

# **CORRESPONDENCE**

**(Public Safety  
Committee Meeting –  
September 23, 2021)**

**Flores, Valerie**

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**From:** Derek Schulte  
**Sent:** Tuesday, September 21, 2021 10:31 PM  
**To:** Flores, Valerie; Perez, John Eduardo  
**Subject:** Comment to Agenda Item 1 for Public Safety Committee (ShotSpotter)  
**Attachments:** 20210921 Shotspotter.pdf

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Secretary Flores:  
cc: Chief Perez

I have attached a letter regarding Agenda Item 1 for the Public Safety Committee's Special Meeting on Thursday, 23 September 2021, to encourage contracting with ShotSpotter and also ask the Police Department to respond to concerns regarding ShotSpotter's gunfire detection, location, and analysis system.

Please provide this letter to the Committee prior to the meeting.

Regards,  
--Derek Schulte

Derek Schulte

Pasadena, CA 91104

21 September 2021

City of Pasadena Public Safety Committee  
c/o Valerie Flores, Recording Secretary  
via email: vflores@cityofpasadena.net

Re: Agenda Item 1, Special Meeting Agenda, Public Safety Committee, 23 September 2021

Members of the Committee:

Please authorize contracting with ShotSpotter for subscription to and use of their gunfire detection, analysis, and alert system. As a resident, I welcome their technology to reduce gun violence and provide objective gunfire data to our city.

I have reviewed the system's cost, technical implementation, privacy concerns, efficacy, and reported weaknesses and I have concluded that the system has the capability to provide unique, high-value, and actionable data to our city.

Having reviewed the background information provided by our Police Department and as published in this meeting's agenda, I ask that the Department publicly respond to the following.

1. In cities such as Washington D.C., ShotSpotter technology has shown that only approximately 1 in 8 gunfire events are reported via conventional (non-ShotSpotter) methods.<sup>1</sup> What is Pasadena's plan for handling a potential increase in the number of gunfire events within monitored areas?
2. The City of Chicago's Office of Inspector General released a report on 24 August 2021 that states "OIG concluded from its analysis that CPD responses to ShotSpotter alerts can seldom be shown to lead to investigatory stops which might have investigative value and rarely produce evidence of a gun-related crime."<sup>2</sup> If a narrow criteria such as this is used to assess ShotSpotter's utility within Pasadena, misguided conclusions may arise, for example, that the system is unreliable, a distraction, or that it falsely informs officers to respond under more dangerous pretenses. If ShotSpotter is contracted, how does the Department intend to assess the ongoing performance and utility of the ShotSpotter system?

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<sup>1</sup> Carr, Jillian B., and Doleac, Jennifer L., The geography, incidence, and underreporting of gun violence: new evidence using ShotSpotter data. April 2016, Brookings Institute. 1 in 8 may be an overestimate: the New York Times quoted Police Commissioner William Bratton on 16 March 2015 with "On average, 75 percent of shots fired called in by ShotSpotter are never called into 911."

<sup>2</sup> City of Chicago, Office of Inspector General. The Chicago Police Department's Use of ShotSpotter Technology. 24 August 2021.

3. The Chicago OIG report cited above also states "OIG identified evidence that the introduction of ShotSpotter technology in Chicago has changed the way some CPD members perceive and interact with individuals present in areas where ShotSpotter alerts are frequent." This statement can be easily construed to support claims of biased policing. How does the Department intend to mitigate the potential for unfair policing as a result of receiving this new data?
4. Finally, technologies such as the ShotSpotter's have the potential to violate individual privacy within our community. While I personally understand and assess ShotSpotter's data collection and analysis to be so insignificant as to be irrelevant, I would like the Department to publicly acknowledge the general privacy concerns inherent with using such a system and reiterate a commitment to protecting our privacy rights such as those in the First, Fourth, and Fourteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution (assembly, search and seizure, family, etc.).

I have also requested a speaker card for public comment during the Special Meeting in order to briefly reiterate my personal desire for the City to contract with ShotSpotter: my above concerns do not rise to a such a level that I would delay or advise against said contract.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Derek Schulte", with a stylized, cursive script.

