence where there is none, and enact violence in turn.

ShotSpotter is financed by the Department of Homeland Security. Why would DHS want more surveillance in our communities, if not to further its own agenda? In this political moment, that agenda is clear—terrorizing, incarcerating, and disappearing immigrants, and silencing them in the process. I am a first-generation Polish American. My parents and immediate family have full citizenship, and still I have heard them joke uneasily about detention and deportation in recent weeks, as I'm sure many privileged immigrant families have. But for so many, this is no joke, especially as we have seen ICE snatch people from off of our streets with increasing regularity. We cannot let fear of one form of violence fuel another, especially one as insidious as the rounding up of our community members.

SoundThinking is a disreputable company that is concerned first and foremost with shareholders and profits. They have found easy targets for their grift in cities that want to do something about gun violence. We in Cambridge must not be fooled. We know that social supports go farther than any surveillance technology to increase safety and decrease violence. Today we ask you to act from that knowledge, instead of letting fear speak for us to increase the profits of a faceless, unaccountable company: cancel the contract, remove the devices, invest in our community.

Thank you,

Krystyna Wazny McClain

Erwin, Nicole

From: Dana Grotenstein <dgrotenstein@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 2, 2025 3:47 PM
To: City Clerk
Subject: Shotspotter comment

Thank you Chair, my name is Dana Grotenstein. I am a Somerville resident, but I am a public servant as a digital navigator at CCTV, a Cambridge nonprofit. I'd like to give/echo a few different concerns I have about the use of Shotspotter.

Through community outreach, we have most often seen that once people actually learn about what Shotspotter is and what it does, they immediately are concerned. I mention this because the community at large does not know they are being listened to, which I believe to be the reason there have been few complaints. The biased deployment of Shotspotter devices in predominantly Black, brown, and low-income neighborhoods in Cambridge, exacerbates over-policing of these neighborhoods and brings into question this surveillance system's ability to effectively reduce crime without disproportionately targeting marginalized communities. We also know and have seen that people have attempted to use dialogue captured through Shotspotter in court as evidence. This shows Shotspotter is listening, not only to gunshots but to conversations, and can do what they want with this information. This is an extremely dangerous precedent and a violation of wiretap ordinances that Cambridge and our state of Massachusetts have developed. Even so, since the technology is funded by UASI, a federal initiative part of DHS, and the contract specifically states Shotspotter can do whatever they want with the data, I question what power we even have as Cambridge to control what is done with this data.

Also, this further stokes my fear of the potential for misuse of surveillance technologies like Shotspotter being repurposed for new and nefarious objectives beyond their original intentions, especially in our current political climate. I also want to note that the Privacy Advisory Commission of Oakland actually recommended against the use of Shotspotter

Lastly, we know Shotspotter generates many false positives, as demonstrated by data collected by the ACLU of Massachusetts stating that 70% of Shotspotter alerts in Boston lead to dead ends [1][2]. False alerts lead to officers responding to loud noises with the attitude there may be an active shooter. The technology also wastes police time, and therefore taxpayer dollars, investigating false positives and dead ends. This money would be so much better spent investing in things that actually address root causes of gun violence, such as housing and food insecurity, unemployment, and mental health concerns. I completely agree that exposure to gunfire is traumatic. Finding ballistic evidence of a shooting doesn't prevent shootings or prevent this exposure. Addressing community needs prevents gun violence. Fund RISE UP. Fund public internet. Fund digital navigation services. I'd also like to call out that a city meeting with police and sound-thinking present, at noon on a Monday, might not be the most accessible space for people to express how they feel about being surveilled.

Erwin, Nicole

From: Dan Totten <dantotten@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 2, 2025 2:50 PM
To: City Council
Cc: City Clerk
Subject: Shotspotter

Hi,

Very disappointing that I was denied a chance to speak. Everyone would have gotten a chance if the police department had been a bit more succinct earlier in the meeting. If the room had to be cleared by 2:30, public comment should have started earlier.

What if someone supporting shot-spotter was signed up at the end?

The point about the potential for these recordings to be shared with the feds is very real. What's stopping this private company from complying with a request from DHS? Of course they would, regardless of what the salesperson assured us of.

Also, with a 40% accuracy rate, I could flip a nickel and be more accurate than shotspotter is.

Time to end this. I liked Councillor Zusy's idea of pausing it during the Trump administration.

It's not "just a tool". Being a sanctuary city requires us to reduce our reliance on surveillance technology. The two go hand in hand. If we have a surveillance state, we lose our ability to choose sanctuary.

Best,

Dan Totten
54 Bishop Allen Drive #2

Erwin, Nicole

From: Virginia Fisher <virginia.fisher@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 2, 2025 2:43 PM
To: City Council; City Clerk
Subject: ShotSpotter public comment

Dear Councillors and Clerk,

I am a city resident at 39 Clinton St, and I strongly oppose the ShotSpotter program. All of the evidence presented at today's hearing describes it as at best a waste of limited resources and public services, and at worst a violation of civil liberties with the potential to be used as a dystopian tool of surveillance and oppression.

Further, I was appalled that public comment was cut short on the excuse of the council chambers being booked for another event. There is obviously widespread opposition to this program from the community, and dismissing everyone who took time out of their days to show up and speak is some shady business.

Thank you,

Virginia Fisher

Erwin, Nicole

From: Stephanie Guirand <stephanie.guirand@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 2, 2025 2:39 PM
To: Azeem, Burhan; McGovern, Marc; Toner, Paul; Simmons, Denise; Wilson, Ayesha; City Clerk; Sobrinho-Wheeler, Jivan; Nolan, Patricia; Siddiqui, Sumbul; Zusy, Catherine; City Council
Cc: Stephanie Guirand
Subject: Statement for ShotSpotter Public Safety Committee Hearing - June 2

Statement for the ShotSpotter Public Safety Committee Hearing - June 2

Good afternoon. My name is Stephanie Guirand, and I live on Pleasant Street. I am a nearly lifelong Cambridge resident, I am Black and an immigrant. I grew up in Newtown Court. And I would like to register my concerns about the city's use of ShotSpotter on the public record. For the record, I will be submitting a formal complaint.

