

# Report on Flock to Berkeley Neighborhood Council

June 13, 2026, *updated June 21* Kitt Saginor ksaginor@gmail.com

## Background

**Berkeley Police Department has had a contract with Flock for Automated License Plate Readers (ALPR) for three years.**

- Flock owns the cameras and stores the data.
- Unlike the cameras that read license plates at the Bay bridge, the system uses AI to gather more than just plate numbers, it identifies make and model of car, text and images of bumper stickers and other information.
- Flock's stated goal is for data from different jurisdictions to be widely available to law enforcement agencies nationally.
- Berkeley, and some other jurisdictions require that their data not be widely shared – for instance, not made accessible to ICE - Flock has promised this, but not delivered.
- Even if Flock adheres to contract language to keep data confidential, the federal government can legally and secretly obtain access to our data through [FISA](#).

**Last Fall (09/09/25), BPD sought to add [another contract with Flock](#) for cameras that would record the activity of pedestrians in high traffic areas of Fourth Street, Telegraph, Shattuck, etc. There was considerable public resistance and the project stalled. ([On September 9th, Item 24 was removed from the agenda by the City Manager before the beginning of the meeting](#))**

**This March, [BPD's proposal](#) was to renew and expand surveillance programs and contracts with Flock at a total cost of \$2.7 million over two years:**

- Renew contract for [Flock ALPRs](#)
- Contract for [Fixed Cameras with Flock](#) to surveil pedestrians
- Contract for [Flock's Drone as First Responder program](#) - drones with surveillance cameras that can be sent ahead of police response or used to follow vehicles
- Initiate **Community Video Streams** - direct feeds from privately owned cameras into Flock's databases
- Contract for [Investigative Software - Flock's NOVA](#), AI managed database combining data from a large number of sources, including DMV, property records, criminal records, etc, possibly voter registration records, school enrollment, possibly data collected by phones, and communication media.

### **Public opposition:**

- Safety especially for immigrants, women seeking reproductive care
- Mistrust of Trump's thugs & Flock
- Cost.

### **Support**

- Tech upgrades
- Doing something about crime - apprehension of suspects, especially retail theft (not reduction of crime)

## **At the March 24th Council meeting:**

- *City Attorney's provided confidential advice to City management, BPD, Council, & PAB that Flock might not keep its word about confidentiality and that expensive litigation was likely. (not publicly known until May 6th)*
- There were multiple supplementals to modify [the proposals \(Item 26\)](#), but the request was overall supported by [Humbert, Kesarwani, Taplin, O'Keefe](#) and [Blackaby](#) / Contracting with Flock was strongly opposed by the [Mayor, Tregub, Lunaparra](#), and less strongly [Bartlett](#)
- BPD made a [presentation](#) about the usefulness & features of Flock's products
- PAB [presented](#) warnings, shortcomings, drawbacks - *new*
- Public comment started before 10:00 pm and continued until 1:30 am
- A vote to extend the meeting failed by one vote, so [the meeting adjourned with a plan to defer it to a Special Meeting on June 2nd](#).
- After a few weeks, a special meeting was scheduled for [May 7th](#).

## **Resistance building**

### **Many diverse community groups mobilized resistance**

- East Bay Sanctuary Covenant, other immigration support groups
- Indivisible Berkeley
- Wellstone, EBCFA, and various progressive groups
- ACLU, Secure Justice, other legal groups
- Friends of Adeline, Sylvia Mendez Support, other neighborhood groups
- Berkeley Neighborhood Council sent a letter
- Stop Berkeley Surveillance (CopWatch) - this group was especially active

### **People from different groups collaborated and intensified efforts**

- EBCFA coordinated ActionNetwork appeals for public comment from Blackaby's district
- People from several of the groups purchased a banner-ad on BerkeleySide directed toward an ActionNetwork page created and supported by Indivisible Berkeley - more than 374 emails sent!
- Efforts included
  - Canvassing with flyers at gatherings AND knocking on doors with flyers
  - Phone banking
  - Yard signs in Blackaby's district
  - Public statements
  - Email appeals
  - 156 oral public comments at the meeting with many more attending in-person, online
- People from different groups connected with each other's actions – for instance by joining Stop Berkeley Surveillance for phone banking.
- Rally and press conference organized by East Bay Sanctuary Covenant and folks from other groups was attended by over a hundred just prior to the May 7th meeting.

**Efforts focused on the basic denominator - stopping Flock.** Potentially divisive issues, such as should any sort of ALPRs should be used? or do we trust Berkeley police? - were set aside.

