

OFFERED BY COUNCILORS HENRY SANTANA, BENJAMIN J. WEBER, BREADON, COLETTA ZAPATA, FERNANDES ANDERSON, PEPÉN, WORRELL, AND LOUIJEUNE



CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

ORDER FOR A HEARING TO REVIEW THE USAGE OF SECURITY CAMERAS IN BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

WHEREAS, In 2021, the Boston City Council unanimously passed an ordinance to increase accountability, transparency, and oversight of the City’s use of surveillance technology and data, including requiring each City department to publish a *Surveillance Use Policy* for each surveillance technology in use or intended use, as well as an *Annual Surveillance Report* detailing actual usage of surveillance technology and data in the past year; the Ordinance additionally tasks the City Council with reviewing “whether the benefits to the impacted City department(s) and the community of the Surveillance Technology outweigh the financial and operational costs and whether reasonable safeguards exist to address reasonable concerns regarding privacy, civil liberties, and civil rights impacted by the deployment of the Surveillance Technology”; *and,*

WHEREAS, During the development and passage of that Ordinance, many of the community advocates expressed particular interest in transparency about the usage of surveillance technologies affecting Boston Public Schools (BPS); *and,*

WHEREAS, Pursuant to the aforementioned Ordinance, the 2023 Annual Surveillance Report on the BPS Video Management System was published by the Administration and provided to the City Council on July 8, 2024; *and,*

WHEREAS, The Committee on Public Safety and Criminal Justice has received inquiries from both community advocates and Councilors requesting discussion of the use of security cameras in BPS facilities, particularly given the limited information available in the corresponding 2023 Annual Surveillance Report; *and,*

WHEREAS, “In 2023, BPS spent \$1,809,412 on security cameras and cabling installation” per the report, but the report provides no further detail on the purpose or nature of these expenditures; *and,*

WHEREAS, The report provides no information on the number or locations of cameras, and includes limited details on the intention in their placement and usage, noting only: “The cameras are used for security purposes. The technology is deployed in

various Boston Public Schools buildings. The technology is in continual use, and doesn't have a specific use case.”; and: “The technology’s identified purpose is the security for students and staff attending school. Security cameras are known for deterring criminals from threatening the safety of students and staff. On a 5-point scale, BPS would give the cameras a ‘4’ rating for effectiveness.”;
NOW, THEREFORE BE IT

ORDERED: That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council holds a hearing to review the usage of security cameras in Boston Public Schools. Representatives from Boston Public Schools, the Department of Innovation and Technology (DoIT), the Boston Police Department, and community advocacy organizations will be invited, and members of the public are encouraged to attend and testify.

Filed in Council: August 7, 2024