

Flock Cameras

From Front
ing anyone’s motives.
“I’ve talked to the mayor about it, so I understand the thinking behind it. I also apologize for being late to this conversation, but I’ve only recently started researching how these things work, and what I find with how they operate is somewhat disturbing to me,” Lester said. “After understanding how they work, I’ve come to the conclusion that these are invasion of privacy. I believe they’re unconstitutional, and they also leave normal everyday citizens such as myself vulnerable to stalking and or government tyranny.”
Lester built his argument around the 2012 D.C. Circuit Court case United States v. Maynard, in which a GPS tracker placed on a vehicle belonging to a cocaine dealer collected 28 days of movement data. He quoted the court’s reasoning at length: the “whole of a person’s movements over the course of a month” is not meaningfully exposed to the public, because “the likelihood a stranger would observe all those movements is not just remote, it is essentially nil.”
He continued: “It is one thing for a passerby to observe or even to follow someone during a single journey as he goes to the market or returns home from

work. [It is] another thing entirely for that stranger to pick up the scent again the next day and the day after that, week in and week out, dogging his prey until he has identified all the places, people, amusements, and stores that make up that person’s private routine.”
Lester argued the Flock network goes further than what courts found unconstitutional in Maynard, because it doesn’t track one suspect under investigation, it logs a month’s worth of data on every single person, uses AI to identify vehicle features beyond just plates, and functions as an interconnected web of cameras where access to one camera effectively grants access to the whole network.
He cited a list of documented misuse cases in other states, including “three Cherokee County sheriffs, five Albany police officers, four Richmond County deputies, including one who searched his ex’s plate 1,600 times.”
He challenged the council directly, “If tracking this data isn’t a violation of privacy, then why is accessing it? If this is all simply publicly gathered information, then why are there consequences for the officers? And if the victims have nothing to hide, as many people argue, then why are these officers being dismissed?”
He closed by asking the council “to uphold my rights

to privacy under the Fourth Amendment” and warned about building “a surveillance state from which we cannot escape.”
Councilman Marshall Norton asked whether there had been any local complaints of abuse.
“Not locally,” Lester and Councilman Brandon McGlone both confirmed. The council and Lester also worked out exactly where the city’s two cameras are located; one on U.S. 52 near the old trailer sale lot coming from Boyle County, described by Mayor Gaffney as having “a little solar panel on it,” and another near KY-25/27; with three additional county-owned units operated by the Sheriff’s Office, for five total across the county.
McGlone, who had previously voted to approve the cameras, told the room his position had changed.
“I apologize. I was not aware of flock cameras and the important issues that they imposed. Now that I am, I’m fully against them. I do believe that we should take them down.”
He then paraphrased Benjamin Franklin.
“Those who sacrifice liberty for temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety. And so I appreciate you bringing that to our attention.”
A second resident followed up later in the meeting during Lieutenant Steve Taylor’s police report, ask-

ing pointedly whether the department has a proper auditing system to verify queries made by officers to help prevent misuse cases, citing officers around the country who have tracked ex-partners or ex-spouses through similar systems; one case involving 1,500 queries.
“I’m not saying that the Lancaster Department has bad apples. I have trust in our city police, but...,” he said.
He also asked whether the Flock system had directly led to any arrests. Taylor responded that the cameras have contributed to recovering stolen vehicles and “a couple of leeing and evading” cases and said officer queries are logged with timestamps and tied into both an internal system and the FBI’s National Crime Information Center (NCIC), which undergoes its own periodic federal audit that local police don’t have visibility into.
“I don’t get to see that audit on the federal level,” Taylor said.
The resident pressed further.
“Those misuse cases have presented themselves way more than average, you would think. And it’s human error. It’s people saying, ‘I’m bored. I wonder what my ex is doing.’ But that’s an invasion of privacy, in my opinion, of the Fourth Amendment, the resident said.”

He specifically raised concern about the system’s ability to capture bumper stickers and other identifying signage beyond plates, using a political bumper sticker as a hypothetical example of potential misuse.
Taylor responded that Lancaster’s system “was not that advanced” and is generally triggered reactively, for example, when a vehicle is reported stolen and entered into the system, rather than through open-ended searching.
Officer Josh Cheek pointed to a recent high-profile case in which Flock cameras helped locate a bank shooting suspect within six hours. The resident agreed that was “a big win for Flock” and said “we all want to see crimes solved,” but pushed back on treating that outcome as proof against misuse concerns.
“The flock system didn’t save those people’s lives. It did catch the perpetrator,” the resident clarified.
Asked who authorized and funded the cameras, Mayor Gaffney said the council approved them roughly a year and a half ago, after multiple discussions with Police Chief Ryan Hughes in early-to-mid 2025 about partnering with the Sheriff’s Office on installation and the annual subscription cost. He said the initial cost came out of civil forfeiture funds rather than taxpayer money.
“We definitely hear your