Derek Schulte  
Resident, Pasadena

CC: John Perez, Pasadena Chief of Police

**Flores, Valerie**

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**Subject:** FW: Shot Spotter Technology

-----Original Message-----

From: David Kalbeitzer

Sent: Thursday, September 23, 2021 12:09 AM

To: Mermell, Steve

Subject: Shot Spotter Technology

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Hi Steve,

It was a pleasure to meet you this evening. I wanted to thank you for coming out to discuss the recent shooting on our street and sharing that the city is actively looking into technology that would allow a better triangulation and tracking of shots if a gun was fired in a neighborhood. This would enable a quicker response from the police force and a more accurate location of where the event occurred.

I would highly support the city's interest in exploring and investing in this technology for our neighborhoods to remain safe. If you could include this note of approval from a District 5 Pasadena home owner in the meeting tomorrow - I would appreciate it.

We appreciated seeing you, Jess, Margo, and both Officers in person as an effort to listen, inform, and help keep the area safe. Please let us know if there are other measures including street cameras that could improve the safety of the community that you are looking into.

Thank you,  
David Kalbeitzer

Pasadena CA

**Flores, Valerie**

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**From:** Mohammad Tajsar  
**Sent:** Thursday, September 23, 2021 10:46 AM  
**To:** Flores, Valerie; cityclerk  
**Cc:** Perez, John Eduardo; Mermell, Steve  
**Subject:** Pasadena PD's proposed acquisition of ShotSpotter technology  
**Attachments:** 2021 09 23 Community Ltr opposing ShotSpotter.pdf

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Dear Ms. Flores,

Please find attached and copied below a letter from nine organizations urging the Public Safety Committee members to oppose the proposed acquisition of ShotSpotter technology, scheduled to be discussed at today's Special Meeting. Please make sure the attached letter is forwarded to the Committee and entered into the record.

We request, for the reasons set forth in the letter, that the Committee not advance this proposed acquisition.

Thank you,  
Mohammad Tajsar  
Resident, District 1  
ACLU of Southern California

--

Mayor Victor M. Gordo  
Councilmember Tyron Hampton  
Councilmember John J. Kennedy  
Councilmember Steve Madison  
c/o Mark Jomsky  
City Clerk  
Pasadena City Hall  
100 North Garfield Ave.  
Pasadena, CA 91101

September 23, 2021

**RE: PASADENA POLICE DEPARTMENT'S PROPOSED ACQUISITION OF  
SHOTSPOTTER TECHNOLOGY**

Dear Public Safety Committee members,

We the undersigned urge you to vote against the Pasadena Police Department's proposed \$640,000 purchase of a subscription for ShotSpotter, a gunfire detection surveillance technology, and to instead commit to invest public funds in life-affirming social and public services for the residents of this community.<sup>1</sup> Surveillance technology like ShotSpotter is harmful to overpoliced communities in the City, widely recognized as unreliable and inaccurate, and a gross misallocation of scarce public funds at a time of great need in our neighborhoods.

First, numerous analyses and investigations have cast serious doubt about the efficacy of ShotSpotter's technology and the Department's claims about its purported benefit to public safety. Just last month, a comprehensive analysis conducted by the City of Chicago's Inspector General concluded that the Chicago Police Department's extensive use of ShotSpotter "rarely produce[d] documented evidence of a gun-related crime, investigatory stop, or recovery of a firearm," and that it instead it causes officers to "rely[] on ShotSpotter results in the aggregate to provide an additional rationale to initiate stop or to conduct a pat down once a stop has been initiated."<sup>2</sup> Another analysis conducted in St. Louis found that the technology "has little deterrent impact on gun-related violent crime in St. Louis" and did "not provide consistent reductions in police response time, nor aid substantially in producing actionable results."<sup>3</sup> We have no reason to expect different results here in Pasadena.