First and most importantly, SoundThinking is a for-profit corporation. They are here to sell a product and make money for their shareholders. I guess today, they are here to sell their dashboard service. I can share TBR's dashboard of ShotSpotter data to the City for free. All you have to do is make the data public.

<https://shotspotter-app-app-fydqqrdrapp9xdv5wlfwhm.streamlit.app/events> (from Bridgestats data)

Second, ShotSpotter is not a magical solution to gun violence, it is simply *a microphone*. I do not believe it is worth trading people's right to privacy to allow a company or the federal government to record our communities at all times in exchange for the possibility of faster police response to potential gunfire.

Third, ShotSpotter devices are funded by the Department of Homeland Security. I ask: *why is it that*, while the city loses federal funding for vital social programs because of our sanctuary city status, the federal government continues to fund this surveillance technology? Why?

Fourth, I speak as an American citizen and as a member of The Black Response—a group that has been in conversation with some of the most vulnerable members of our community. While I, like many, fear for my safety in these times, there are others in Cambridge with even fewer protections. Spanish-speaking residents have shared their discomfort with the idea of being recorded in public spaces. Haitian Creole speakers have expressed deep concern that the federal government holds their names and addresses.

Many Haitian residents are living in legal limbo due to recent changes in federal immigration policy. As pathways to permanent residency close for those who arrived under the Biden administration's humanitarian program, people are now facing the very real possibility of becoming undocumented. With ICE raids potentially on the horizon, they are afraid to speak publicly or even in their own homes.

We've spoken with many of these residents, particularly those living in public housing or Section 8 units. Based on leaked information, ShotSpotter devices are often mounted on top of these buildings. Today, we heard from experts that these microphones may be capable of picking up conversations when in close proximity. *Meaning people can be heard by these devices in their own homes.* That raises deeply

troubling questions about privacy, especially for people already living under the weight of surveillance, policing, and immigration enforcement in these times.

Finally, the data simply does not support the claims being made about ShotSpotter's effectiveness. I return to my earlier point: *we should not sacrifice our right to privacy* for a technology that records public life. We certainly should not give up our right to privacy for little proven benefit.

Instead, Cambridge should invest in real, community-based alternatives that address the root causes of gun violence—programs like CARE and Cambridge HEART that prioritize prevention, care, and public health over surveillance.

Please cancel the ShotSpotter contract and remove the devices.

Thank you.

Stephanie Guirand

Erwin, Nicole

From: Zoe Feder <zoe.a.feder@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 2, 2025 2:37 PM
To: City Clerk
Subject: Public Comment #38 for 12pm Public Safety Committee Mtg

Hello,

I was #38 in line to give public comment at the 12pm Public Safety Committee Meeting today. The public comment portion of the meeting was cut short, so I am emailing my comments below:

Thank you to the city council and thank you to the Prof. from BU and the public defender who spoke today. I've been a Cambridge resident for 8 years. I want to raise two questions:

1. What happens when the Dept of Homeland Security demands access to shot spotter recordings?

The federal government has already done so many illegal and immoral things sometimes directly IN SPITE of court rulings. The Sound Thinking representative has said many times that his company doesn't give away their client's data. That doesn't matter. Trump's Dept of Homeland Security (DHS) will find a way to take the data. DHS is already financing the program, so who's going to stop them from taking our audio surveillance data?

2. What happens when shot spotter gets bought up by someone like Elon Musk or Donald Trump Junior?

People who sent their DNA to 23 and Me 5 years ago didn't know that the company was going to go bankrupt and that their data would be sold 5 years later.

Other cities are already divesting from ShotSpotter, who knows how long this company is going to last before it goes bankrupt. And when it does, do we want some random oligarch buying up an extensive surveillance system across our city?

History shows, once the infrastructure is built to surveil people, it will be used for nefarious purposes. For these reasons, I urge my Cambridge City Council Members to end all contracts with Sound Thinking and remove all Shotspotter technology from our city. Thank you.

Thank you,
Zoë Feder
80 Wendell St., Apt #1

Erwin, Nicole

From: Andy Bienvenido Suárez Cruzeta <andy.25.70@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 2, 2025 2:34 PM
To: Azeem, Burhan; McGovern, Marc; Nolan, Patricia; Siddiqui, Sumbul; Simmons, Denise; Sobrinho-Wheeler, Jivan; Toner, Paul; Wilson, Ayesha; Zusy, Catherine; City Clerk; City Council
Subject: My comments about ShotSpotter

Good afternoon

My name is Andy. I have proudly called Cambridge my home for the past 11 years. I am a Core Team member of The Black Response.

I hold an International Certificate in Data, Surveillance, and Democracy from the University of Recoleta in Chile.

During my studies, I discovered that Cambridge hosts one of the most controversial and harmful surveillance technologies: ShotSpotter. Initially, I found it hard to believe that such a tool could be implemented in the city I call home. However, after conducting thorough research and fact-checking, I confirmed its presence. I quickly realized that the information available about ShotSpotter in Cambridge is minimal; much of what I learned pertains to other cities grappling with similar technologies. The community insights and research efforts of esteemed individuals, including the National Coalition against Shotspotter, have been crucial in bringing attention to this issue.

To further illustrate my concerns, I want to draw your attention to two recent investigative reports published by 404 Media: *"A Texas Cop Searched License Plate Cameras Nationwide for a Woman Who Got an Abortion"* and *"ICE Taps into Nationwide AI-Enabled Camera Network, Data Shows."* These reports highlight the alarming implications of surveillance technologies and raise important questions about privacy, safety, and civil rights.

So, I ask you: why are we sitting back and waiting for Cambridge to become another troubling case study featured in one of these reports? I want to emphasize that the community is here today, and we are voicing our collective concerns.

ShotSpotter is merely one example of the various surveillance technologies that Cambridge has leased from private companies, and it is not even the only technology provided by SoundThinking. This situation has led me to question the integrity of our Sanctuary City status. Instead of feeling secure and protected, I feel increasingly vulnerable, as if everyone around me can see and know my immigration status. This is not the environment I want for myself or my fellow residents. We deserve transparency, safety, and a community that respects our rights and dignity.

I oppose the use of ShotSpotter in Cambridge. I urge to please cancel the ShotSpotter contract with SoundThinking and remove the devices

Thank you.

In community.

