

OFFERED BY COUNCILORS HENRY SANTANA, BENJAMIN J. WEBER,  
BREADON, DURKAN, FERNANDES ANDERSON, PEPÉN, AND LOUIJEUNE



## CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

### ORDER FOR A HEARING TO DISCUSS THE CITY OF BOSTON'S CURRENT INVESTMENTS IN AND POLICIES FOR USING GUNSHOT DETECTION TECHNOLOGY

**WHEREAS,** The City of Boston currently employs gunshot detection technology in some but not all neighborhoods of Boston as part of our strategy to locate and address gun violence; these systems are intended to detect and record sounds that may be a gunshot, which are reported in real-time to the Boston Police Department; *and,*

**WHEREAS,** In 2021, the Boston City Council unanimously passed an ordinance to increase accountability, transparency, and oversight of the City's use of surveillance technology and data, including requiring each City department to publish a *Surveillance Use Policy* for each surveillance technology in use or intended use, as well as an *Annual Surveillance Report* detailing actual usage of surveillance technology and data in the past year; this ordinance also tasks the City Council with holding a meeting by May 31 every year, beginning in 2024, to discuss these *Annual Surveillance Reports*, and to specifically determine "whether the benefits to the impacted City department(s) and the community of the Surveillance Technology outweigh the financial and operational costs and whether reasonable safeguards exist to address reasonable concerns regarding privacy, civil liberties, and civil rights impacted by the deployment of the Surveillance Technology;" *and,*

**WHEREAS,** The Boston Police Department has published a *Surveillance Use Policy* governing gunshot detection technology, and is required to publish an *Annual Surveillance Report* on the usage of that technology, which are both subject to the City Council oversight prescribed in the aforementioned ordinance; *and,*

**WHEREAS,** Boston has invested millions of dollars in gunshot detection technology, and has increased its spending on the technology in the past two years, making it worthy of particular attention for the City Council's oversight of our surveillance technology and data usage; the Council has not held a hearing substantially discussing the use of gunshot detection technology in Boston since 2022, and that hearing was not specifically focused on gunshot detection technology, as it also addressed a variety of other surveillance technologies; *and,*

**WHEREAS,** Other cities have been applying increased scrutiny in recent years to both the benefits and issues with gunshot detection technology, and have arrived at differing conclusions in how and whether to utilize the technology in their public safety measures; Boston should evaluate these findings alongside local data, to make our own effective public safety decisions about how this technology should best fit into our efforts to address gun violence, as well as to evaluate how the technology meets the evaluation criteria provided by the aforementioned City ordinance; ***NOW, THEREFORE BE IT***

**ORDERED:** That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council holds a hearing to discuss the City of Boston's current investments in and policies for using gunshot detection technology in our public safety measures. Representatives from the Boston Police Department and the City of Boston Surveillance Oversight Advisory Board will be invited, and members of the public are encouraged to attend and testify.

**Filed in Council:** March 27, 2024