From: Patrick Conant <patrick@prcapps.com>
Sent: 5/11/2015 7:35:02 PM
To: AshevilleNCCouncil@ashevillenc.gov
Cc:
Subject: APD Body Camera Resolution

Asheville City Council,

I would like to share my concerns regarding the Staff report on "Standardization purchase of body cameras through Fiscal Year 2019".

One of the stated benefits of these body cameras is "Strengthening agency accountability and transparency to the public."

With this stated goal, I would encourage City Council to take additional steps to establish clear guidelines around the retention and public access to this footage, while balancing privacy concerns.

Without these regulations, I believe the footage would be governed by NC House Bill 713 - which specifically states that body camera footage is to be released at the discretion of the law enforcement agency.

My concern is that, with only those guidelines in place, footage will be released only in cases where it benefits the law enforcement agency. It's hard to see why the APD would release critical footage to the public when the law clearly states that they are not required to do so.

Nationally, we still lack a consensus on the "best practices" regarding Body Cameras - however, I would really like to see Asheville set an example of transparency and accountability by being setting clear regulations that go beyond what state law requires. This must include external oversight or access by the general public, even in cases where the APD does not support the release of a specific piece of footage.

Although I don't have answers for all aspects of this complex issue, I do believe that more careful consideration is required. I strongly feel that authorization of funding for these cameras without regulations that ensure transparency and public access is a mistake and a significant waste of taxpayer funds.

Finally, I wanted to ask if public comment would be allowed on this resolution at tomorrow's City Council meeting.

Thank you,
Patrick Conant

http://www.ashevillenc.gov/Portals/0/city-documents/cityclerk/mayor_and_citycouncil/current%20agenda/New%20A%20-%20Body%20Cameras.pdf

http://www.ncleg.net/Sessions/2015/Bills/House/PDF/H713v2.pdf