



Bruce Harrell
Seattle City Councilmember

April 29, 2011

United States District Attorney Jenny A. Durkan
United States Attorney's Office
700 Stewart Street
Suite 5220
Seattle, WA 98101-1271

Re: Investigation of Seattle Police Department - City of Seattle

Dear U.S. Attorney Durkan (Jenny),

As the Department of Justice ("DOJ") continues their investigation of our Seattle Police Department, I wanted to make your office aware of a technology proposal that I believe would greatly enhance the issues of police accountability and public trust. I have attached a few documents that support my position.

In short, as demonstrated in Cincinnati, OH, Oakland, CA, San Jose, CA, and locally in 10 jurisdictions including Bainbridge Island, WA, and Lake Forest Park, WA, ***the use of body-mounted cameras*** have provided a feasible solution to establish better accountability and a restoration of public trust. According to Cincinnati's Police Chief Tom Streicher, the video evidence from a body mounted camera "is the real thing. It is the evidence. It is the incident as it is unfolding. . . . [w]hat better way of evaluating that officer's conduct by taking a look at what the officer is seeing." Similarly, throughout the country and in other parts of the world including Victoria, B.C., Plymouth, U.K., and Strathclyde, Scotland, police agencies are using this technology to gain public trust, obtain valuable evidence, and increase police accountability. As you know, in April of 2001, the Mayor of Cincinnati requested the DOJ to review their police department's use of force. A Memorandum of Agreement was reached between the City and the DOJ and one outcome was the use of body cameras. As a result, its Chief of Police became one of the biggest supporters of this technology. Similarly, our Mayor Mike McGinn and our Chief of Police John Diaz have publicly stated their support to trial this technology.

The point of this letter is to provide your office with a clear suggestion in how conduct and accountability have been improved in other jurisdictions.

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I should also note that because labor negotiations are underway between the City and the Seattle Police Department, with an expectation that they be complete in the near future, any recommendation or requirement from your office regarding body cameras should be made in the very near future. The use of body cameras is currently one of the items being discussed during negotiations.

I will make myself available to you or your staff, if you need further information regarding this technology. Again, I have provided some documents that may assist your Department with respect to this suggestion.

Sincerely,



Bruce A. Harrell

Seattle City Councilmember

cc: Mayor Mike McGinn (w/o attachments)
Councilmember Tim Burgess (w/o attachments)
Chief John Diaz (w/o attachments)

Attachments:

1. Seattle City Council News Release, June 30, 2010 (Technical feasibility of placing cameras on all Seattle Police officers)
2. Seattle City Council New Release, September 23, 2010 (Oakland City Council equips Police Officers with body-mounted cameras)
3. Seattle Times Editorial, Bruce Harrell, Smile, you're on Seattle Police Department camera (Originally published on Sunday, July 11, 2010)
4. CBS Evening News, Police Head Cameras Capture Action, Evidence, April 4, 2010
5. U.S. News & World Report, Police Mount Cameras on Officers' Heads, Dec. 29, 2009
6. Popular Mechanics, Taser Builds AXON Cop Headcams to Fend Off Abuse Allegations, October 1, 2009
7. Arizona Department of Public Safety, Freeze Frame, Photo: Officers in the San Jose, Calif., Police Department are testing the Axon head camera, which rests on the officer's ear and records the video and audio of interactions with the public.
8. BBC, Body cameras to help fight crime, April 16, 2009
9. Police One.Com News, San Jose Mercury News, San Jose police will be first to use ear-mounted cameras to record arrests (2009)