Andy B. Suárez

Erwin, Nicole

From: Jacob Brown <jbzingo@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 2, 2025 2:31 PM
To: City Clerk
Subject: Public Comment - ShotSpotter Hearing 06/02/2025

Hi, my name is Jacob Brown and I live on Magazine Street. I'm here because I'm extremely concerned about the use of surveillance technology like ShotSpotter in Cambridge, and I believe its expansion reinforces historical inequities and enables both police and federal immigration enforcement to threaten black and brown communities in Cambridge.

ShotSpotter has a history, not only in Cambridge but throughout the country, of registering a high rate of false positives; nearly 70% of alerts in Boston led to no evidence of gunfire being found. Furthermore, the deployment of ShotSpotter microphones is almost exclusively in communities of color; a map of known placements in Cambridge shows the microphones lining up nearly exactly with historically redlined neighborhoods. Furthermore, ShotSpotter does record more than just the moments directly surrounding gunshots; legal scholars have documented instances in which prosecutors attempted to use conversations recorded by shotspotter in court. The high false positive rate and racially disparate deployment results in a network of surveillance devices that create armed, high-risk police interactions almost exclusively in neighborhoods of color.

ShotSpotter's expansion also risks granting another tool for the Trump administration to threaten Cambridge residents. Its development in Cambridge was funded by a DHS grant and there is close work with federal enforcement agencies woven through its history. One of the defining characteristics of the first few months of this administration has been the erosion of trust around institutions that had responsibilities to protect their data - the IRS has handed taxpayer data to ICE, and ICE has been making arrests at immigration court hearings. If something as sacrosanct as tax records can be accessed by ICE, what is to keep them from using conversations recorded by ShotSpotter? We heard ShotSpotter's representatives talk about tools, but tools are not a politically neutral thing - this is a tool not for violence prevention, but for masked agents to kidnap our neighbors more efficiently. Given the way ICE has taken advantage of data and processes that should be protected, the use of ShotSpotter in Cambridge represents to me a way of further threatening the livelihoods of my fellow Cambridge residents.

Thank you for your time.

Erwin, Nicole

From: Dan4th Nicholas <dan4th@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 2, 2025 2:27 PM
To: City Council; City Clerk
Subject: Follow-up on Public Comment – ShotSpotter/SoundThinking Contract

Dear Members of the Cambridge City Council,

My name is Danforth Nicholas, and I'm a Cambridge resident. I offered public comment during today's Public Safety Committee hearing, but I'd like to follow up with a clearer written statement.

I do not trust ShotSpotter—now called SoundThinking—to deliver on its promises. The technology has a well-documented record of false alerts, and more disturbingly, it can capture private conversations without disclosure or consent. That is not public safety—it is surveillance.

During the meeting, the company's representative claimed that the system has saved "hundreds if not thousands" of Black and Brown lives. There is no public data to support this assertion. Using communities of color to justify unproven surveillance technology is not just disingenuous—it's harmful.

The same representative also claimed that Commissioner Elow supports expanding the program. Unless and until the Commissioner publicly affirms that position, I believe it is misleading to suggest such institutional support as a reason to renew or grow the system.

Finally, I want to underscore that ShotSpotter has been in use for over a decade in Cambridge—and yet the neighborhoods where it's deployed are still described as hotspots. That speaks volumes. If the technology were effective, the trend would be moving in the opposite direction.

Cambridge has an opportunity to act in line with its stated values of transparency, accountability, and community safety. I urge you to let this contract expire and invest instead in initiatives that build real, lasting trust and safety.

Sincerely,
Danforth Nicholas
93 Richdale Ave, Cambridge
dan4th@gmail.com

Erwin, Nicole

From: Lee Farris <Lee@LeeFarris.net>
Sent: Monday, June 2, 2025 1:15 PM
To: City Council
Cc: City Clerk
Subject: Remove ShotSpotter

Dear Mayor and Councilors,

I am writing for the Cambridge Residents Alliance to encourage Councilors to vote to remove ShotSpotter from Cambridge. As you know, we signed the letter from The Black Response.

We share concerns about its accuracy (both false positives and negatives) and whether it is useful at trial, and share concerns of it possibly having negative consequences for residents.

Thanks,

Lee Farris, President
Cambridge Residents Alliance: *Working for a Livable, Affordable and Diverse Cambridge*
<https://www.cambridgeresidentsalliance.org/>

Erwin, Nicole

From: Rachel Grashow <rachel.grashow@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 2, 2025 12:54 PM
To: City Clerk
Subject: Could not stay on until my name was called (called away for work)

Hi,

I may need to step away from this call when called upon. If that happens, if possible, in lieu of my live comment, can you read the following:

My name is Rachel, I am a white women living in North Cambridge.

There have been many great points made today and thank everyone for their care for Cambridge.

I urge the city of Cambridge not to confuse surveillance with safety. As said- it's catching some shots being fired, but not actually leading to arrests- is the city safer?

I wanted to additionally ask: Do we have assurances that the Department of Homeland Security will not be given these data when ShotSpotter/Sound Thinking is asked?

At a time when the federal government is sanctioning the kidnapping of adults and children off the street, divesting in technology and companies that could further jeopardize the safety and privacy of our citizens is paramount.

While I appreciate the careful presentation, I remain unconvinced that ShotSpotter is worth the financial and privacy costs.

Thank you for your time.

Erwin, Nicole

From: shep@posteo.net
Sent: Monday, June 2, 2025 12:07 PM
To: City Clerk
Subject: Public safety meeting 6/2 comment re: ShotSpotter

Hi,
Something's come up at work and I'm unable to make my scheduled comment slot (#17). My name is Meredith Shepherd, and I live at 384 Prospect St.

in Cambridge. It's very clear that current federal leadership does not accept any constitutional constraints on their power, and that the administration is actively encouraging federal law enforcement agencies to disregard both the law as written and court decisions. It doesn't matter what the gathered data is intended to be used for, or what (minimal) legal constraints are placed on it. Right now the only way to prevent data from being misused is not to collect it. The only reason to engage in this kind of indiscriminate surveillance would be if it provided a clear, immediate, and overwhelming public safety benefit, and this program does not.

