



CITY OF BALTIMORE
MAYOR BRANDON M. SCOTT

TO	The Honorable President and Members of the Baltimore City Council
FROM	Berke Attila, DGS Director
DATE	April 8 th , 2024
SUBJECT	City Council Bill 23-0377

The Honorable President and
Members of the City Council
City Hall, Room 400

April 8th, 2024

Position: Favorable with Amendments

The Department of General Services (DGS) is in receipt of and reporting herein on City Council Bill 23-0377: Surveillance Technology – Procurement. DGS requests a favorable report pending the inclusion of the Law Department’s proposed amendments.

Legislation Background

This purpose of this resolution is to establish the Community Advisory Commission on Surveillance, requiring City Council approval for certain surveillance technology, and requiring City agencies to submit reports regarding procurement of surveillance technology.

Comments

In total, the City’s surplus schools account for roughly a third of DGS’ total facilities portfolio, and the management and security of these facilities is unique and separate from the rest of the portfolio.

By definition, surplus schools are no longer adequate for use as public education facilities, and many are in areas of declining population and enrollment. As the steward of these vacant facilities, DGS is compelled to keep them as well-maintained as we possibly can. This includes (but is not limited to) securing against vandalism and theft, addressing public safety issues (e.g. playgrounds), and ensuring that any trash or illegal dumping is quickly addressed.

Currently, our PMPS (Portfolio Management & Property Services) team is actively working to acquire AI surveillance cameras for surplus school locations. In locations with 24/7 monitoring, it requires around-the-clock human surveillance. If someone sees something, they notify mobile security and the police. In locations with basic cameras only, there is no interaction or alert to BPD; the cameras therefore cannot prevent any actions or breaches; it simply records them.

Artificial intelligence (AI) cameras, on the other hand, provide real-time surveillance that is actionable and can prevent break-ins or escalation in particular situations. Furthermore, having

AI stand in for human surveillance is a fraction of the cost to provide 24/7 human interaction. It is only when AI detects a threat that human intervention is involved. The AI cameras are also equipped with speakers that allow the human operators to speak to the perpetrators directly, which can further assist in deterring crime.

It should be noted DGS' planned use of AI equipment is only being considered for surplus/vacant schools, not operational facilities.

While we support the intent of this legislation and share a deep commitment to ensuring surveillance technology is appropriately deployed and used in an equitable manner, we do have concerns about extending the length of the procurement process to acquire new technology as referenced in the first reader version of this bill, which required City Council approval for the purchase of new surveillance technology. DGS supports this legislation with the incorporation of the Law Department's amendments.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact DGS' Legislative Liaison Annie Fullas at annie.fullas@baltimorecity.gov or at 667-208-0380.

Sincerely,



Berke Attila

Director, DGS