

# Flock

Carmel City Council 2.4.25

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Former ad hoc committee member

# ALPR definition

- A-L-P-R stands for AUTOMATED LICENSE PLATE READER
- *A-I License Plate Reader technology uses cameras and artificial intelligence to automatically capture, scan, read and store data. They recognize license plate numbers from vehicles as well as significant other information such as **time**, **location**, vehicle make, model, color, identifying characteristics (such as bumper stickers, auto damage etc.) along with the **license plate number**.*

# History of ALPR cameras in Carmel

- The original 6 license plate reader cameras at the perimeter entrances and exits to Carmel were authorized by the City Council in July 2018 for \$110,000 and installed in late 2019, placed high up on PG&E power poles.
- At the April 4, 2023 meeting, the City Council passed the Consent Agenda which had the City Administrator sign a 2-year agreement with the Flock company for 30 cameras at a cost of \$77,900 for year one and \$69,000 for the following year.
- Under that agreement, the city leased 24 automated license plate reader cameras from Flock in addition to 6 software overlays onto the existing city cameras at the perimeter.

# Formation of the ad hoc committee

- There had not been a public discussion of the cameras nor their locations.
- The cameras were installed throughout town in July 2023.
- Implementation of the program was halted and the ad hoc committee was formed shortly afterwards.
- The ad hoc committee held three public meetings in 2024: one in June and two in October

# What we learned: Flock has aggressive sales and marketing departments

- Flock began in 2017 and is now valued as a \$4 billion dollar start-up company with its cameras installed in over 4000 cities across 42 states
- Our city was upsold to sign up for 30 cameras for our one-square mile village and pressured to act quickly and sign the contract before the rates went up.
- Email between Police Chief Alan Ward and Flock representative Kyle Egan on December 8, 2022:

*“There is new discussion about not presenting options to council and entering into an agreement with an appropriation during our mid year budget review in February.” -Alan Ward)*

# We learned that this is not a good contract; it doesn't look out for Carmel, it looks out for Flock

- Just one example of that from the contract is that it states Flock gets final approval on locations of the cameras in Carmel.
- The two-year contract is set to automatically renew at the end of March 2025 and the city must give 30-days written notice prior for cancellation.
- Furthermore, if the city decides to cancel the contract altogether, Flock is responsible for removing all of their equipment on their dime, otherwise the city has to pay \$500 for the removal of each installation.

# We learned from the crime statistics the Police Chief provided us that Carmel is a safe, low crime community

- Carmel has about one vehicle theft a month. Flock camera systems are often installed in communities with large amounts of auto thefts to combat that issue, however they usually only result in stolen vehicle recoveries, not arrests and prosecutions of the auto thieves.
- Police departments (in Carmel and all across the state and the CHP=California Highway Patrol) already have a system network that ties them together, it reports stolen cars, “be-on- the-look-out alerts” for suspects and vehicles, etc. Carmel would continue to be a part of this system even if we are not a part of the Flock system.

As other cities have already found out we heard ways in which criminals are always one step ahead:

- Criminals have already found ways to outsmart the Flock license plate reader camera system: they may come in with a recently stolen car (not yet reported) then abandon it; they may come in with blackened plates, no plates or special paint over plates that blurs the image; they may abandon the car and have second getaway car waiting, etc.
- These Flock cameras create a false sense of security--basically only a dumb criminal would come to town in their own car to commit a crime.



# The community expressed deep concerns about privacy and protecting civil liberties

- This issue is about monitoring and surveillance; these license plate readers can eventually become facial recognition. They also can have audio capabilities to listen in to all sounds and voices.
- There is community concern about maintaining and protecting civil liberties now and into the future. We do not want to become a police state or a surveillance state.

We found that Flock has faced multiple lawsuits for Fourth Amendment violations of warrantless government surveillance.

- When we held the ad hoc committee meetings last fall, the Police Chief reassured the public that they could opt out of having their license plate in the Flock system if they chose to do so, however we have just learned from the chief in the staff report that Flock will no longer allow this.

The community also has concerns with how Flock operates its business including how the data is stored in the cloud.

- All information stored in the cloud can be accessed by the government (or hackers).
- Flock has not allowed an independent verification by a third party of how their company controls/secures personal data.

# The community wanted more information on other companies and their policies.

- We still have not compared or researched other companies, asked about pricing, data storage policies etc.