Thanks,
Meredith Shepherd

Erwin, Nicole

From: paolo padova <paolopadova27@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 2, 2025 11:38 AM
To: City Council; City Clerk
Subject: Public Safety Committee Comment

Hello,

My name is Paolo and I'm a Cambridge resident living on Walden Street. I am reaching out to voice my concern about the use of ShotSpotter surveillance in Cambridge. The City needs to cancel ShotSpotter contracts, remove surveillance devices, and confirm these actions through a public safety meeting.

Thank you,
Paolo

Erwin, Nicole

From: J. Palin <jgpalin@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 2, 2025 11:20 AM
To: City Clerk
Subject: Public safety comment

I have been a community member for the last 14 years. I've lived in, gone to school in, I work and volunteer in, and have family and many close friends in Cambridge.

Shot spotter is listening to and recording our conversations; this is a violation of our expectation of privacy. Even if SoundThinking denies this, *and* their claim were to be true, the technological ability to record our conversations is there and can be enabled, by demand, for the department of homeland security.

With a federal government whose actions show a clear intent to rule, not govern, it is a matter of when, not if, this technology will be intentionally used against us.

With a federal government that is currently, actively, trying to suppress speech, protest, and privacy at our local academic institutions, in an attempt to control what we can think and express, it is a matter of when, not if, this technology will be intentionally used against us.

If we allow Shot Spotter to surveil our citizenry, we are complicit in the loss of our free speech, privacy, and safety). Please rescind the shot spotter contract and remove their technology from Cambridge.

Thanks,
Joe Palin

Erwin, Nicole

From: Max Q <maxor001@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 2, 2025 11:05 AM
To: Azeem, Burhan; McGovern, Marc; Nolan, Patricia; Siddiqui, Sumbul; Simmons, Denise; Sobrinho-Wheeler, Jivan; Toner, Paul; Wilson, Ayesha; Zusy, Catherine; City Clerk
Subject: Public Safety Committee June 2nd hearing - Serious Concerns about Shotspotter

Dear City Council,

I am writing to you about the Public Safety Committee hearing today about the use of the surveillance technology **ShotSpotter** in Cambridge. I have big concerns about this technology and its use in Cambridge.

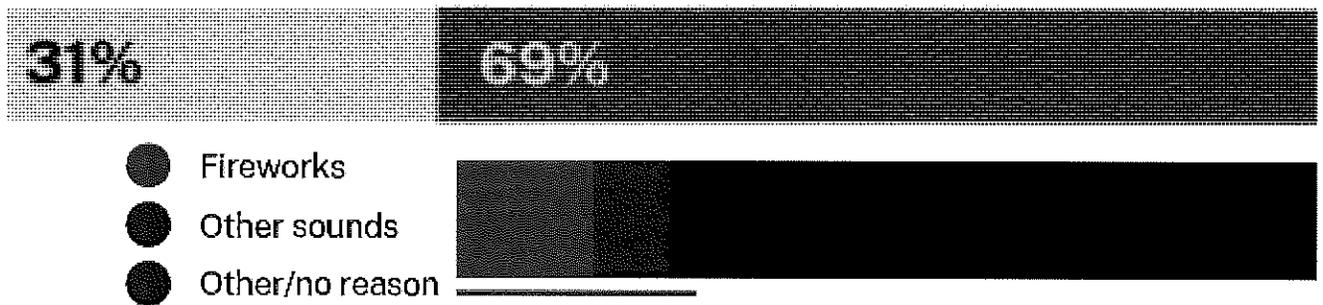
They've been so many false positive ShotSpotter alerts in Cambridge and across the country resulting in CPD showing up to Black and brown neighborhoods where these devices are located expecting an active shooter situation and leading to aggressive police responses and wasted resources.

Even more importantly these false positives have serious effects on first responder times to actual emergencies both health and safety for everyone across Cambridge!

How would you feel if you knew that your loved ones had a lower odds of surviving an emergency if the ambulance couldn't make it in time because Shotspotter's false positives wasted our first responders time?

Almost 70% of alerts result in no evidence of gun

Evidence: one or more shell casings, ballistic damage, witnesses, victims, and/or suspects



16% of all alerts were other kinds of sounds
(e.g., fireworks, vehicles backfiring, construction, etc.)

<https://data.aclum.org/2024/04/08/boston-shotspotter/>

Recording of everyday life by government-funded surveillance devices such as ShotSpotter also raise serious concerns about privacy & civil liberties, and the normalization of surveillance tech in communities that are already over policed.

ShotSpotter devices are funded by DHS and the company can share data from these devices with federal immigration enforcement agencies ICE, which goes against Cambridge's Welcoming Community ordinance.

I call upon all City councillors & City to **immediately end ShotSpotter contract**, make clear that **immigrants families are welcome in Cambridge** and to **invest in programs that have been proven to reduce gun violence instead of an unreliable, ineffective, hidden surveillance tech** that is used to over police vulnerable community members.

In community,
Max
Inman Sq

Erwin, Nicole

From: Wedly Mozeau <mozobosal@theblackresponsecambridge.com>
Sent: Monday, June 2, 2025 10:25 AM
To: Azeem, Burhan; McGovern, Marc; Nolan, Patricia; Siddiqui, Sumbul; Simmons, Denise; Sobrinho-Wheeler, Jivan; Toner, Paul; Wilson, Ayesha; Zusy, Catherine; City Clerk
Cc: Stephanie Guirand
Subject: End the City's Contract with ShotSpotter – Protect Cambridge's Communities

Dear Councilors and Public Safety Committee Members,

As an immigrant who works in Cambridge and cares deeply about the well-being of this community, I urge you to end the City's contract with ShotSpotter. This technology does not make us safer—it creates real harm, especially for communities of color and immigrant residents. ShotSpotter claims to detect gunfire in real time, but it also records ambient sounds—conversations and everyday noise. In at least one case here in Massachusetts, these recordings were found to be illegally obtained. No one should have their words recorded without consent, especially in communities already facing high levels of surveillance and criminalization. The technology is also deeply flawed. False alerts are common and often result in aggressive police responses in neighborhoods that have long experienced over-policing. These incidents are not only traumatic—they reinforce fear and distrust, and they don't stop gun violence. As an immigrant, I am especially alarmed that ShotSpotter data may be shared with federal immigration agencies. This poses a serious threat to Cambridge's values as a Sanctuary City and puts our neighbors at risk of detention or deportation. Despite years of use, the City has not provided transparent evidence that ShotSpotter is effective. If this system truly worked, the data should speak for itself—but it hasn't. True public safety comes from investment in people, not surveillance. We need affordable housing, youth opportunities, mental health care—not flawed technology that endangers our communities. Please listen to the voices of residents, workers, and advocates calling for change. Cambridge must lead with care, equity, and justice. In solidarity,

Wedly Mozeau
The Black Response Cambridge

Erwin, Nicole

From: Steve Wineman <steven.wineman@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 2, 2025 10:21 AM
To: City Council
Cc: City Clerk; City Manager
Subject: ShotSpotter

Dear Councillors,

I write to you on the occasion of today's Public Safety Committee hearing focusing on the deployment of ShotSpotter devices in the city. When this issue comes to the full Council, I urge you to vote to terminate the ShotSpotter contract and remove the devices.

