

David A. Olson
City Clerk
City of Newton
City Hall
1000 Commonwealth Ave.
Newton Centre, MA 02459

October 13, 2010

Re: Public Records Request

Dear Mr. Olson,

This letter constitutes a request under the Public Records Law, Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 66, §10 for documents made or received by the Newton Public Schools. The request seeks documents regarding surveillance cameras installed in the schools and police access to those cameras.

As a civil rights organization, the ACLU of Massachusetts has for some years been concerned, generally, about the proliferation of surveillance cameras in all facets of our lives, including streets, stores, schools and transportation. In order to fully understand the scope of the surveillance systems in use, we have made numerous requests for public records to cities, towns, and other public entities in Massachusetts.

It is our understanding that at least two of the public schools in Newton are outfitted with surveillance cameras.¹ News reports suggest that the technology is meant to apprehend people who are stealing or vandalizing others' property, as well as to keep students safe in the event of an emergency.

I understand and appreciate the school's efforts to ensure the safety of the children in its care. Our goal is to educate the public about how the cameras are currently being used, and their potential for different kinds of uses, in order to ensure an informed discussion of these issues. For that reason we are seeking the following records.

I would be happy to discuss this request with you in order to clarify any of the issues and to modify the request, if necessary.

¹ Rathi, Rachana, "Quiet installation of cameras in Newton schools sparks debate: Right to privacy, security collide," The Boston Globe, January 15, 2008. Available at http://www.boston.com/news/education/k_12/articles/2008/01/15/quiet_installation_of_cameras_in_newton_schools_sparks_debate/

Specific Documents Requested:

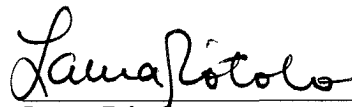
1. Any records that provide notice to students, parents, staff and/or teachers that surveillance cameras are in use in the Newton schools. This includes documents such as letters, posted signs, notices or billboards.
2. Any contracts between any of the Newton schools and any company providing surveillance equipment, consulting related to camera surveillance, and/or installation or maintenance of camera equipment.
3. Any contracts between any of the Newton schools and the federal Department of Homeland Security regarding cameras.
4. Any policies, procedures, rules and training materials regarding the use of cameras, the retention and deletion of data and the security of data.
5. Any contracts, agreements or memoranda of understanding between any of the Newton schools and any law enforcement agency regarding the use of or access to surveillance cameras installed in the schools.
6. Any documents showing the location of cameras inside any and all of the schools in Newton.

Because this request involves a matter of public concern and because it is made on behalf of a nonprofit organization, I ask that you waive any copying costs pursuant to 950 C.M.R. § 32.06(5).

Should you determine that some portion of the documents requested are exempt from disclosure, please release any reasonably segregable portions that are not exempt. In addition, please note the applicable statutory exemption and explain why it applies to the redacted portions. As you know, a custodian of public records shall comply with a request within ten days after receipt.

Thank you for your assistance. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Laura Rótolo
ACLUM Staff Attorney

cc: Daniel M. Funk, City Solicitor