Second, the deployment of this questionable technology has led to very real harms for communities across the country, harms which we are likely to face should the Department successfully acquire this technology. Instead of reducing crime in Chicago, for instance, ShotSpotter produced thousands of dead ends

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<sup>1</sup> September 23, 2021 Agenda, Pasadena Public Safety Committee, <https://cityofpasadena.net/commissions/wp-content/uploads/sites/31/2021-09-23-Special-Public-Safety-Committee-Meeting-Agenda-1.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> City of Chicago Office of Inspector General, *The Chicago Police Department's Use of ShotSpotter Technology* (Aug. 24, 2021), <https://igchicago.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Chicago-Police-Departments-Use-of-ShotSpotter-Technology.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Dennis Mares and Emily Blackburn, *Acoustic Gunshot Detection Systems: A quasi-experimental evaluation in St. Louis, MO*, *Journal of Experimental Criminology* (forthcoming) (June 2021), [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/337869476\\_Acoustic\\_Gunshot\\_Detection\\_Systems\\_A\\_quasi-experimental\\_evaluation\\_in\\_St\\_Louis\\_MO](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/337869476_Acoustic_Gunshot_Detection_Systems_A_quasi-experimental_evaluation_in_St_Louis_MO).

for officers, created a false justification for officers to conduct threatening and illegitimate detentions and arrests, and harmed—rather than improved—the safety of vulnerable people in the city. The company itself has also been found to alter the information it collects by “frequently modify[ng] alerts at the request of police departments—some of which appear to be grasping for evidence that supports their narrative of events.”<sup>4</sup>

Third, we can expect the acquisition of this technology to harm the most vulnerable populations in this city who have been overpoliced, oversurveilled, and undervalued in recent years. The Department’s report to this Committee says that it intends to deploy ShotSpotter sensors in areas its own analysis show are “most impacted by gun related crimes.” Roughly translated, the Department intends to use this technology to further increase its presence and footprint in Black and brown communities in Pasadena, including in our City’s Northwest. The inevitable result will be further frisks, contacts, detentions, seizures, and arrests—none of which are likely to deter violence, and all of which are likely to make residents feel *less* safe and *less* welcome in their communities.<sup>5</sup> Coming on the heels of the mass public uprisings against police violence and abuse in this country, and the urgency with which local residents within this City have demanded change, the acquisition of technologies like ShotSpotter will retard, rather than advance, the pursuit of safety, security, and justice in Pasadena.

It is little wonder, then, that cities across the country that previously used ShotSpotter—San Antonio, Charlotte, and Troy, to name a few—dumped it after constant false alarms and lack of perceptible impact on public safety. We therefore find it deeply concerning to see the Pasadena Police Department seek \$640,000 for a “trial” of this troubling technology.

For the reasons set forth above, we ask that this Committee reject this acquisition.

Signed,

ACLU of Southern California  
ACLU Pasadena/Foothill Chapter  
Coalition for Increased Civilian Oversight of Pasadena Police  
Heavenly Hughes, Co-founder and E.D. of My TRIBE Rise  
Indivisible  
Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance of Greater Pasadena  
NAACP Pasadena Chapter  
Pasadenans Organizing for Progress  
Pasadena Privacy for All

CC: John Perez, Steve Mermell

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<sup>4</sup> Todd Feather, *Police are Telling ShotSpotter to Alter Evidence From Gunshot-Detecting AI*, VICE (July 26, 2021), <https://www.vice.com/en/article/qj8xbq/police-are-telling-shotspotter-to-alter-evidence-from-gunshot-detecting-ai>.

<sup>5</sup> For an example of research demonstrating the harms of increased, proactive police contact with youth of color, see, e.g., Juan Del Toro et al., *The criminogenic and psychological effects of police stops on adolescent black and Latino boys*, PNAS Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America, 116(17), 8261–8268, <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1808976116> (noting that “[p]olice stops predict decrements in adolescents’ psychological well-being and may unintentionally increase their engagement in criminal behavior”).



## Flores, Valerie

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**From:** Yadi  
**Sent:** Thursday, September 23, 2021 12:01 PM  
**To:** PublicComment-AutoResponse; Flores, Valerie  
**Subject:** Public Comment - Public Safety Committee meeting 9/23/2021

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Gun violence is harmful and requires multi-faceted solutions. Shotspotter, which is expensive, unreliable, and a drain on City resources is not one of them.