There are many reasons why Cambridge should end its involvement with ShotSpotter. It purports to be "gunshot location" technology, but there is no evidence that ShotSpotter reduces gun violence or facilitates faster police response. It is prone to false positives which lead police to use excessive force and detain people on the street. This particularly impacts Black and Brown people who live in the neighborhoods where most of the ShotSpotter devices are clustered. The technology also has voice surveillance capacity that has been used to submit evidence in court, and this surveillance capacity is always turned on. Shotspotter is described by the ACLU as "a surveillance tool used disproportionately in communities of color."

I particularly want to call to your attention the implication of ShotSpotter's surveillance capacity for migrants who live in Cambridge or, regardless of their place of residence, are simply standing or walking on streets reached by ShotSpotter devices. As you know, Cambridge's ShotSpotter contract is paid for by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and the devices' surveillance capacity to record spoken words yields data which can be reported to DHS, placing migrants at risk simply by speaking in public places.

You don't need me to tell you that we are in the midst of a national emergency created by the Trump Administration's assault on civil liberties. A significant component of the emergency is the abduction and deportation of migrants without any semblance of due process. Termination of the ShotSpotter contract and removal of the devices is a specific, concrete act of resistance that is within your grasp. Please do the right thing.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Steve Wineman
26 McTernan St.

--

This email communication is made possible by the labor of the people of the Congo, including thousands of children, mining cobalt for rechargeable lithium batteries in conditions tantamount to slavery. <https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2023/02/01/1152893248/red-cobalt-congo-drc-mining-siddharth-kara>

Erwin, Nicole

From: Prasanth, Saira <sairaprasanth@g.harvard.edu>
Sent: Monday, June 2, 2025 9:45 AM
To: City Council
Cc: City Clerk
Subject: Public comment to stop ShotSpotter

Dear Cambridge City Councilors,

I hope you are well. My name is Saira Prasanth. I am a doctoral student in population health sciences at Harvard University, and I organize with Cambridge DSA. Given these connections with the Cambridge community, I am writing to provide my thoughts for the Public Safety Committee hearing today on June 2nd about the use of the surveillance technology "ShotSpotter" in Cambridge.

As a public health student and researcher, I want to emphasize that increasing surveillance and policing does not improve public safety or public health. Rather, it is detrimental to both.

The recording of everyday life by government-funded surveillance devices, including ShotSpotter, in public spaces raises serious concerns about privacy, civil liberties, and the normalization of surveillance, particularly in communities that are already over-policed.

Voice recordings from ShotSpotter devices have been used as evidence in multiple criminal trials, including in the 2015 case Commonwealth of Massachusetts vs. Denison where it was found that the recordings violated Massachusetts wiretapping laws.

SoundThinking, the company that produces ShotSpotter devices, perpetuates misleading claims about its technology, using flawed science that does not stand up to actual data.

False positive ShotSpotter alerts are very common in Cambridge (and across the country in communities where devices are located) meaning that the CPD routinely shows up to the Black and Brown neighborhoods where these devices are located expecting an active shooter, leading to overly aggressive police responses and wasted resources. Research shows that police intrusion in communities has destructive effects on health, not only for the individuals directly impacted, but also for surrounding community members. A study from the Journal of Urban Health, for instance, highlights "how indirect exposures to invasive policing practices operate as illness-generating structures of society, not simply individual life events" (1). I implore the Council to take findings like this into account when faced with decisions that stand to expand the racist and violent police state.

Moreover, ShotSpotter devices are funded by DHS, and the company can share data from these devices with federal immigration enforcement agencies, conflicting with the letter and spirit of Cambridge's Welcoming/Sanctuary city ordinances.

The City of Cambridge and CPD has repeatedly refused to release relevant data to the public about the impacts of this technology over the 11 years it has been present in Cambridge. I call upon the City to immediately end the ShotSpotter contract and ensure that all devices on public and private property in Cambridge are promptly removed, and to invest in community-centered approaches that have been

proven to reduce gun violence - such as stable housing and universal basic income (2) - instead of an unreliable, harmful, hidden surveillance technology that brings heavy police responses to community members disproportionately impacted by oppression.

Thank you for your time, and I trust that you will stand with your constituents and end all use of ShotSpotter immediately.

In community,
Saira Prasanth

Sources:

1. Sewell, A. A., & Jefferson, K. A. (2016). Collateral damage: the health effects of invasive police encounters in New York City. *Journal of urban health*, 93(Suppl 1), 42-67. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11524-015-0016-7>
2. Rowhani-Rahbar, A., Schleimer, J. P., Moe, C. A., Rivara, F. P., & Hill, H. D. (2022). Income support policies and firearm violence prevention: a scoping review. *Preventive medicine*, 165, 107133. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ypmed.2022.107133>

--

Saira Prasanth, MPH (she/her/hers)
PhD Student in Population Health Sciences | Environmental Health
Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health
LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/in/saira-prasanth

Erwin, Nicole

From: Shelley Rieman <shelleyrieman@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 2, 2025 8:32 AM
To: City Council; City Clerk; City Manager
Cc: Nancy Ryan; <cresa-ec@googlegroups.com> com; Krysia Wazny McClain
Subject: Spotshotter discussion today at Public Safety Committee hearing

Dear Councilors and Manager,

Spotshotter is bad news for many reasons and should be dismantled in Cambridge and Somerville immediately.

