



VIA EMAIL

July 14, 2019

Alameda City Council
The Honorable Marilyn Ezzy Ashcraft – Mayor
2263 Santa Clara Avenue
Alameda, California 94501

Oakland Privacy is writing with our comments on Alameda's proposed renewal of a no-bid contract for body-worn cameras with Axon on the agenda for the July 16, 2019, meeting of the Alameda City Council.

Oakland Privacy is a citizen coalition that works regionally to defend the right to privacy, enhance public transparency, and increase oversight of law enforcement, particularly regarding the use of surveillance techniques and equipment. We were instrumental in the creation of the first standing municipal citizens' privacy advisory commission in the City of Oakland, and we have engaged in privacy enhancing legislative efforts with several Northern California cities and regional entities. As experts on municipal privacy reform, we have written use policies and impact reports for a variety of surveillance technologies, conducted research and investigations, and developed frameworks for the implementation of equipment with respect for civil rights, privacy protections and community control.

Oakland Privacy is writing to ask that you seriously consider whether going forward with a no-bid contract with Axon for body-worn cameras is the correct decision for the City of Alameda and its residents.

When cities and police departments purchased body-worn cameras, they promised that they would be an effective tool for accountability and transparency. However, the reality has proved to be quite different. The video from body-worn cameras is controlled by the police, who determine the policies surrounding the use of body-worn cameras, if and when video from body-worn cameras is released and to whom.

The staff report for Agenda Item 5-F does not include any information about what impact, if any, body-worn cameras have had in Alameda. Those possible impacts include the use of force by police, the number of complaints about the police and whether body-worn cameras have been a cost-effective tool for accountability and transparency.

A recent report by the research, development and evaluation arm of the US Department of Justice has concluded that "There were no statistically significant differences in police use of force, number of citizen complaints, or number of arrests for disorderly conduct for police officers who wore BWCs [body-worn cameras], compared with officers who did not wear BWCs." The study, conducted in 2019, can be found at <https://crimesolutions.gov/ProgramDetails.aspx?ID=644>.

Submitted re: 5-F
7/16/19

At the very least, we ask that you remove this agenda item from the consent calendar and possibly table this item to a later meeting to discuss whether there is any data that the cameras have been effective in reducing police use of force, the number of citizen complaints and the number of arrests for disorderly conduct for police officers who wore body-worn cameras, compared with officers who did not wear body-worn cameras. Please also consider changing the policy on body-worn cameras to support greater transparency and accountability. Without a substantive discussion, the citizens of Alameda cannot be assured that decisions of the City Council are made with the appropriate information.

Furthermore, we encourage the Alameda City Council to continue its consideration of a comprehensive surveillance transparency ordinance that has been under discussion since 2018.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Mike Katz-Lacabe

Member, and on behalf of, Oakland Privacy
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