



Andre Ravenelle
Superintendent
Fitchburg Public Schools
376 South Street
Fitchburg, MA 01420

October 4, 2010

Re: Public Records Request

Dear Superintendent Ravelle,

This letter constitutes a request under the Public Records Law, Mass. Gen. Laws ch. 66, §10 for documents made or received by the Fitchburg 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 some of the schools in Fitchburg are outfitted with surveillance cameras. It was also reported in the news last year that the Fitchburg High School had received technology from a company named Emergency Surveillance Systems that would allow police to access the surveillance cameras remotely. The reporting suggested that the technology was meant to be used in the case of a Columbine-like situation or other emergency where police would be involved.

I understand and appreciate the school's efforts to ensure the safety of the children in its care. Our goal is simply 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.

Specific Documents Requested:


1. Any records that provide notice to students, parents, staff and/or teachers that surveillance cameras are in use in the Fitchburg schools. This includes documents such as letters, posted signs, notices or billboards.
2. Any contracts between any of the Fitchburg schools and Emergency Surveillance Systems regarding cameras.
3. Any contracts between any of the Fitchburg 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 Fitchburg 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 Fitchburg.

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: Michael Ciota, Fitchburg City Solicitor