In 2000, the City Manager and Pasadena Police reported to the Public Safety Committee that answering false alarms were costly and problematic, stating:

*[Quote] "Unnecessary calls for service due to false burglar alarms have grown into a tremendous problem...alarms serve as useful deterrents to crime, however, the amount of resources the Pasadena Police Department spends responding to false alarm calls every year has become intolerable. The department has struggled with the problem of false alarms for the past several years as false alarm calls are draining patrol resources and often create a significant backlog of calls.*

*Police resources are not available to address other needs. City government must balance citizen welfare with consumption of municipal resources.*

*Fines and permits had no significant effect on the overall reduction of alarms. Nearly all alarm activations were false." [End quote]*

Costing Pasadena taxpayers \$200,000 yearly.

Based on PPD stats of 300 gunfire calls in the last two years plus Shotspotter's claim that "88% of gunshots go unreported" means that Pasadena will now get about 8 gunshot alerts per day - at cost of about \$27 per call - translating to \$80,000 per year or \$240,000 for the life of this pilot (on the conservative side), on top of the \$640,000. And we can expect a high false alarm rate. And unlike false burglar or fire alarms fines, the City won't have a mechanism to recoup these costs.

Expanding the budget during a pandemic that starved the City's revenue streams and severely depleted our reserves isn't a good use of valuable PPD and City resources. Instead, conduct a proper impact and feasibility study to eliminate gun violence in Pasadena.

### Redwood City and DOJ

DOJ and Redwood City conducted a field evaluation of ShotSpotter that included a survey of 27 police officers on the effectiveness of Shotspotter finding that:

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- 100% said the Shotspotter system will not increase the likelihood that the victim of a shooting will survive.

- 
- 
- 
- 92% said the ShotSpotter system will not increase the likelihood someone will be arrested.
- 
- 
- 
- 88% said the ShotSpotter system will not make them more effective when handling shots fired incidents.
- 

## St. Louis

PoliceChief Magazine reported on a study of gunshot detection tech in St. Louis indicating that:

*"Results show that [Acoustic Gunshot Detection Systems] AGDS simply seem to replace traditional calls for service and do so less efficiently and at a greater monetary cost to departments. Given the tepid results in guiding police to the scenes of crime and given the hidden costs of these systems ...AGDS might not be well-suited for the audience the technology is marketed toward. High-volume agencies will likely experience substantial increases in their call volumes with remarkably little to show for it, at a cost that might have taxpayers questioning the logic behind the expense."*

It is time to put in place due diligence protocols and processes for the acquisition of police equipment that evaluates efficacy, feasibility, and impact so City Council can make informed decisions with community stakeholder engagement.

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Name: Yadi Younse  
 City: Pasadena  
 State: CA  
 ZIP: District 4

Meeting Date: September 23, 2021  
 Agenda Item: 1. Shotspotter Contract

To be read aloud: Yes

## ADDENDUM

### Re: Shotspotter Contract: Addendum to Public Comment (Yadi Younse)

Hi,

Please find listed below the documents which I referenced in my public comment.

Source	Reference in public comment
Field Evaluation of the ShotSpotter Gunshot Location System: Final Report on the Redwood City Field Trial; US Department of Justice; January 2000  <a href="https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/180112.pdf">https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/180112.pdf</a>	Police survey on effectiveness of Shotspotter
The Hidden Costs of Police Technology: Evaluating Acoustic Gunshot Detection Systems; PoliceChief Magazine  <a href="https://www.policechiefmagazine.org/the-hidden-costs-of-police-technology/">https://www.policechiefmagazine.org/the-hidden-costs-of-police-technology/</a>	Study on effectiveness of Shotspotter and the impact on Police and City resources
List of providers of gunshot detection technology	See second page below
Undetected Gunshots; Shotspotter  <a href="https://www.shotspotter.com/law-enforcement/gunshot-detection/">https://www.shotspotter.com/law-enforcement/gunshot-detection/</a>	Shotspotter claim that 88% of gunshots go undetected
City of Pasadena False Alarms Report to City Council; Public Safety Committee; December 2002  <a href="https://ww2.cityofpasadena.net/councilagendas/2002%20agendas/Dec_16_02/5e1.pdf">https://ww2.cityofpasadena.net/councilagendas/2002%20agendas/Dec_16_02/5e1.pdf</a>	Pasadena Police and City statement on negative impact of false alarms  Chart with figures and financial impact of answering false alarm calls, including cost of police resources
The Good, The Bad, The Ugly in Shotspotter; SeekingAlpha; June 2019  <a href="https://seekingalpha.com/article/4268995-good-bad-and-ugly-in-shotspotter">https://seekingalpha.com/article/4268995-good-bad-and-ugly-in-shotspotter</a>	List with the percentage of false alarms of gunshots by City
Shotspotter SEC filing  <a href="https://www.sec.gov/Archives/edgar/data/1351636/000104746917003746/a2232322zs-1a.htm">https://www.sec.gov/Archives/edgar/data/1351636/000104746917003746/a2232322zs-1a.htm</a>	Shotspotter states a bulk of their contracts are 1 year in length