all’s side of it. We hear your thoughts, your opinions on it,” Gaffney said.
The resident clarified he wasn’t necessarily asking for a costly third-party audit.
“I think it could be something that could be done in-house... but I do think that an audit at least bi-monthly or twice a year should be done to make sure that we’re not getting queries of misuse. Each query requires a notation of why that query is being input, and a lot of these misuse cases are showing that there’s no intent put into” the queries.
Taylor explained the mechanics of a typical query, for instance, running a license plate during a traffic stop generates an automatic timestamp and noted officers must complete training and sign a federal agreement not to share personal information obtained through NCIC, a violation of which would constitute a federal statute breach.
Councilwoman Michelle Ballew confirmed with Taylor that every time an officer accesses the plate database, a timestamp is automatically generated.
No formal action was taken on the cameras Monday night, but between Lester’s initial comments, McGlone’s public reversal, and the extended back-and-forth with Lieutenant Taylor, the issue appears likely to resurface at a future meeting.

Spending From Front

have heard of any budget adjustments ever done.”
Mayor Michael Gaffney responded that while a specific line-item fund showed that deficit percentage, “the total fund itself had no deficit” later clarifying that same explanation applied to a follow-up question about a separate fund.
The exchange turned to the status of outstanding city audits. Rinthen asked when the audit for the 2025 fiscal year would be presented to the council. Gaffney said the city had requested and received a six-month extension, pushing the target date to January 1, 2027 and explained that under state law (KRS), once the proper paperwork is submitted, the state auditor’s office has up to 18 months to complete the audit, and the city “can’t make the auditors go faster.”
Rinthen responded, “So you basically passed the budget with no current audit.”
Gaffney maintained the city budgets based on its operating budget rather than waiting on completed audits.
“We don’t operate on the audit,” Gaffney said.
Rinthen shot back, before citing the 2024 audit’s reported general fund deficit

of \$329,392.
Gaffney attributed most of that figure to grant funding that passes through the Water Department but isn’t captured as revenue in the general fund on paper, adding that the same pattern has shown up in audits “the exact same” way for at least the past decade. He explained further later in the exchange, “When you look at the audit, it’s going to show that you overspent your budget. It’s not going to say that you didn’t have the money to cover it... If your budget is \$1 and you spend \$2, it’s going to say you overspent your budget by \$1. But we have not. So we have covered all our bills since I’ve been in office.”
Rinthen, who said he runs his own business locally and services vehicles for many city residents, framed his concern around fiscal transparency for taxpayers.
“I’m just really concerned because you’re all sitting here making major purchases that the taxpayer’s going to have to pay for... I personally run a business. I can’t go out and make a large purchase without knowing where I stand financially... Any major institution, they’re going to ask for three years of audits. You don’t have three audits to give them.”
Gaffney responded the

city can provide “everything leading up to this most recent year,” which he argued wouldn’t satisfy lenders who typically want the three most recent completed audits.
Rinthen also cited a conversation with the county sheriff’s office about its budget, comparing it directly to the city police budget.
“\$1.42 million. He has 20 individuals that work for him... and it covers the whole county of 18,000 people. You all approved a \$2.2 million budget for the city police. This [city] only has 3,000 people by the last 2020 census... I just don’t see correlation between 2.2 million and 1.2 million, 18,000 people in the whole county and 28 miles of paved streets in the city.”
Gaffney asked how many of the sheriff’s 20 employees were full-time deputies versus court security detail; Rinthen said the sheriff reported eight full-time officers, one detective, and the remainder assigned to court security, which he confirmed comes out of the sheriff’s own budget.
Rinthen also invoked a prior council statement about the city potentially becoming “homeless” an apparent reference to the ongoing uncertainty around City Hall’s future home after the building’s sale last fall.

“The night of the meeting, Councilwoman Ballew said you felt like you were going to be homeless. I remember those words exactly,” he said. He criticized the lack of a concrete relocation plan nearly a year after the sale process began.
“You all sold it last September, October. You’re rolling it up to that time frame now. You all still have not heard of any guaranteed plan of where you’re going to move and how much it’s going to cost you to move to wherever you’re going. You just keep kicking these cans down the road... You’re here to make these financial decisions for the well-being of the people of this city,” he said.
Rinthen raised a related, longstanding issue, the city has continued providing water, sewer and electric service to the City Hall building’s tenants at a financial loss under a contract he said dates back to 2009 and has never been renegotiated.
“At some time a mayor with business sense should have said, ‘Hey, we need to renegotiate this contract,’” he said.
Gaffney acknowledged, “That’s the only one I haven’t renegotiated.”
Rinthen closed by urging the city to have a fully developed relocation plan includ-