### **While Community Resistance was building for the May 7th meeting...**

- The Police Accountability Board continued to identify problems, including with the no-bid procurement process.
- Councilmember O’Keefe sent out a Google survey through her newsletter (result never reported, rumored to have been majority opposed)
- Push poll by??? BPD?? Flock?? generated AI assisted emails supporting Flock. Also SafeBear solicited emails from UC parents.
- In addition to the PAB, three other Berkeley commissions made recommendations against Flock
  - [Commission on Labor](#)
  - [Human Welfare Community Action Commission](#)
  - [Peace and Justice Commission](#)
- Around the country, cities continued to terminate contracts with Flock because of misuse of their data, threat of expensive lawsuits, deceitful statements or conduct from Flock employees.
- Rush of articles in the last few days before the vote:
  - [Opinion piece by Kesarwani, Taplin, O’Keefe, Humbert](#) in the Berkeley Scanner (Emilie Raguso)
  - [Opinion piece by Josh Cayetano and Leah Wilson](#), Chair/Vice Chair of PAB in BerkeleySide
  - [CalDaily published article](#) and leaked Confidential memo from City Attorney Farimah Brown to the Council - main points about security of data and potential legal costs. (grayed out but could be restored). Story picked up by [BerkeleySide](#)

### **May 7th Meeting**

**The introductory material from the March 24th meeting was not repeated, councilmembers asked questions of BPD, PAB, and Trevor Chandler, Flock’s Director of Public Affairs.**

**Public comment was limited to two hours for commenters present at the meeting, and one hour for remote attendees.**

**After a brief council discussion, Blackaby [made a motion](#) to split up the pieces of the proposal and remove the expansion of contracts with Flock for fixed video cameras, drones, and more advanced software.**

- First part
  - Approve policies for Fixed Video cameras and Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) with amendment refining use of drones at protests/crowds (Lunaparra) (but can be revised before we have the equipment)

- Policy for Community Video Streams referred to Public Safety Policy Committee (still headed towards implementation)
- Start RFP process involving PAB and BPD for ALPR and other equipment (fixed cameras and drones) and the software
  - Yes: Everyone except Bartlett, who said his constituents want none of it.
- Second part
  - Approve 12 month extension of Flock contract for ALPR cost of \$200,000
    - Yes: Kesarwani, Taplin, O’Keefe, Humbert & Blackaby
    - No: Mayor, Bartlett, Tregub, Lunaparra
- No third part
  - Technically, there wasn't a vote AGAINST the additional flock contracts - there was no motion to approve those additional contracts.

### Since May 7th

- Flock has started offering a webinars to police departments “[HOW TO SPEAK TO CITY COUNCILS: MEETING THE MOMENT WITH CONFIDENCE](#)”
- On June 2nd, the Public Safety Committee (Blackaby, O’Keefe, & Ishii (in place of Kesarwani)) approved BPD’s draft for policy for Community Video Streams and Investigative Software. This recommendation goes to City Council on June 30th
- The Police Accountability Board [discussed this policy](#) on June 17th
- BPD has developed a [DRAFT of the RFP](#) for
  - Automated License Plate Recognition (ALPR)
  - Solar-powered pan-tilt-zoom (PTZ) fixed video cameras
  - Drone as First Responder
  - Field-Deployed Drones (Unmanned Aerial Systems)
  - Community Video Stream Integration
  - Investigative Software, with many capabilities including:
    - Ingest and integrate structured and unstructured data from CAD, RMS, and digital evidence; proposers must identify supported systems and the integration approach.
    - Enable case-linking and entity resolution across all connected data sources and support the ability to cross-reference vehicle and person information across sources.
    - Provide access to open-source intelligence and shared inter-agency data, with configurable access controls, audit logging, and security measures for all shared information.
- We’re asking Council to support funding for “Live Free,” a gun violence prevention program that **actually has** reduced crime.

## **What comes next *updated June 21st***

- The City Council agenda for June 30th includes two relevant items:
  - **19.-Formal Bid Solicitations and Request for Proposals Scheduled for Possible Issuance After Council Approval on June 30, 2026.** This is authorization for the City to invite bids for all the forms of surveillance that BPD is seeking. It is in the consent section of the agenda, meaning that it is expected to pass without discussion. The specifications for the RFP is not provided.
  - **46.-Surveillance Technology Ordinance Submissions for Community Video Streams and Investigative Software, Pursuant to Council Direction of May 7, 2026.** This item will approve policies for Community Streams (direct access to participating merchant video cameras) and Investigative Software (AI managed integration of data from surveillance, public records, and other sources). It is in the action section of the agenda - for discussion.
- Policies for the other forms of surveillance have already been approved (although it is possible for BPD or PAB to initiate revisions to policy)
- The RFP has not been published by the City of Berkeley, but a [DRAFT is available](#).
- If the dates provided at the end of the [DRAFT RFP](#) hold, City Council could approve a contract for extended surveillance in September, before councilmember elections. (Kesarwani and Lunaparra are not seeking re-election. Tregub and Humbert are seeking re-election.)
- Community groups will (or won't?) continue to follow this issue and work on public education & resistance.

## **In Conclusion**

**The fight is far from over on surveillance in Berkeley.**

### **Local work is crucial for national issues**

- If/when Berkeley has to face off against ICE or other federal thugs, our ability to resist depends both on neighborhoods pulling together and on whether the Feds can infiltrate locally created surveillance infrastructure.
- Also as the Federal government loses trust and the ability to help people (weakened FEMA, CDC, EPA, etc.) we need the support of strong, TRUSTED local and regional governmental bodies.