## ADDENDUM

Gunshot detection system providers include:

- Acoem Group
- Aegis
- Battelle Memorial Institute
- Compagnie Industrielle des Lasers CILAS S.A.
- Databuoy, LLC
- EAGL Technology
- Elbit Systems Ltd.
- ELTA Systems Ltd.
- Information Systems & Services, Inc.
- Israel Aerospace Industries Ltd.
- Louroe Electronics, Inc.
- Microchip Technology
- Pacific Northwest National Laboratories Acoustic Gunshot Detection
- QinetiQ North America, Inc.
- Rafael Advanced Defence Systems Ltd.
- Raytheon BBN Boomerang Technologies
- Rheinmetall Aktiengesellschaft
- Safety Dynamics Inc
- Safran Electronics & Defense SAS
- Shooter Detection Systems LLC
- ShotSpotter, Inc.
- Thales S.A.
- V5 Systems Inc.

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Name: Yadi Younse

City: Pasadena

State: CA

ZIP: District 4

Meeting Date: September 23, 2021

Agenda Item: 1. Shotspotter Contract

To be read aloud: No

**Flores, Valerie**

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**Subject:** FW: PPD Proposed Purchase of ShotSpotter - OPPOSE  
**Attachments:** ShotSpotter Purchase Letter to Council.pdf

**From:** Marla Tauscher  
**Sent:** Thursday, September 23, 2021 1:44 PM  
**To:** Flores, Valerie  
**Cc:** Perez, John Eduardo  
**Subject:** FW: PPD Proposed Purchase of ShotSpotter - OPPOSE

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Dear Ms. Flores,

Will you please make sure that this letter is included in the official record for this matter?

Thank you,

Marla

*Marla Tauscher  
Attorney at Law  
225 S. Lake Ave., Ste. 300  
Pasadena, CA 91101*

*Phone: (626) 345-5777  
Cell: (760) 534-3143  
e-Fax: (760) 444-2742  
[www.attymat.com](http://www.attymat.com)*

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MARLA TAUSCHER  
ATTORNEY AT LAW

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September 23, 2021

**BY EMAIL**

VGordo@cityofpasadena.net  
THampton@cityofpasadena.net  
JKennedy@cityofpasadena.net  
SMadison@cityofpasadena.net  
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JRivas@cityofpasadena.net  
AWilson@cityofpasadena.net  
MJomsky@cityofpasadena.net  
SMermell@cityofpasadena.net

**Re: Proposed Purchase of ShotSpotter Surveillance Technology**

Dear Council and Public Safety Committee Members:

It has come to my attention that you are planning to commit the City of Pasadena to a three-year contract at a cost of \$640,000 for more surveillance equipment for the Police Department. I have a lot of questions about the technology itself and whether anyone within the City has actually done any due diligence about the effectiveness of the technology:

**1. How Effective is ShotSpotter?**

A **2021 study** of 68 large counties that used ShotSpotter over a 17-year period -- from 1998 to 2016 -- found that "implementing ShotSpotter technology has *no significant impact on firearm-related homicides or arrest outcomes*. [emphasis added].

**Source:** Doucette, M.L., Green, C., Necci Dineen, J. *et. al.* "Impact of ShotSpotter Technology on Firearm Homicides and Arrests Among Large Metropolitan Counties; a Longitudinal Analysis, 1999-2016". *J. Urban Health* (2021).

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A **2020 study** of ShotSpotter in St. Louis concluded that the ShotSpotter system produced "no reductions in serious violent crimes, yet...increased demands on police resources."