ing where the new City Hall would be, what renovations would be needed, and a firm timeline well before any final sale closes, rather than waiting until 30 or 60 days’ notice to move.
“These people [the council] need to be able to make a logical and correct decision. Not just kick this can down the road since last November... I’m not bad-mouthing you. I’m just saying to quit kicking things down the road and make some sound business decisions for the citizens of the city.”
Council members offered a mixed but partly sympathetic response. Marshall Norton noted that a local bank handling the city’s accounts had, as part of its bid to help finance the ballpark lighting project discussed later in the meeting, certified “a satisfactory review of the last three years” of the city’s financial statements.
Councilman Brandon McGlone agreed City Hall’s future needs to be settled soon: “One thing I do agree with Don about is kicking the can down the road... I think we need to figure that out sooner rather than later.”
Councilwoman Michelle Ballew added, “I’ve been saying that. I’ve been saying it since day one,” and argued the city could develop con-

tingency plans regardless of whether the pending building sale closes.
“I think that you can have a plan without knowing about the closing or all that... you can have a plan for when it sells, and you can have a plan for if it don’t sell,” she said.
Gaffney indicated a special council meeting will likely be scheduled before the end of August driven primarily by the need for a first reading on the 2026 tax rate documentation, which must reach the county by early September and said City Attorney Jonathan Baker would be asked to bring options for moving the City Hall matter forward.
City Attorney Baker told the council he had recently reached out again regarding an outstanding legal matter tied to the building but had not yet received a response.
“I spoke with the original buyer. I have not received an different answer. I will contact him and have a better answer.”
Ballew asked directly, “So how long are we going to let him say that?” prompting Baker to agree.
“That’s something we just need to sit down and talk about... it’s been more long enough,” he said.

Water Meters

From Front
ing he personally contacted roughly 20 companies.
Gaffney explained that when the treatment plant was built, opening in late 2021 or early 2022, site space constraints allowed for only a single lagoon, rather than the two, three, or four rotating holding ponds typically used so that sediment can be isolated in one pond and cleaned while the system continues using others.
“The lagoon that we were formerly told we would never have to clean out; well, it opened in late ‘21, early 2022, and here we are,” Gaffney said.
Councilman Marshall Norton pressed for next steps.
“We have no bids on [cleaning the] lagoon. What is your course of action?” he asked.

Gaffney said the city’s remaining options are to solicit a direct quote from a willing contractor on a short-term basis, or re-issue the public bid solicitation. Bill Moore confirmed the severity of the problem, noting the overflow is running “into the waterway” and that “something needs to be done.”
The council voted unanimously to re-issue the bid for a short, roughly seven-day turnaround window, while Gaffney simultaneously pursues direct outreach to a small number of contractors who might take on the job outside the formal bid process.
Separately, the council spent an extended portion of the meeting publicly opening and reading aloud a large stack of sealed bids submitted for the city’s long-planned water meter replacement project, covering both new meters and the labor to install them across

an estimated 1,850 to 1,900 accounts. Bids opened included:
• SPG, paired with Badger Meter hardware: \$771,704 for meters only (no installation included in that figure)
• Allegiant: \$234,718.19, described as covering meter replacement/installation rather than meters alone, the exact scope drew some confusion among council members as bids were read
• Ferguson Water Works, bidding Master Meter hardware, base package: \$568,914 for meters only
• Ferguson Water Works, an alternate Master Meter package: \$733,316.55
• Marcy Excavating (submitted by Sammy Marcy): installation labor only, estimated at 2,000 meters at \$50 per meter, totaling \$100,000
• Integrity Water and Energy, based in Indiana: installation labor only, based on roughly 1,850 meters, totaling \$110,316

• Consolidated Pipe and Supply: \$631,249.12 for meters only
• Metron: two tiered options — \$630,140 for meters bundled with 10 years of required cellular connectivity/software service (based on roughly 1,900 meters), or \$753,575 for a 20-year cellular service and software bundle; no installation included in either figure
• Flow Pros: installation labor only, based on roughly 1,850 meters, totaling \$146,025
Councilwoman Michelle Ballew asked where most of the bidding companies were based; Gaffney said the majority are Kentucky-based, with Integrity Water and Energy the lone out-of-state (Indiana) bidder.
No decision was made Monday. Mayor Gaffney recommended giving Public Works Supervisor Stacy Grow and council members time to fully review

the packets, which Gaffney said city clerk Teresa Cheek would scan and distribute the following day, with a decision expected at the September regular meeting.
Councilman Marshall Norton specifically asked whether that timeline could align with a special meeting the council is already planning to hold within the next two to three weeks on other business; Grow and other officials indicated that timeline should work.
Grow gave the council some practical context on the newer meter technology under consideration, noting that some systems bill on a “per meter” fee basis with built-in cellular connectivity rather than requiring separate reading equipment, and that some vendors handle the full administrative process, including managing customer name and address data via iPad-based software, as part of the installation service, minimizing

city staff workload during the changeover.
Gaffney said the city intends to pursue an Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) grant that could cover roughly half of the total project cost, supplementing that with a low-interest USDA-style loan, both carrying roughly 1% interest rates, for the remaining balance, which he said would be the most cost-effective path forward.
He noted that ARC funding decisions typically aren’t announced until early spring of the following year, and that the city needs a finalized vendor selection and pricing figure in hand before it can formally apply, though pricing can be updated periodically (roughly every 90 days) if needed during the application process.