

Village of Scarsdale Police Department

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Dear Scarsdale Residents,

Over the past few weeks, some residents have raised questions about the Scarsdale Police Department's selection of new Law Enforcement technology tools used to combat crime and strengthen public safety. I want to take this opportunity to speak directly to the community about why we are pursuing these tools, what they are designed to do, and how the Scarsdale Police Department will ensure they are implemented responsibly and transparently.

The Police Department's investigation into past criminal activity has confirmed that Scarsdale's location and reputation make it an ongoing target for organized criminal groups intent on committing property crimes, auto theft, and other offenses against our residents. During my 19 years with the Scarsdale Police Department, it has become clear that in order to stay ahead of these evolving threats, we need more advanced, real-time tools that help us respond faster and more effectively.

For nearly two decades, our department has embraced technology as part of our mission to keep residents safe. We have used vehicle-mounted and fixed license plate readers (LPRs), live-view cameras, officer-worn body cameras, patrol dash cams, and drone technology during emergency responses. These tools have served us well, but like any system they have limitations.

In April 2023, a stolen vehicle carrying multiple firearms crashed on the Hutchinson River Parkway. The suspect fled on foot and remained at large in our Village for several hours. That incident made it clear that the Police Department needed to move quickly to upgrade the technology available to our officers. Since then, there have been several more incidents including very recently, a hit-and-run where a suspect broke into a resident's home and barricaded himself inside. Real-time data and modern tools could have made a measurable difference in safety and response.

Prior to the Police Department requesting authorization from the Village Board of Trustees for the purchase of this Law Enforcement technology, as part of the Department's due diligence, we consulted with colleagues across Westchester County, New York State, and nationally, including trusted contacts from the FBI National Academy. Many of these departments had already implemented fixed camera systems, updated LPRs, and drone-as-first-responder (DFR) programs with strong



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results. Scarsdale is not alone in its use of this technology. Local departments in Eastchester, Bronxville, Tuckahoe, New Rochelle, White Plains, and Greenburgh have adopted similar tools and continue to expand their use.

To be clear, this is not a mass surveillance system for Scarsdale. It is a public safety tool designed to help deter and solve crime, deliver real-time information directly to our patrol vehicles and dispatch center, and reduce our reliance on outside agencies for critical, time-sensitive data. It will be used selectively, responsibly, and solely for legitimate law enforcement and emergency response purposes.

To clarify how these technologies work:

- **License Plate Readers (LPRs)** scan and compare plate numbers against databases of stolen vehicles, wanted suspects, or individuals involved in criminal activity. They help officers establish timelines, identify vehicle movements, and support cases involving burglaries, abductions, and more.
- **Live-view cameras** complement LPRs by monitoring public areas adjacent to roadways—parks, trails, and open spaces—helping officers assess which direction a suspect may have gone.
- **Drones as First Responders (DFRs)** launch automatically in response to certain emergency calls, giving our team immediate, real-time visuals. They are operated by our police officers and can often arrive on scene faster than officers on foot or in vehicles, and they are valuable for storm assessments, fires, or large-scale events.

These tools are not experimental; they are in use by thousands of communities across the country, including many right here in Westchester.

As we explored our options, we met with Senator Kirsten Gillibrand’s office to pursue federal grant opportunities that could offset the cost of this program. Her team was supportive and directed us to the funding program to which the Village has since applied.

We also evaluated several vendors including Flock, Motorola, Midl, and Hanwha after seeing demonstrations at a security conference and inviting each to present their solutions. A fifth vendor, Verkada, did not respond. After careful review, we selected Flock for several key reasons:

- The system delivers real-time data directly to our patrol vehicles and dispatch center.
- Our Department controls access, use, and data-sharing- limited to active cases and authorized personnel.
- It includes ongoing hardware and software upgrades at no additional cost.
- The contract includes a six-month trial period which allows us to cancel for any reason.
- If we do not receive grant funding, the Village is under no obligation to continue with this program.
- All data is automatically deleted on a rolling basis after 30 days.



- The system includes several built-in accountability features, including public portals for the LPR and DFR systems, to ensure appropriate usage and transparency.
- It is used in almost 200 municipalities and police departments in the NY Metropolitan area. These include New Canaan, Darien, Westport, Wilton, and Ridgefield in CT, and East Hampton, Garden City, Brookville, Old Westbury, and Sag Harbor in NY.

I want to be clear: the Scarsdale Police Department has been nationally accredited through CALEA for over 30 years. We are proud of our policies, training, and oversight—particularly when it comes to protecting personal privacy and civil rights. This program will be no exception.

Our officers are grateful for the community’s support in acquiring this technology. We are committed to using it responsibly and transparently. The Police Department is currently developing a policy, which will be reviewed with the Board of Trustees and shared with the public. In preparing this policy, the Police Department and Board of Trustees are committed to ensuring that we will:

- Use this technology only for legitimate public safety purposes.
- Never use it to monitor anyone based on race, religion, gender, political affiliation, or any protected class.
- Enforce strict access controls. Every use will be logged and reviewed.
- Maintain clear data retention policies—automatic deletion after 30 days.
- Follow a “data minimization” model, collecting only what’s necessary.
- Conduct regular audits and comply with CALEA best practices.

My first responsibility as Chief of Police is to safeguard the residents of Scarsdale. This is not about chasing the newest trend or expanding surveillance. This is about giving our officers better tools to prevent crime, protect the public, and respond to emergencies with speed, efficacy, and accuracy. These technologies represent a natural and necessary evolution in our work.

I welcome continued conversation with the community as we move forward with this initiative. I ask for your support as our department continues to serve and protect with integrity, professionalism, and care.

Respectfully,



Steven DelBene
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