**Source:** Mares, D., Blackburn, E. "Acoustic gunshot detection systems: a quasi-experimental evaluation in St. Louis, MO. *J. Exp. Criminal* 17, 193-215 (2021).

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A **2018 study** of a similar gunshot detection system in Philadelphia found that the system "did not significantly affect the number of confirmed shootings, but it did increase the workload of police attending incidents for which no evidence of a shooting was found."

**Source:** Ratcliffe, J.H., Lattanzio, M., Kikuchi, G., *et al.* "A partially randomized field experiment on the effect of an acoustic gunshot detection system on police incident reports." *J. Exp. Criminal* 15, 67-76 (2019)

A **2017 study** of OEMC data from Chicago published in the *South Side Weekly* found that "of the 508 ShotSpotter alerts that lead to opened cases, 435 - eighty five percent - were also reported within five minutes by civilian calls to 911, police report, or other on-the-ground witnesses. The same study found that ShotSpotter was only 2.2 seconds faster than human reports of gunfire."

**Source:** Wasney, M. "The Shots Heard Round the City: Are Chicago's new shot detection and predictive policing worth it?" *South Side Weekly*, December 19, 2017.

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The City of Chicago entered into a three-year contract with ShotSpotter for use by Chicago Police Department ("CPD") from August 20, 2018 through August 19, 2021.

According to an August 2021 report from the City of Chicago, Office of the Inspector General, "CPD responses to ShotSpotter alerts rarely produce evidence of a gun-related crime, rarely give rise to investigatory stops, and even less frequently lead to the recovery of gun crime-related evidence during an investigative stop."

The Inspector General concluded that, "Because the ability to match ShotSpotter events to other police records, including ISRs, is so limited, *it may not be possible at present to reach a well-informed determination as to whether ShotSpotter is a worthwhile investment* as an effective law enforcement tool for the City and CPD."

<https://igchicago.org/2021/08/24/the-chicago-police-departments-use-of-shotspotter-technology/>

That doesn't sound like a ringing endorsement of ShotSpotter from the Chicago Inspector General. Three years and \$33 million dollars later, the Inspector General cannot say that the technology was a worthwhile investment. Overall, based on recent studies from a number of jurisdictions, ShotSpotter does not reduce crime or result in evidence of crime.

*Why would the City of Pasadena commit to a technology that has not been effective in countless other cities that have used the technology?*

**2. How Accurate is ShotSpotter?**

In May 2021, the MacArthur Justice Center analyzed data from ShotSpotter in Chicago over a 21-month period and concluded that the vast majority of alerts generated by ShotSpotter produced no evidence of gunfire or gun-related crime. From July 1, 2019 through April 14, 2021, ***ShotSpotter produced 40,000 dead end deployments of Chicago Police Department.***

89% of the alerts during that period led to no evidence of a gun crime and 36% led to no evidence of any crime at all. On an average day in Chicago, there are 61 ShotSpotter-initiated police deployments that result in ***no evidence of any crime at all.***

*Given the dismal results from cities that have employed ShotSpotter, why would the City of Pasadena even consider the purchase of such a technology?*

Source: Feathers, T., "Police Are Telling ShotSpotter to Alter Evidence from Gunshot-Detecting AI". *Motherboard Tech by Vice*, July 26, 2021, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/qj8xbq/police-are-telling-shotspotter-to-alter-evidence-from-gunshot-detecting-ai>. MacArthur Justice Center, *ShotSpotter Generated Over 40,000 Dead-End Police Deployments in Chicago in 21 Months, According to New Study*; Press Release, May 3, 2021, <https://www.macarthurjustice.org/shotspotter-generated-over-40000-dead-end-police-deployments-in-chicago-in-21-months-according-to-new-study/>

**3. How Reliable is "Evidence" From Shot Spotter?**

The short answer is: very unreliable. Police departments can and do contact ShotSpotter to have its analysts alter information in the alerts that are generated. For example, in 2016, in Rochester, New York, police were looking for a suspicious vehicle and pulled over the wrong car, shooting the driver, Sylvon Simmons, in the back three times. Police alleged that Simmons fired first, but there was no evidence to support that claim. The only "evidence" against Simmons was the ShotSpotter alert, but ***the company's sensors had not detected any gunshots.*** After Rochester Police contacted ShotSpotter, one of its analysts decided that there had been four gunshots, which included a shot that did not hit Simmons.

