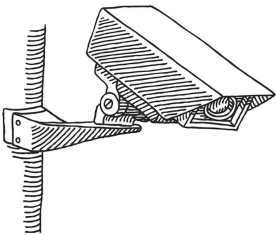


In 2024, the City of Asheville staff asked Congressman Chuck Edwards to request federal grants for a Real Time Intelligence Center (RTIC) for the APD. The Council was not informed at the time of the request. The Buncombe County Sheriff's Department already has a RTIC with Axon, implemented in 2022, that the Asheville Police are able to use.

Our understanding of this technology and its uses have changed greatly since 2024. ICE has ramped up to extreme levels, we have seen this tech used to target individuals getting reproductive care, and more journalism has come out exposing how this technology is abused and how safeguards do not work.

Surveillance Without Consent

HOW ASHEVILLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL IGNORED THE PEOPLE



CAMS (Communities Against Mass Surveillance)

Scan this QR code to see the footage from the vote during the May 12 City Council meeting:



We the People deserve to be heard, we deserve to have a local government that protects our civil liberties, and we deserve to have representatives that think about the far-reaching, negative impact this decision will have on all of us, and disproportionately on vulnerable communities.

The First Council Meeting

On April 14, 2026 the city council had a regular council meeting where they were set to vote on a resolution accepting the grant funding. They expecting this to be a non-controversial item that just needed a vote. However, over 40 people showed up to speak against this funding, causing the council to pull the vote from the agenda right before the start of the meeting. Many people still spoke during the general comment section expressing their concerns.

Resolution deleted from the April 14th Agenda:

Resolution authorizing the City Manager to apply for, accept, and sign all of the appropriate application and acceptance documents for the Community Project Funding Award allocated to the City of Asheville as secured through Congressman Chuck Edwards's Office and managed through the Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs, Byrne Justice Grants and adopted a budget amendment in the City's Special Revenue Fund in the amount of \$1,141,255.56.

• Deleted from Agenda - Not considered

What Happened Next

The City council and APD, surprised by the amount of public dissent, took these steps:

The APD invited City Council to tour the Buncombe County RTIC and hear their case on why they needed this system

April 28th - The City Council held a Policy and Finance Committee meeting

At the April 28th meeting, Interim Police Chief Stepp along with spokespersons from Flock and Axon presented their case again

No security or technology experts who do not financially benefit were invited to share alternative perspectives

The Vote

None of people's concerns mattered. When 1 hour was up, the mayor ended open comment, when she could have extended it to let everyone speak. The people there were outraged, causing an uproar, demanding to be heard. In the midst of this uproar, the Mayor called the vote. The vote passed 6-1, with Kim Roney being the dissenting vote. During every other part of the agenda there was discussion back and forth; there was none here. After the vote, Councilwoman Kim Roney gave her presentation of comments from the ACLU and EFF that showed great concern over accepting this contract. She had shared the slide deck prior to the meeting.

The public was not listened to, differing opinions and experts, at least publicly, were not listened to. It seems apparent that their minds were made up before they even entered the chambers.

The Second Council Meeting

On May 12, 2026, City Council met for the budget meeting which included 2 votes on the agenda. 1. To accept the funding for the RTIC. 2. To allow the City Manager to negotiate the Axon contract without another vote from the council. The item was put at the end of the agenda, with people waiting until 10:30 to even begin to speak.

So many people showed up that many who showed up to speak had to wait outside until other agenda items were covered and folks cleared out.

Over 40 people signed up to speak, they were given only 2 minutes for individuals with 10 for those that had 3 individuals that ceded their time. Public comments were only allowed for an hour, leaving 21 people without a chance to speak, when the mayor could have extended the time to let everyone speak.

Things People brought up in Open Comment

- One person brought up Axon's predatory pricing model using their slide decks from Axon's own site
- One individual who hacks as a career talked about the way that the metadata from this technology will be used to create profiles of individuals
- A Harvard Law graduate who has worked with the kinds of contracts Axon uses for their technology covered the ways that a \$32 billion dollar company like Axon cannot be out-lawyered and how the contract can be changed whenever they want to.
- Many others came forward with different arguments and viewpoints, including:
- A concern with the way this decision was being pushed through very quickly without community oversight
- The use of data by bad actors such as the federal government
- Accepting the funding without having seen a final contract

For more info, see "Asheville City Council's public comment process vexes some constituents", Mountain Xpress, July 16, 2026