It is not effective in reducing crime or gun violence. There are many false reports from other loud noises that activate the shotspotter sensors--fireworks, trucks backfiring, construction site noises. Police time is wasted investigating. Police are on high alert when they go to a site thinking there is gunfire and that they also might be in danger. This is a scenario for accidental reactive police shooting. Because spotshotters are largely located in black and brown neighborhoods, residents feel that they are especially targeted for surveillance.

It's a lousy system and a waste of money.

There are also sinister possibilities for its use. The government could add cameras and authorize ICE to "eavesdrop" on anyone walking by a shotspotter device.

Housing and food security are truly important issues in Cambridge. The closure of Daily Table is a terrible loss for local residents. Area food pantries are already experiencing reduced food donations and increased numbers of residents needing food to feed their families.

Cambridge is a wealthy city and has an opportunity to use our resources for good.

Please discontinue the shotspotter program.

Thank you,

Shelley Rieman

201 Franklin St.

Erwin, Nicole

From: Yadi <email.yadi@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, June 1, 2025 6:33 PM
To: City Council; City Clerk
Subject: Public Comment - Cambridge Public Safety Committee Meeting 06/02/25
Attachments: Public Comment - Cambridge Public Safety Committee 06-02-25 Shotspotter Report 2025.pdf

Hi,

Please find attached my public comment for the June 2, 2025 Cambridge Public Safety Committee Meeting, Shotspotter Report 2025.

Thanks,

Yadi
(Attachments: 1)

Cambridge Police Department Shotspotter (SoundThinking) Report 2025

Do we have to accept gun violence? No. However, we don't have to accept technology that fails on its promises to reduce gun violence either.

What Is The Goal of Using ShotSpotter - Because it Doesn't Address Gun Violence

The lackluster performance of Shotspotter (SoundThinking) in Cambridge is in-step with other cities across the nation who are finding that this gunshot detection technology does not deliver on its promises, is unreliable, ineffective, resource intensive and a threat to civil liberties. Simply stated, it is ineffective at addressing gun violence.

Shotspotter itself makes it clear that it's not reliable when someone is shot with a silencer, gunshots are close to the ground, gunshots are fired at close range, in a car, indoors, or with ambient loud noises. Cambridge PD's presentation admits Shotspotter is fooled by "Loud industrial work or construction noises, fireworks, a car backfiring or loudly crashing, electrical transformer explosion"¹ - that's an extremely large number of scenarios where Shotspotter is essentially useless.

Shotspotter (SoundThinking) Pleads That The Public and Politicians Have Faith

Cambridge PD's presentation includes Shotspotter's well-worn *faith defense* that "An unfounded alert does not definitely mean a shooting did not occur, more simply that there was no evidence located to prove there had been a shooting." Really?! Government officials should not be making policy decisions on SoundFaith that require faith in the efficacy of technology. Policy should be based on SoundEvidence and SoundFacts. The evidence and facts are clear that Shotspotter does not address the gun violence problem and instead takes resources and funds away from solutions.

False Alarms Drain City Resources - According to Cities

The *faith defense* is an attempt to rise above the resource drain & ineffective technology critique. In a half-dozen city sampling using Shotspotter, false alarm rates ranged from 51% - 88%.² False alarms are extremely problematic and resource-intensive for cities across the nation. Pasadena City Manager and Pasadena PD stated: "*Unnecessary calls for service due to false burglar alarms have grown into a tremendous problem...alarms serve as useful deterrents to crime, however, the amount of resources the Pasadena Police Department spends responding to false alarm calls every year has become intolerable. The department has struggled with the problem of false alarms for the past several years as false alarm calls are draining patrol resources and often create a significant backlog of calls. Police resources are not available to address other needs. City government must balance citizen welfare with consumption of municipal resources.*"

In fact, the problem persists and Cities including Cambridge and Pasadena have increased fees to *several hundred dollars* for private false alarms and pays a contractor to collect fees because "**false alarm fees helps to reduce responses to false alarms and allows police department resources to respond to actual emergencies.**"^{3 4} According to the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, "In the vast majority of jurisdictions, the cost of responding to false alarms is not recouped through fines. Jurisdictions that try to recoup costs generally omit the lost-opportunity costs, potentially a significant part of the equation..such as personnel costs; software, hardware, office

¹ <https://cambridgema.iqm2.com/citizens/FileOpen.aspx?Type=1&ID=4231&Inline=True>

² <https://www.wired.com/story/ai-gunshot-detection-accuracy-san-jose-nyc/>

³ <https://www.cityofpasadena.net/city-manager/news/city-of-pasadena-announces-new-police-department-false-alarm-billing-company/>

⁴ <https://www.cambridgema.gov/cfd/firedeptdivisions/firepreventionbureau/generalinformation/falsealarmbillinginformation>

Cambridge Police Department Shotspotter (SoundThinking) Report 2025

space, and equipment costs for false alarm management such as notifications, permitting and billing; administrative and staff costs of notifications, permitting, billing; 911 call displacement costs; and police being unavailable to work on actual crime.”⁵ *How much would Shotspotter owe Cambridge PD, the City and residents for false alarms that drain resources and keep first responders from responding to actual emergencies? How is it Ok for Shotspotter to not be held accountable?*

Shotspotter Is Under Scrutiny For Threats To Civil Rights and Misuse of Taxpayer Funds

In May 2024, Members of US Congress called into question not only the effectiveness and accuracy of Shotspotter, but expressed concerns about how the use of the technology - which is predominantly deployed in already marginalized communities of color - exacerbates discrimination, over-policing and civil rights violations.⁶ Members of US Congress are urging the Department of Homeland Security Inspector General to investigate, as several cities utilized Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) grant funds to acquire Shotspotter.

A National Institute of Justice report found ShotSpotter did not reduce the occurrence of shots-fired calls for service, fatal shootings, non-fatal shootings or other violent felonies committed with firearms. The introduction of ShotSpotter in police districts had no impact on gun-violence crime clearance rates (the proportion of cases solved by police).⁷

A Redwood City survey of 27 police officers on the effectiveness of Shotspotter noted that:⁸

- 100% said Shotspotter will not increase the likelihood that the victim of a shooting will survive.
- 92% said ShotSpotter will not increase the likelihood someone will be arrested.
- 88% said ShotSpotter will not make them more effective when handling shots fired incidents.

