



SHEILA DIXON
Mayor

BALTIMORE POLICE DEPARTMENT



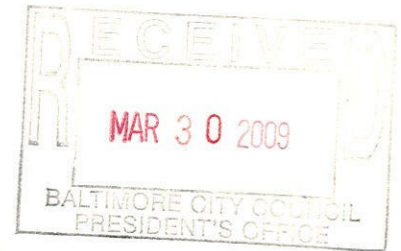
FREDERICK H. BEALEFELD, III
Police Commissioner

March 27, 2009

TO: The Honorable President and Members
of the Baltimore City Council
Room 400 City Hall
Attn. Karen Randle

FROM: James H. Green, Deputy Legal Counsel
Baltimore Police Department

RE: City Council Bill No. 09-107R-Performance Measures-"Blue Light
Cameras"-Crime Prevention



The Baltimore Police Department (BPD) has reviewed City Council Bill No. 09-107R Performance Measures-"Blue Light Cameras"-Crime Prevention which requests the Police Commissioner to report to the Council on the status of the CCTV camera program to include the phase out of the Portable Overt Digital Surveillance System (PODSS) cameras and replacement with closed circuit (CCTV) units and the measures in place for monitoring the cameras.

The Baltimore Crime Camera Program has continued to grow over the past several years and has shown to be a critical tool in preventing and solving crime. In 2005, the City made its initial investment in implementing camera technology for its use in combating crime. The Program grew quickly and substantially from a pilot to its current complement of cameras, 480 CCTV and 86 PODSS. Today, this Program is consolidated under the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice which provides for the budget and assists the BPD and MOIT in the coordination efforts and identifying new technologies. The BPD remains exclusively responsible for the crime-fighting operations, selecting the camera locations, and monitoring the cameras.

The City's camera investments have evolved over time and have changed with the advances in technology. While it was initially determined that the PODSS were an effective deterrent because of their design and that they could be moved, the overall cost (instillation and retrieval) and difficulty of monitoring them have begun to outweigh their overall effectiveness. They require line of sight monitoring where officers

Comments

must position themselves within camera range, often times negating the enforcement efforts. Additionally, their stand-alone hard drives require technicians to physically remove the hard drives from the system to determine whether the cameras have recorded the events. By contrast, the CCTV platform does not require line of sight monitoring and allows for the instant review of the footage to determine if the crime was captured by the system. Most importantly, the CCTV system allows for better active monitoring, which is the most critical component to the successful utilization of the cameras. Active monitoring allows for the proactive use of the cameras which has shown to provide the greatest impact on crime.

Efforts are underway to phase in the CCTV cameras in favor of the PODSS and to explore ways to possibly convert by wireless technology the current PODSS for more effective monitoring. Most recently, twenty-nine (29) CCTV cameras were installed in Southwest Baltimore. The CCTV cameras have a live feed and are monitored centrally at Citiwatch at the Atrium, police districts, and BPD headquarters. This type of technology and the ability to centrally monitor maximizes fiscal resources while producing consistent results. Last fall, the City began an expansion of the Atrium to accommodate additional camera stations and monitors. The expansion will allow for the overall centralized monitoring of the CCTV cameras which increases the ability to actively monitor the cameras around the clock. The BPD will still have the ability to monitor from the districts for planned initiatives and specialized enforcement, but the shift in resources will ensure better supervision and more consistent enforcement results. The video footage is not only used in routine policing, investigative, and prosecutorial functions, but has more recently been used in training and the review of apprehension and arrest tactics.

The BPD continues to better integrate this technology into its daily operations. Officers continue to adapt to the changes in enforcement and issues in the communities where they patrol. The BPD remains steadfast in its commitment to public safety in Baltimore and will continue to work with the community to enhance their understanding about the utilization of the camera systems. As we move forward, with improvements in technology and our ability to monitor the cameras, we hope to continue to instill confidence in community perception and deliver enhancements to overall public safety.

The BPD is pleased to provide to the Council an update of our progress and a guide to the future impact that this technology provides to our citizens. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this legislation.

cc: Frederick H. Bealefeld III, Police Commissioner, BPD
Angela Gibson, Mayor's Legislative Liaison