



CITY OF NEW BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS

**MEETING: COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY
AND NEIGHBORHOODS**

DATE: SEPTEMBER 09, 2026

TIME: 7:03 P.M.

PLACE: CITY COUNCIL CHAMBER, ROOM 214

**PRESENT: COUNCILLORS BRIAN GOMES, CHAIR; IAN ABREU;
DEREK BAPTISTE (7:45); SHANE BURGO; NAOMI
CARNEY; LEO CHOQUETTE; SHAWN OLIVER (7:20);
SCOTT PEMBERTON; RYAN PEREIRA; (7:38); JAMES
ROY**

ABSENT: COUNCILLOR JOSEPH LOPES

Councillor Gomes called the Committee meeting to order, took attendance, and explained that the meeting was being recorded and live-streamed. The Clerk read a Communication into the record, from Councillor Lopes explaining his absence. The Communication was received and placed on file by Councillor Abreu and seconded by Councillor Roy.

The following items were taken up together:

WRITTEN MOTION, Councillor Gomes, requesting that the Committee on Public Safety & Neighborhoods immediately meet with Police Chief Jason Thody, a representative from the Mayor's Office, and a representative from Flock Safety; this meeting is to bring all parties together for the purpose of enhancing policies and procedures and strengthening community trust around the use of these cameras; the policy is transparent, with every search being logged and additional safeguards in place, not only to protect the civil rights of the citizens but for the Police Department as well. (Referred – August 25, 2026) (Matter ID #1302)

WRITTEN MOTION, Councillors Burgo, Lopes and Abreu, requesting that the Committee on Public Safety & Neighborhoods meet with representatives of the New Bedford Police Department, the City Solicitor, the Information Technology Department, and any other appropriate officials to discuss the City's use of law enforcement surveillance technologies, including but not limited to automated license plate reader (ALPR) systems, Flock Safety cameras, public safety camera networks, and any other technologies capable of collecting or retaining data on the movement of vehicles or individuals; and further, that the Committee review the City's policies governing the collection, retention, sharing, security, and deletion of data generated by such technologies; the circumstances under which such data may be accessed or shared with outside law enforcement agencies; the safeguards in place to protect residents' constitutional rights and privacy; and whether additional local policies or ordinances are warranted to promote

transparency, accountability, and public confidence while preserving the legitimate public safety benefits these technologies provide. (Referred – August 25, 2026) (Matter ID #1303)

On motion by Councillor Abreu and seconded by Councillor Carney, the Committee VOTED: to receive and place on file a packet submitted by Chief of Police, Jason Thody regarding Flock safety.

The Chair recognized Chief of Police, Jason Thody, who provided the Committee with a prepared statement. This statement summarized the use and abuse of the Flock camera system and how he and his department were reevaluating how an ALPR (Automatic License Plate Reader) system should be used and operated within the City. He also provided information about what an ALPR system can and cannot do and reviewed how the search system worked, re-emphasizing how important such a system is when it is applied to law enforcement. Chief Thody briefed the Committee on recent shootings in the City in which the investigation process was conducted without the benefit of the ALPR program which did not make the process any easier. He said he has reviewed how the system has been abused and how he will prevent this in the future.

Upon completion of his remarks, Chief Thody took questions from the body.

Councillor Choquette complimented Chief Thody on conducting an audit on the City's ALPR use. Councillor Choquette asked Chief Thody how long Flock (the City's current ALPR system) has been in use in the City. Chief Thody replied since late 2024. Councillor Choquette asked if there were any regulation or operating manuals within the department that were being used with the current system. The Chief stated there was a boiler plate policy that was in place for the use of the system. There was also an additional step of an MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) that each person using the system had to sign. The MOU did list restrictions on how the system should have been used, but unfortunately audits were not being conducted, it was more like a supervisory review as opposed to an actual audit. There was also a training program offered by Flock, but it was not mandatory. The Chief said that while there is a policy, in his opinion it does not go far enough.

Councillor Burgo asked if the training mentioned by Chief Thody was used as an audit tool? The Chief explained the process being when an Officer wanted to use the ALPR system, they would meet with a Lieutenant in major crimes, receive the policy, and sign the MOU. Once signed, the Lieutenant would create a user id and password for the Officer to use. When an Officer logged on to the program, they would be directed to a program called Flock Academy to learn how to use the system. But for some reason there was a disconnect where the policy said you need to do the training, but the MOU did not say the same. Councillor Choquette asked if the training was mandatory, the Chief said it was not.

