CITY OF SAN DIEGO

COUNCILMEMBER STEPHEN WHITBURN

THIRD DISTRICT

PRESS RELEASE

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Councilmember Stephen Whitburn Calls for San Diego to Turn Off Flock Cameras

A past supporter of the cameras, he cites growing fear in many communities that the devices could be used for President Trump's expanded ICE operations in San Diego

SAN DIEGO — San Diego City Councilmember Stephen Whitburn today called for the city to remove its Flock cameras, saying they are causing too much fear in local communities.

Whitburn is a member of the city council's Public Safety Committee, and his district, which includes Balboa Park and its surrounding neighborhoods, has the highest density of Flock automated license plate reader cameras (ALPRs). He previously supported the cameras.

"Until now, I have voted in favor of the cameras as a matter of public safety," Whitburn said. "They have helped solve crimes, and I believe our police department uses them responsibly."

However, Whitburn said he has heard from many San Diegans who are afraid the ALPRs will be misused by the federal government.

“The Trump Administration and ICE and their un-American, anti-immigrant brutality have created a police state in many of our communities,” Whitburn said. “Many people worry Flock cameras are being used in that crackdown.”

He said law-abiding San Diegans are living in fear that that the city’s Flock cameras will be used against them.

“Families are afraid of being separated. Workers are afraid of being targeted on their way to work. Parents are afraid of what could happen when they take their children to school,” Whitburn said. “American citizens have been detained. These are our neighbors, and they deserve to feel safe in their own city.”

He said last week’s report that ICE is expanding its operation in San Diego and targeting schools and construction sites heightens the fear and the urgency to turn off the Flock cameras, which are contributing to that fear.

“I want public safety tools that help San Diegans feel safe,” Whitburn said. “If Flock cameras are causing many San Diegans to feel unsafe, then they have lost effectiveness as a public safety tool.”

He said residents have told him what would make them feel safer is faster response times when they call the police department for help.

“When someone calls for assistance, they don’t need a Flock camera; they need help to be on the way quickly,” Whitburn said. “Let’s turn off the cameras and cancel the Flock contract. Let’s use the savings to speed up response times when people call for help.”

The city council has been divided on the use of Flock ALPRs in previous votes. Whitburn said with his decision to no longer support their use, he does not believe there will be enough support to operate them for much longer.

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