

HUNTINGTON SUED FOLLOWING APPROVAL OF FLOCK SAFETY CONTRACT

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HUNTINGTON, W.Va. – A Huntington resident is suing the city following the approval of a \$2.1 million contract with Flock Safety, a prominent and controversial provider of surveillance technology.

The American Civil Liberties Union of West Virginia (ACLU-WV), the Haslam Law Firm, and Glazer, Saad, Anderson filed the lawsuit Tuesday in Cabell County Circuit Court on behalf of **Greg Jimison**.

If the Court allows the contract to proceed, Huntington would be blanketed in license plate recognition cameras with vehicle fingerprint technology, live video cameras, gunshot detection audio devices, and even automatically dispatched drones. City Council approved the contract in a 6-4 vote early Tuesday morning after one of the most contentious meetings in recent memory. More than 50 people spoke against the invasive technology, and protesters circled the block outside Huntington City Hall.

The lawsuit alleges that City Council neglected several key procedural matters in the process of awarding the contract. However, ACLU-WV Legal Director **Aubrey Sparks** said more legal action relating to the contract itself could follow.

“The legal issues with this contract are numerous, but we are starting with how it was awarded in the first place,” Sparks said. “Simply put, the city acted hastily and did not follow its own laws when approving this contract, so it should be considered null and void from the start.

“City code is clear that a private company cannot use property for commercial purposes,” she explained. “If the city wanted to grant Flock the right to use property belonging to the City of Huntington, there’s a proper process by which to do that. That process includes public notice, a public hearing, and other procedural safeguards to make sure that city property is used appropriately.”

None of these steps were followed, she said.

Flock Safety has been at the center of numerous controversies across the United States in recent years. Major cities like Los Angeles have allowed their Flock Safety contracts to expire, while numerous smaller municipalities have banned the technology.

ACLU-WV Executive Director **Eli Baumwell** said contracts like Huntington’s pose grave concerns about civil liberties.

“As other towns and cities are waking up to the egregious abuses of this technology, Huntington officials worked behind closed doors for months to thwart the will of their constituents and push this invasive surveillance on the city,” Baumwell said. “We will not stand by while the city runs roughshod over the will of the people and the privacy rights of every person in Huntington.”