Councillor Choquette asked what Chief of Police established the original policy currently being followed by the department. Chief Thody said the program was introduced in 2024, so it would have been the Chief of Police serving at that time. Chief Thody explained as a part of his audit he will draft new guidelines on usage and will require annual training on whatever ALPR system is in use. Councillor Choquette asked whether in the future the City's IT department will be included in discussions on the ALPR system. Chief Thody said they would.

Councillor Abreu asked Chief Thody if he had any conversations with Police Chiefs in surrounding Towns about their use of ALPR systems. The Chief said yes, he has and there have been different variations in usage and decisions that will be made when their Flock system contracts are up. Chief Thody noted that the City's contract ends on November 12, 2026.

Councillor Oliver asked Chief Thody to confirm that free reign in the Police Department is no longer practiced and has been suspended. He was told yes. Councillor Oliver asked once reviewed who would have access to the ALPR system. He was told Detectives, Dispatch Supervisors and Professional Standards.

Councillor Pereira asked how the City would monitor any ALPR company to ensure they are abiding by their contractual agreement. Chief Thody believes that as a part of the new guideline process, they would negotiate an acceptable audit plan. This would be a good opportunity to bring in the IT Department to see what auditing the vendor would entail. Councillor Pereira asked what the Chief saw as a timeline in developing a working guideline to be applied to future vendor usage in creating a group and start to create policy. Chief Thody explained that the public input portion is currently open and he may extend that. He would then look to form a committee to include some Councillors, IT Department, the Administration, community representatives, residents, members of the Police Department and himself. He believes that one to two months is reasonable.

Councillor Pereira asked if there is any precedence of any outside organizations such as the District Attorney's office in conducting quarterly audits of ALPR use. Chief Thody stated he was not aware of that happening on a technology program like this. However, he stated there is precedence of outside organizations performing audits on evidence so it may be possible. Councillor Pereira asked if input from the public was closed, would Chief Thody make that input public. He said he would.

Councillor Roy stated that the Committee had asked to have black bags placed over the flock cameras and questioned whether that happened. The Chief said no, however, they are in communication with Flock and they do not have a timeline for them to cover the units. Chief Thody said Flock did give them the authority to cover the flock cameras, and he is in the process of coordinating that.

The Chief also explained that he received permission to remove two cameras in their entirety, one that was facing a home and the other which was on private property. Councillor Roy asked how the Police Department identifies the anomalies of usage. He was told for the 2026 data they had the audit assistance tool within the Flock system that pointed to any anomalies that it detected. It was very good as it pointed to them the two issues of misconduct. The Chief also explained that prior to 2025, they were doing a manual audit.

Councillor Carney asked when Chief Thody would look at other vendors. Chief Thody said he hoped to complete the input portion of the process before the current Flock contract expires, then they will look at other vendors and make a recommendation.

Councillor Baptiste asked Chief Thody whether he had any intention of renewing the Flock contract before its November 12th expiration date? The Chief said no. Councillor Baptiste asked Chief Thody if he would consider using Flock again. The Chief said if that were to occur, then he would make sure safeguards and language were in place in the contract and if Flock was opposed to such requests, he would not renew the contract. Councillor Baptiste asked if Chief Thody did not want to renew the contract could the Mayor renew it. The Chief stated he did not know the answer to that. He did say that most contracts like that would be signed by both him and the Mayor. Chief Thody explained that the Mayor has been on the same page as he has and has been open to any recommendations he has made.

Councillor Burgo was recognized and informed the Committee that it is the Mayor who will sign the ALPR contract.

Councillor Abreu asked if Flock knew they were in some difficulty with the City. Chief Thody said they are aware that they have been put on notice primarily with the Police Departments request to take them down and cover them up. They were very cooperative, as he cited and they did attend the public meeting in Ward One.

Councillor Oliver asked if Chief Thody could provide them with a synopsis of the proposed Ordinance he received last night. The Chief stated that that was his intention. He will review the Ordinance and provide them with his thoughts on the ALPR Ordinance

Councillor Gomes asked Chief Thody whether he had put together a rank-and-file structure to be followed to use the system at this point. The Chief said he had not completed one yet and that at this point the cameras are not in use.

On motion by Councillor Burgo and seconded by Councillor Roy, the Committee VOTED: to table the matters at this time.

Councillor Abreu made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Councillor Roy.

The meeting adjourned at 8:21 p.m.

ATTEST:

Denis Lawrence, Jr.
Clerk of Committees