Simmons was acquitted of attempted murder and the judge overturned his gun possession conviction, ***citing ShotSpotter's lack of reliability.***

Similarly, in Chicago, in May 2020, police arrested a man, Michael Williams, after seeing video of Williams' car stopped in the 6300 block of South Stony Island Avenue at 11:46 p.m., the time and place where police claimed they knew a man named Safarika Herring



was shot. ShotSpotter sensors detected a sound at that time, but determined the location to be 5700 Lake Shore Drive – a mile away from the site of the murder.

ShotSpotter initially classified the sound as fireworks, but ShotSpotter analysts manually overrode the algorithms and “reclassified” the sound as a gunshot. Months later ShotSpotter changed the location of the sound to match the location of Williams’ car at the time of the murder.

At Williams’ trial, the defense brought a *Frye* motion – a motion requesting the judge to examine the evidence and rule on whether a particular forensic method is sufficiently scientifically sound to be used as evidence. Prosecutors decided to *withdraw all ShotSpotter evidence* against Williams because they knew it would not withstand judicial scrutiny.

*Source: Motherboard Tech by Vice, supra.*

In a 2016 criminal trial, a ShotSpotter employee admitted that the company *reclassified sounds* that had originally been classified as helicopter noise to a gunshot at the request of a police department that used the technology. The employee said that those changes happen frequently because ShotSpotter trusts its law enforcement customers to be “upfront and honest” with the company.

*Source:* Stanley, J. “ACLU News & Commentary: Four Problems with the ShotSpotter Gunshot Detection System”. August 24, 2021.

How will the City of Pasadena benefit from tainted evidence that has to be thrown out because it’s unreliable?

#### **4. What are the Methodologies and Algorithms Used By ShotSpotter?**

The truth is you have no idea. No one does, outside of ShotSpotter. The company is not transparent at all. In fact, ShotSpotter’s “expert”, Paul Greene – the guy the company sends to court to defend its product – is an employee of the company.

ShotSpotter has not allowed any independent testing of its algorithms and evidence shows that its marketing claims may not be based on scientific data.

In fact, in recent years, several cities, including Troy, NY and Charlotte, NC have dropped ShotSpotter after concluding that it is not effective.

*Source: Motherboard Tech by Vice, supra.*

#### **5. Why is PPD Requesting a No-Bid Contract?**

In its staff report to support the acquisition of ShotSpotter, PPD requests an exemption from the competitive selection process because "Staff is not aware of any other vendor providing this service."

Really? Has staff even done any due diligence to determine whether there are other vendors? Have any of you members of the council done so?

### **Conclusion**

There is no evidence that anyone in the City of Pasadena has even done a cursory review of any of the information available related to ShotSpotter and gunshot detection technology. Instead, city officials are relying on the information supplied by Pasadena Police Chief John Perez. The Staff Report submitted in his name consists of unsubstantiated, unsupported statements about the effectiveness of ShotSpotter, but there isn't a single citation to any source of information.

It is understandable that PPD wants some shiny new toys, but it is unreasonable to commit the city to a three-year contract for \$640,000 of *taxpayer money* for a product that has been shown to be not just ineffective, but harmful -- resulting in overturned criminal convictions and tossing of bogus evidence -- because it is entirely unreliable.

Why does PPD want to ram this purchase through the City Council approval process so quickly, and why would the City Council even consider doing so without public input? Where is the evidence that the technology works? Where is the information about the company's methodology and algorithms?

Pasadena is already well on its way to becoming a police state with its unfettered acquisition of multiple means of surveillance technology, including facial recognition, automatic license plate readers, helicopter mounted cameras, and who knows what else. To date, the City's process for purchase and implementation of surveillance equipment has been opaque.

Given the factual inaccuracies and lack of citation to any sources for the claims made in Chief Perez's staff report, it is clear that much more inquiry is required by City officials before approving this purchase. Failure to conduct a more thorough investigation would be reckless and irresponsible.

**This purchase of a wholly ineffective surveillance technology must be denied.**

Sincerely,  
  
Marla Tauscher