

Todd C. Rotondo, Chair
Matthew J. St. Hilaire
Steven M. Crowley

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Danielle M. Spang, Chair
John J. Mullady
Keith Sonia

Joint Meeting Legal Affairs / Public Services / Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes

Tuesday April 21, 2026, 6:00 PM

City Council Chambers

3rd Floor, Beverly City Hall, 191 Cabot Street

Rotondo called the Committee on Legal Affairs to order at 6:00 PM with Rotondo, St. Hilaire, and Crowley present.

Spang called the Committee on Public Services to order at 6:00 PM with Spang and Sonia present; Mullady was absent.

Rotondo called Committee of the Whole to order at 6:00 PM with Flowers and Feldman in attendance.

Also present: Mayor Cahill, Chief John LeLacheur, Lieutenant Edward Hathon, Representative Hannah Bowen, and members of the public.

Order #120-Councilors Rotondo and Spang to schedule a joint meeting of the Legal Affairs and Public Services Committees to review the City's use of and contracts for Automated License Plate Readers and associated software including Flock Safety cameras.

Chief LeLacheur provided an overview of the Department's use of Flock cameras, noting that Salem's cameras assisted in an arson investigation and Lynn's cameras helped identify a vehicle involved in a fatal pedestrian incident. These incidents led Beverly to explore Flock and ultimately contract for cameras. He cited additional investigations where Flock assisted the Department, including the Brown University shooting, a home invasion in Pride's Crossing, and an incident involving a person threatening suicide. He emphasized that the Department's use of the cameras is restricted and that the cameras capture license plates and vehicles rather than drivers.

Lieutenant Hathon provided a presentation regarding the ALPR system, its use by the Beverly Police Department, camera locations, access controls, data retention, and information sharing. Presentation is attached.

Lieutenant Hathon explained that Flock is one of many investigative tools used by the Police Department. He stated that one of the benefits of the system is its ability to assist officers in locating vehicles or persons of interest during an investigation and to share information with other law enforcement agencies.

Lieutenant Hathon explained that ALPR stands for automated license plate reader. Beverly utilizes the Flock Falcon 2 license plate reader cameras. He stated that one reason the Department uses Flock is its integration with the National Crime Information Center (NCIC), which allows information contained in NCIC to be incorporated into the system.

Lieutenant Hathon explained that the Flock system uses still images to capture license plates and vehicle characteristics. He stated that the system does not use facial recognition and is not designed to identify a person's race, sex, or gender. Beverly currently has four Flock cameras located on Rand Street, Cabot Street, Brimbal Avenue, and Elliott Street.

Lieutenant Hathon stated that Flock information may not be used for unauthorized purposes. He explained that the cameras and database are used for investigative criminal purposes, public safety, official law enforcement business, and criminal investigations. He further explained that individuals with access to the Flock system must acknowledge that they are accessing restricted information for authorized use and must comply with Flock's privacy and security policies and Criminal Justice Information System requirements. Unauthorized or improper use may result in disciplinary action and criminal or civil penalties.

Access to the system is limited to active-duty members of the Police Department and Communications Center who are NCIC certified. Lieutenant Hathon stated that there are two administrators to provide checks and balances. He explained that access is deactivated when an individual is no longer an active-duty member of the Department.

Under the City's contract, the City owns the data generated by its cameras, while the data is stored on servers owned by Flock. Lieutenant Hathon stated that the data is retained for 30 days; information needed for an investigation must be retrieved and preserved before the retention period expires.

He also explained that Flock may generate alerts involving stolen vehicles, stolen license plates, Amber Alerts, Silver Alerts, and criminal warrants. Officers must verify the information before taking enforcement action.

Lieutenant Hathon stated that the Police Department conducts audits of system use. He explained that he reviews the system at least monthly and examines searches, users, license plates, networks accessed, and the reasons for searches. He stated that the Department also conducts network audits concerning agencies with which information is shared.

He explained that data sharing can occur between jurisdictions and that access can be limited. He stated that, at the time of the meeting no federal agencies have access to Beverly's data, agencies that had previously been given access to Beverly's system had been removed and would need to be reauthorized before regaining access.

Chief LeLacheur emphasized that an officer who does not have a legitimate criminal purpose for using the cameras could be charged with a criminal offense. He also stated that the cameras are mounted on City property.

Chair Rotondo opened the meeting to public comment and asked speakers to state their names for the record.

Kathleen Young expressed concerns regarding the potential use of Flock technology in connection with federal immigration enforcement and broader government surveillance. She questioned why the City would establish infrastructure that could potentially be used for federal purposes.

Alistair Smith, a Beverly resident, stated that he has confidence in the Beverly Police Department but not in Flock as a company. He expressed opposition to Flock cameras in the community and stated that he hoped the City would not renew its contract with Flock.