St. Louis Police Chief Magazine reported on a study of gunshot detection tech in St. Louis indicated that: *“Results show that [Acoustic Gunshot Detection Systems] AGDS simply seem to replace traditional calls for service and do so less efficiently and at a greater monetary cost to departments. Given the tepid results in guiding police to the scenes of crime and given the hidden costs of these systems ...AGDS might not be well-suited for the audience the technology is marketed toward. High-volume agencies will likely experience substantial increases in their call volumes with remarkably little to show for it, at a cost that might have taxpayers questioning the logic behind the expense.”⁹*

The MacArthur Justice Foundation found that 89% of Shotspotter reports led police to find no gun-related crime, and 86% turned up no crime at all.¹⁰

The Chicago Inspector General found that about 90% of ShotSpotter alerts were false positives and resulted in the dispatch of police 40,000 times when no gun-related violence had taken place.¹¹

Reporting on **Pasadena City** data found Shotpostter leads to dead ends 75% of the time and wasted resources, routinely misidentified sounds and missed fatal shootings.^{12 13}

⁵ <https://cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/e05021556.pdf>

⁶ https://www.markey.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/shotspotter_dhs_oig_letter_51424.pdf

⁷ <https://nij.ojp.gov/library/publications/learning-about-shotspotter-and-gun-violence-chicago>

⁸ <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/180112.pdf>

⁹ <https://www.policechiefmagazine.org/the-hidden-costs-of-police-technology/>

¹⁰ <https://www.macarthurjustice.org/blog2/shotspotter-is-a-failure-whats-next/>

¹¹ <https://igchicago.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Chicago-Police-Departments-Use-of-ShotSpotter-Technology.pdf>

¹² <https://knock-ia.com/data-shows-shotspotter-leads-to-dead-ends-and-wasted-resources-in-pasadena/>

¹³ <https://lapublicpress.org/2025/02/pasadena-shotspotter-missed-calls-budget-shooting-gun-violence/>

Cambridge Police Department Shotspotter (SoundThinking) Report 2025

A multi-institution study of 68 large metropolitan counties in the U.S. found “ShotSpotter technology has no significant impact on firearm-related homicides or arrest outcomes.”¹⁴

Cities Across the Country are Abandoning and Rejecting Shotspotter

The performance of Shotspotter in Pasadena is not an anomaly, rather it is on par with the performance of Shotspotter in other cities. Lackluster results, mounting evidence and research debunking the proclaimed merits of Shotspotter’s technology have led several cities across the nation to decline to continue using Shotspotter.

- 2025: Little Rock, AR¹⁵
- 2024: Chicago, IL;¹⁶ Seattle, WA;¹⁷ Mobile, AL;¹⁸ Houston, TX¹⁹
- 2023: Portland, OR;²⁰ Durham, NC;²¹ Indianapolis, IN²²
- 2022: San Diego, CA;²³ Atlanta, GA;²⁴ Greenbay, WI;²⁵ Buffalo, NY²⁶
- 2021: Independence, MO;²⁷ Long Beach, CA²⁸
- 2020: Grand Rapids, MI;²⁹ Dayton, OH³⁰
- 2012-2019: Canton, OH;³¹ St. Paul, MN;³² Fall River, MA;³³ Austin, TX;³⁴ San Antonio, TX;³⁵ Wichita, KS;³⁶ Charlotte, NC;³⁷ Dallas, TX;³⁸ Los Angeles, CA;³⁹ New Orleans, LA;⁴⁰ Beloit, WI⁴¹

¹⁴<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33929640/>

¹⁵<https://arktimes.com/arkansas-blog/2025/02/04/little-rock-city-board-scrap-contr-versial-shotspotter-gunfire-detection-technology>

¹⁶<https://chicago.suntimes.com/2024/02/13/mayor-johnson-to-end-shotspotter-deal-after-summer>

¹⁷<https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/seattle-mayor-bruce-harrell-shelves-plans-for-shotspotter-technology/>

¹⁸<https://mynbc15.com/news/local/mobile-not-renewing-shot-spotter-contract>

¹⁹<https://hoodline.com/2024/05/houston-to-deactivate-controversial-3-5-million-shotspotter-program-amid-scrutiny-over-effectiveness-and-racial-profiling-concerns/>

²⁰<https://www.opb.org/article/2023/06/01/portland-shotspotter-gunshot-detection-technology-police-firearms-crime/>

²¹<https://www.wral.com/story/durham-won-t-renew-shotspotter-contract-following-city-council-vote/21203098/>

²²<https://www.wishtv.com/news/indiana-news/indys-shotspotter-pilot-is-over-so-why-are-the-sensors-still-there/>

²³<https://www.nbcsandiego.com/news/local/san-diego-city-council-review-of-renewal-of-spotshotter-system-pulled-from-agenda/2670781/>

²⁴<https://www.11alive.com/article/news/crime/apd-shotspotter-technology/85-79f2851c-023e-45bc-b69e-8dcddbe2814>

²⁵<https://www.greenbaypressgazette.com/story/news/2022/09/21/green-bay-delays-vote-branding-initiative-oks-license-plate-cams/8071915001/>

²⁶<https://www.wkbw.com/news/local-news/city-of-buffalo-adopts-amended-2023-budget-eliminates-proposed-shotspotter-funding>

²⁷<https://www.themarshallproject.org/2022/10/13/how-a-suburb-spent-covid-relief-on-sniper-rifles-tactical-helmets-and-police-bonuses>

²⁸<https://beachcomber.news/content/why-doesn%E2%80%99t-long-beach-have-gunfire-location-technology>

²⁹<https://www.wzzm13.com/article/news/grand-rapids-votes-no-on-cares-act-grant-for-grpd/69-a733c09b-e45f-4d47-9519-50e03cce551f>

³⁰<https://www.daytondailynews.com/local/dayton-not-renewing-contract-with-shotspotter-program/PYYGLLNVRJGUHEAF4OSJJ7K4NA/>

³¹ <https://www.govtech.com/public-safety/canton-ohio-to-part-ways-with-shotspotter-expand-system.html>

³²<https://www.mprnews.org/story/2019/11/20/gunshot-sensor-technology-likely-wont-be-part-of-st-pauls-crime-response>

