

Madalyn Letellier

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, June 12, 2026 8:45 PM
To: Public Comments
Cc: All City Council
Subject: Public Comment: Body-Worn Cameras — Public Input, Strong Policy, Deployment Without More Delay

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Dear City Councilors and Mayor,

I am submitting this public comment regarding Somerville's body-worn camera policy and ask that it be entered into the record.

Public Input, Yes. Strong Policy, Yes. Deployment Without More Delay, Yes.

I support public input. I support strong safeguards: no facial recognition, clear activation rules, retention schedules, audit review, meaningful consequences for misuse or failure to activate, and a fair and accessible process for requesting footage. These are not obstacles to implementation. They are the conditions that make implementation worth doing.

But public input should improve the policy. It should not become another reason to pause, restart, or indefinitely delay deployment.

Somerville has been discussing police body-worn cameras for many years. In 2021, the City announced a collective bargaining agreement with the Somerville Police Employees Association that allowed body-worn camera implementation for patrol officers and described cameras as a transparency and accountability tool. Five years later, the City should not restart the debate from zero. The question now should be how to strengthen the policy and move forward.

I know from direct experience that an objective, contemporaneous record of a police-public encounter is something no written report can substitute for. I also know that access to such a record depends entirely on the policy governing it. The camera creates the record. The policy determines whether residents can actually use it.

That is why safeguards matter — not as conditions for delay, but as the framework that makes body-worn cameras a genuine accountability tool rather than a gesture toward one. Activation rules with real consequences. Audit logs available for oversight, with public reporting where legally appropriate. A footage request process that works without requiring extraordinary effort from the resident making the request.

A public hearing should be a guardrail, not a stop sign.

If the Council believes the policy needs additional safeguards, those safeguards should be identified specifically, added promptly, and paired with a clear deployment timeline. Policy concerns should be resolved through specific language and specific deadlines, not through open-ended delay.

Somerville residents and Somerville police officers both deserve a reliable, objective record of police-public interactions. Delaying body-worn cameras does not protect accountability. Moving forward with strong rules does.

I respectfully urge the City Council to strengthen the policy where needed and continue toward deployment without further delay.

Public Input, Yes. Strong Policy, Yes. Deployment Without More Delay, Yes.

Respectfully,

Helen Levich
Somerville resident