

# MARSHALLTOWN

— I O W A —

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**TO:** Mayor Joel Greer, City Administrator Joe Gaa & Marshalltown City Council  
**FROM:** Michael W. Tupper, Chief of Police  
**DATE:** 18 October 2023  
**RE:** Flock Safety – Public Safety Camera Program Proposal

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**Strategic Plan:**

- Strategy 1: Expand and improve development in the community.
- Strategy 2: Enhance Marshalltown’s public image.
- Strategy 3: Continually improve and sustain the City’s infrastructure, organization, and services.
- Strategy 4: Partner with citizens, for-profit, non-profit, and others to improve quality of life.

**Plan Objective:**

Build upon the current public safety camera program by adding camera sites for the purpose of enhancing public safety and deterring crime.

**Recommendation:**

Authorize the police chief to enter into a two-year contract with Flock Safety to provide thirty-two cameras to be deployed throughout the City of Marshalltown.

**Budget Impact:**

The police department requests to spend no more than \$210,000.00 from Automated Traffic Enforcement revenues to fund this project for two years.

**Description/Background:**

Since 2017 the city has had a limited public safety camera program. This program was initially funded by the Marshall County Crime Stoppers organization. Crime Stoppers conducted fundraising efforts that subsequently led to public safety camera sites being located in Marshalltown and in rural Marshall County. In Marshalltown, the camera sites are:

1. Center & Anson
2. 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue & Anson
3. Parking lot behind Center Street Station bar

Since 2017, RACOM has installed cameras around the RACOM property the police department can access. The 13<sup>th</sup> Street District also funded a project in the 13<sup>th</sup> Street area. Although our current program is very limited, public safety cameras have assisted law enforcement in solving criminal offenses. The police

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department would like to expand this program. The department feels adding camera sites would enhance public safety and improve the overall effectiveness of this program.

In 2022, the Marshalltown City Council designated \$150,000.00 in local option sales tax funds to increase the number of public safety cameras in the system. The current public safety cameras are installed and maintained by RACOM. There is currently no maintenance contract with RACOM, which means there is no monitoring or automatic maintenance completed on the cameras or the system. Through no fault of anyone, there have been consistent outages and technical difficulties with accessing the cameras. When the Marshalltown Police Department began research on expanding the public safety camera program, it was learned that much of the current equipment would need upgraded. The current server is not capable of handling the number of cameras being discussed. There are additional infrastructure challenges with increasing the number of cameras throughout the city if we maintain the current limited system.

For over a year, the police department has worked with a committee to review the public safety camera needs in our community and to engage with potential vendors for this program. While conducting research on other communities, MPD learned that many Iowa agencies are utilizing License Plate Reader (LPR) technology. LPR technology is a camera system that is designed to capture vehicle movement throughout the city. The cameras have technology that can read license plates and identify vehicles based on characteristics.

Flock Safety, based out of Atlanta, Georgia, is a company that provides LPR technology to public and private entities throughout the country. Flock is currently being utilized by 13 Iowa law enforcement agencies. These agencies are West Des Moines PD, University of Iowa PD, Council Bluffs PD, Altoona PD, Clive PD, Ankeny PD, Urbandale PD, Waukee PD, Glenwood PD, Camanche PD, Clinton PD, Polk County Conservation, and Carter Lake PD. There are many additional commercial and private companies using Flock in Iowa.

The Marshalltown Police Department worked with Flock Safety to develop a deployment strategy for the City of Marshalltown. The deployment strategy is a two-part plan. The first part is to cover all main entry and exit points in the city. This will allow MPD to identify criminal activity as vehicles were entering Marshalltown. It will also allow MPD to identify anyone fleeing the city after committing a crime. The second part of the strategy is to cover main thoroughfares throughout the city. The emphasis being to cover the main roadways criminals would travel to get from north to south, east to west, and vice versa.

There are several benefits to joining the Flock network. Flock cameras are linked to NCIC and other databases that provide real-time alerts to law enforcement officers. Alerts will be sent instantaneously for stolen vehicles, stolen license plates, wanted people, amber alerts, and silver alerts. MPD can also create custom "hot-lists" to add alerts for vehicles associated with criminal activity. In addition to real-time alerts, MPD will have the ability to search Flock records to identify vehicles traveling to or from a crime. MPD will have the ability to partner with other Flock agencies or users to receive local hot-list alerts from cameras in the network. This creates an opportunity to partner with Marshalltown businesses who are interested in installing their own Flock cameras.

The contract with Flock includes all camera maintenance and upgrades at no additional fee. The Flock team monitors the cameras functionality and automatically provides maintenance when there are issues with a camera. There are installation fees associated with the first year of the contract. This includes a

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\$150.00 fee for any cameras installed on existing infrastructure and a \$650.00 fee when Flock has to provide a camera pole. Flock makes every effort to use existing infrastructure in all possible locations.

Flock takes proactive steps to reduce privacy concerns created by the data collection. All data collected by the Flock system is the sole property of the Marshalltown Police Department. Flock will not share or use data collected from Flock cameras without the express consent of the Marshalltown Police Department. All Flock data has a 30-day retention period. After 30 days, all unused data is permanently deleted. The Flock system has a full audit-trail for any system inquiries. System audits will be regularly conducted by the Marshalltown Police Department to ensure compliance with department policies. Data retrieved from Flock cameras is stored securely in AWS Cloud with end-to-end encryption of all data.

The Flock system has proven to be an effective tool for law enforcement agencies in Iowa and across the country. When conducting research on Flock, MPD has communicated with other agencies utilizing the Flock system. The feedback received from those agencies has been overwhelmingly positive. Agencies, including Altoona PD and Waukee PD, provided information about their Flock system. There were many examples of success stories from the Flock system.

The Marshalltown Police Department continues to face challenges with staffing. Using technology can improve the services and increase public safety for the community. The Flock system would act as a force multiplier to aid in reducing and solving crime.

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