³³<https://www.govtech.com/public-safety/after-too-many-shots-missed-fall-river-mass-ends-deal-with-shotspotter.html>

³⁴<https://www.kxan.com/news/how-technology-could-help-austin-police-prevent-shootings/>

³⁵<https://www.mysanantonio.com/news/local/article/City-pulls-plug-on-pricey-gunshot-detection-system-11817475.php>

³⁶ <https://www.kwch.com/content/news/Wichita-to-consider-Shot-Spotter-gunshot-detection-technology-465155373.html>

³⁷<https://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/local/crime/article59685506.html>

³⁸<https://www.dallasnews.com/news/2015/05/12/years-after-flirting-with-sensors-that-detect-gunshots-dallas-deems-technology-too-pricey/>

³⁹<https://www.latimes.com/politics/la-pol-ca-gunshot-detection-bill-20170312-story.html>

⁴⁰<https://www.wwtv.com/article/news/crime/new-orleans-city-council-police-shotspotter-technology-crime-reduction-shootings/289-966251f7-4097-4c61-bbba-f4c1138e81de>

⁴¹<https://www.wpr.org/milwaukee-committed-shotspotter-outcomes-data-remain-elusive>

Cambridge Police Department Shotspotter (SoundThinking) Report 2025

On a positive note, Shotspotter's rebranding to SoundThinking better describes what this technology actually is: microphones picking up noises and someone *thinking* whether the sounds are actually gunshots.

Cambridge should not extend Shotspotter and instead look into evidence-based solutions moving forward with future public safety investments addressing gun violence that are evidence-based, accountable, and that do not infringe on civil liberties.

Yadi

Cambridge Public Safety Committee Meeting

June 2, 2025

Cambridge Police Department Presentation on Shotspotter (SoundThinking)

Erwin, Nicole

From: Sheli Wortis <sheliwortis@comcast.net>
Sent: Saturday, May 31, 2025 4:51 PM
To: City Council; City Clerk
Cc: City Manager
Subject: Support for POR #80 and Opposition to ShotSpotter

I write in strong support of POR 2025 #80, urging that a section of the Cambridge Municipal Code be revised with language clarifying the role of Cambridge city employees, especially members of the Police Department, and that such revised language specifically should state that “the sole role of Cambridge city employees during any action by ICE is only to protect public safety and not to assist or facilitate the work of ICE, especially given that those actions may be unlawful.”

Given that the Public Safety Committee is also reviewing the ShotSpotter contract, I also urge that the Committee recommend cancelling the contract with ShotSpotter, as has been argued by The Black Response, (a) because of the privacy risks imposed by the existence of the ShotSpotter microphones and (b) because there is insufficient evidence that ShotSpotter reduces gun violence.

Sheli Wortis
106 Berkshire St. 02141

Erwin, Nicole

From: Daniel H <dannyisme123@hotmail.com>
Sent: Friday, May 30, 2025 8:46 PM
To: City Clerk; City Manager; City Council
Subject: Public Safety Committee: ShotSpotter

City Council,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the continued use and proposed expansion of ShotSpotter technology in our community.

Numerous independent reports, including investigations by news outlets and civil rights organizations, have shown that ShotSpotter frequently produces false alerts, disproportionately targets communities of color, and diverts limited public safety resources away from strategies that are proven to work.

Specifically, the technology has been shown to:

- **Generate false positives:** Studies have found that a significant percentage of ShotSpotter alerts result in no evidence of gunfire, leading to unnecessary and often traumatic police encounters.
- **Lack transparency and oversight:** ShotSpotter's methods for detecting gunfire are proprietary, making it difficult for the public or independent experts to evaluate its accuracy or effectiveness.
- **Raise civil liberties concerns:** The system increases surveillance in already over-policed neighborhoods, further eroding trust between residents and law enforcement.

Rather than investing in flawed and expensive surveillance technology, I urge the council to redirect funding toward community-based violence prevention programs, mental health services, youth engagement initiatives, and proven public safety alternatives.

Public safety should be rooted in equity, transparency, and trust—not surveillance systems that have failed to demonstrate effectiveness. I respectfully request that you vote against any proposals to renew or expand ShotSpotter in our city.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Daniel Heller

25 Bellis Cir Cambridge MA 02140

Erwin, Nicole

From: Madeline Lee <lee.madeline.g@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, May 30, 2025 7:32 PM
To: City Council
Cc: City Clerk
Subject: Public Safety Committee hearing 6/2 - End use of ShotSpotter

Dear Councilors,

I am writing to share my thoughts regarding the Public Safety Committee hearing on June 2nd about the use of ShotSpotter surveillance technology in Cambridge.

I have several concerns about this acoustic detection technology and its implementation in our community:

1. Voice recordings from ShotSpotter devices have been used as evidence in various criminal trials, including the 2015 case Commonwealth of Massachusetts vs. Denison, which determined that the recordings violated Massachusetts wiretapping laws.
2. SoundThinking, the company that produces ShotSpotter devices, makes misleading claims about its technology, relying on flawed science that fails to align with actual data.
3. False positive alerts from ShotSpotter are widespread in Cambridge (and in many other communities where these devices are installed). This means that the Cambridge Police Department often responds to alerts in Black and brown neighborhoods, expecting active shooter situations, which can lead to overly aggressive police responses and misallocated resources.
4. ShotSpotter devices are funded by the Department of Homeland Security, and the company has the ability to share data from these devices with federal immigration enforcement agencies. This practice conflicts with the principles of Cambridge's Welcoming/Sanctuary City ordinances, and concerns me given the current political climate at the federal level.
5. The City of Cambridge and the Cambridge Police Department have repeatedly failed to release relevant data to the public regarding the impacts of ShotSpotter over its 11 years of presence in our community. This does not promote trust and a sense of accountability for Cambridge residents.

I urge the City to immediately end the ShotSpotter contract, ensure the removal of all devices on public and private property in Cambridge, and invest in proven programs that effectively reduce gun violence, rather than relying on an unreliable and harmful surveillance technology that disproportionately affects our most vulnerable community members.

Sincerely,

Madeline Lee
238 Garden St.

Madeline Lee
(440) 785-7054

madelineleeart.com
pronouns: she/her/hers