

**CITY OF WOBURN
CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY & LICENSE
WOBURN CITY HALL
COMMITTEE ROOM
TUESDAY, APRIL 22, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.**

Voting members present: Chair Robert Ferullo, Councilor William Pappalardo, Councilor Joseph Demers. Absent: Councilor Joanne Campbell and Councilor Robert Toro

Non-voting members present: Councilor Lou DiMambro, Councilor Charles Viola, and President Jeffrey Dillon. Absent: Councilor Darlene Mercer-Bruen

Also present: Mayor Michael Concannon and Police Chief Robert Rufo

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Reading and approval of previous meeting minutes: Motion made by Councilor Demers and seconded by Councilor Pappalardo to waive the reading of and approve the minutes of the meeting of March 10, 2025, approved, 3-0-2.

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Communication requesting opportunity for the Woburn Police Department to provide an update on the License Plate Recognition program: Chief Rufo said 2 ½ years ago he looked into working with Flock Safety, which provides police departments with a program to record license plate information. He said he wanted to see how it was accepted in other communities. He said there are currently 800 Flock cameras in a number of cities and towns across the commonwealth, including Boston, Chelsea, Wakefield, Somerville, Lawrence, Lowell and Cambridge. He said the closest community to Woburn with Flock cameras in use is Wakefield. He said there was an incident where a victim claimed he was shot in Woburn, outside the library. He said Flock records determined the incident occurred in Medford and Malden. He said it was impossible for the vehicle involved in the shooting to have been in Woburn during the time frame of the incident. He said the Flock records saved the Woburn Police Dept. money and time. He said the Woburn Police Dept. has identified 12 locations for Flock cameras. He said the cameras do not use facial recognition imaging nor will the department use information to write speeding tickets. He said it only records license plates. He said the system isn't used other than as an investigative tool for detectives. He said the access will be limited to investigations. He said if a plate is associated with someone who has a warrant, it notifies the police department immediately. He said the records retention period is 30 days. He said if an officer enters the system, there is a record. He said the system is used across the state with a tremendous amount of success. He said it also gives police access to a nationwide system. He said the system is set up for 500 miles. He said it is primarily an investigative tool. He said there will be no motor vehicle enforcement nor facial recognition. Councilor Pappalardo asked if the retention period is 30 days. Chief Rudo said the records are retained for 30 days. He said the department has a 30-day look back. Councilor Pappalardo said he is concerned the program has a Big Brother tone to it. He asked if the chief can provide an example that indicates the program is not too much. Chief

Rufo said the program is not there to give civil infractions. He said it is not live. He said it captures pictures. He said the benefit for Woburn is there is a certain amount of crime in the city in certain locations. Councilor Pappalardo asked if there has been any negative feedback in other cities. Chief Rufo said most of the cities and towns that have this program say it has been met with tremendous positivity. Councilor Demers said his day job involves criminal justice information services. He said during the Covid period he worked with a lot of police departments that monitored license plates. He said the equipment was generally mounted on cruisers. He said the primary use is for investigations. He said you need a cause to look up license plate information. He said one of the things the program is used for is after breaking and entering incidents while people are away. He said the program can look for information about suspicious vehicles. He said he thinks it's a great investigative tool. He said it will help police track people who are coming here in stolen vehicles. He said this program is helpful. He said he understands the argument about Big Brother. He said when he worked for Rep. Dwyer, there was a program that provided license plate information for only about 72 hours. Chief Rufo said this system is far more encompassing. Motion made by Councilor Demers and seconded by Councilor Pappalardo to suspend the City Council's rules to allow any non-voting member of the council to address the communication; approved, 3-0-2. Councilor DiMambro asked if this tool can be used to track someone on foot. Chief Rufo said Somerville is able to capture people riding bicycles in their bike lanes. He said it can capture things like that. Councilor DiMambro asked if it would capture someone running from a crime scene. Chief Rufo said it is possible. He said it can further enhance the collection of data from a Ring Cam. Councilor DiMambro said he supports anything that beefs up security. Mayor Concannon said he wants to make the council aware of what this program is and is not. He said there are concerns the police will be using this data to issue tickets. He said that's not what this is for. He said it is also not facial recognition. Councilor Viola said this is a great tool for investigations. He asked what the cost is. Chief Rufo said the cost is \$3,000 per camera per year. He said he has managed to fund the first year. He said there are no grants available. He said there is a possibility the department could get private funding from businesses. President Dillon said Chief Rufo has represented in the past that the population of Woburn grows to 200,000 during weekdays. He said anything the police department needs to enhance public safety he will support 100 percent. Councilor Demers asked if the technology is similar to what MassDOT uses to collect tolls. Chief Rufo said it is exactly the same. Councilor Ferullo said this equipment is already out there. He said if the city installs the Flock program it will reduce the time to conduct investigations to a day or two from weeks. Councilor Pappalardo said people are going to want to hear what it is not intended to do. Chief Rufo reiterated the program is not intended to be used for traffic enforcement or facial recognition. Councilor Ferullo said this is exciting. Chief Rufo said Woburn is at the crossroads of Routes 93 and 95 and the influx of traffic is tremendous. Chair Ferullo asked if any action is required. Mayor Concannon said this is an FYI discussion. Motion made by Councilor Demers and seconded by Councilor Pappalardo to receive the communication from Mayor Concannon and place it on file; approved, 3-0-2.

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Petition for renewal of Taxi Cab License for Woburn Cab Company Inc at 100 Ashburton Avenue: Chair Ferullo said Woburn Cab Co. is seeking renewal of five taxi cab licenses. He said all paperwork is in order and there are no complaints in the file. Motion made by Councilor

Demers and seconded by Councilor Pappalardo that the license renewal “ought to pass” with any existing limits or conditions; approved, 3-0-2.

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MOTION made by Councilor Pappalardo and seconded by Councilor Demers to adjourn; approved, 3-0-2. Chair Ferullo adjourned the meeting at 6:17 p.m.

A TRUE RECORD ATTEST:

Gordon Vincent
Clerk of Committees