Christine, a former Beverly resident and North Shore resident who works at the hospital, expressed concerns regarding Flock's relationship with other technology and data-service companies. She raised concerns about the collection and use of data and the potential for increased surveillance.

Kellen Marvel expressed concerns regarding the Flock camera located at McKay and Elliott Streets, near the Cummings Center which contains numerous medical and health-care practices. He specifically referenced clinics providing abortion and gender-affirming care and expressed concern that the camera could allow out-of-state agencies to obtain information concerning individuals receiving health care in Massachusetts. He asked how the City would ensure that use of the cameras does not violate Massachusetts shield laws.

Mark Wilson, an attorney and Beverly resident, expressed concerns regarding the sharing of license plate information with other organizations and agencies. He stated that, in his view, such sharing could place community members at risk. He also raised constitutional concerns regarding ALPR data. He encouraged the City Council to terminate the City's Flock contract.

Joseph Benson, a resident of Chase Street, discussed the Fourth Amendment and the distinction between a lack of a general expectation of privacy in public, protection against unreasonable searches and seizures, and prolonged tracking of a person's movements.

Steve Crannish, of Pratt Avenue, stated that there is no right to operate a motor vehicle and argued that individuals can choose not to drive through areas where cameras are located if they do not want to be observed while driving.

St. Hilaire asked how frequently the City reviews the Flock audit logs and what information is reviewed. Lieutenant Hathon stated that he reviews the logs at least monthly and reviews information concerning system use, users, searches, and network access. St. Hilaire asked whether the audit records are public records. Lieutenant Hathon stated that members of the public have requested and received the records through public records requests, although certain information may be redacted, including license plate information and information relating to an investigation or individual.

Sonia asked whether other vendors could provide similar investigative capabilities while providing greater privacy protections. Chief LeLacheur stated that other companies provide similar services that operate in a similar manner. He also noted that the Police Department uses numerous investigative methods, including requesting camera footage from businesses when investigating crimes.

Sonia stated that the concern raised by residents was not necessarily with the Police Department's investigative tools, but with the storage and availability of data and Flock's business model. He stated that he would support investigating other vendors and determining whether another company could provide a better relationship for Beverly and the Police Department.

Chief LeLacheur stated that one of the significant benefits of Flock is its ability to facilitate collaboration with other cities and towns using the same system. He referenced investigations in which information from Flock cameras in Lynn, Salem, and other jurisdictions assisted in solving crimes.

President Flowers expressed concerns regarding Flock's approach to oversight and stated that Flock appeared to be reactive rather than proactive in addressing concerns regarding its policies. She emphasized that she has confidence in the Beverly Police Department, but that Flock as a company raises concerns. She asked about the cost of the cameras for the City.

Lieutenant Hathon stated that three cameras were installed on existing infrastructure at an installation cost of approximately \$150 each. The fourth camera required a separate breakaway pole and had an installation cost of approximately \$650. Each of the four cameras costs \$3,000 per year, for a total annual cost of \$12,000. He stated that the Department uses drug forfeiture funds and IT/computer expense funds to pay for the cameras.

Feldman expressed concern regarding the \$12,000 annual cost and stated that she questioned why the price was relatively low if the data collected has significant value. She stated that she would support the City paying more for a system that better protects privacy while maintaining public safety. She also questioned whether Beverly and other communities could work together to develop or select an alternative system rather than continuing with Flock.

Representative Bowen discussed proposed state legislation addressing privacy and security concerns associated with ALPR technology. She stated that the legislation would not remove investigative tools from police departments, but would establish additional privacy and security protections. She stated that the proposal would permit certain law enforcement uses while prohibiting the sale and storage of the data. She noted that the legislation has not yet been enacted and that communities are currently addressing these issues individually.

Mayor Cahill stated that the City understands the benefits that have been realized through Flock and other data-collection tools, while also recognizing the concerns raised regarding privacy and safety. He stated that the City is in the process of arranging a meeting with Flock leadership to discuss the concerns raised and determine whether the City should continue its relationship with the company. He invited Council members and residents to submit additional questions to be raised at the meeting. The Mayor stated that the goal is to determine how the City can benefit from information that has helped apprehend dangerous individuals and solve crimes while addressing the concerns regarding personal privacy and safety.

Chair Rotondo stated that the meeting was the beginning of an ongoing community conversation. Residents were encouraged to continue contacting the City Council, Mayor's Office, or Police Department with questions or concerns.

A motion to adjourn the Committee of the Whole was made and seconded. A vote was taken, and motion carried (7-0). The Committee of the Whole adjourned at 6:58 PM.

A motion to adjourn the Committee on Legal Affairs was made and seconded. A vote was taken, and motion carried (3-0). The meeting adjourned at 6:58 PM.

A motion to adjourn the Committee on Public Services was made and seconded. A vote was taken, and motion carried (2-0). The meeting adjourned at 6:58 PM.

Recorded by: Sarah Kirker