

- **Cost**

BWCs involve serious costs, which must be factored into any decision about implementing a BWC system. The Committee is not well-positioned to make the judgments about whether BWCs are worth the cost, because that depends on a balancing of BWC costs against other budgetary demands and priorities, and the Committee has no information about and is not charged with assessing those expansive City budget considerations; those are matters that the Common Council, the Mayor, and the Police Department are much better situated to balance. But what the Committee can do is try to help those decision-makers understand the potential costs of implementing BWCs, so they can appropriately consider whether they are worth the budgetary trade-offs.

While it is surprisingly difficult to get a firm handle on potential costs, the Committee has been able to glean information about potential costs from a variety of sources. BWC program costs include expenses that arise from purchasing the cameras (and replacing them over time), training, maintaining the hardware, and processing, cataloging, redacting (when necessary), managing, and storing the footage. For a pilot project, preliminary estimates from the MPD are that the costs of a North District BWC pilot program could be in excess of \$136,000. More than \$72,000 of that total is for initial equipment acquisitions, which would not have to be incurred in subsequent years.

For a fully implemented BWC program, preliminary MPD estimates are that first-year startup costs would be approximately \$720,000. The startup costs would include purchasing 289 cameras (enough to outfit all patrol units with cameras) and managing their implementation (training, processing, storage, etc.) for \$575,000 plus another \$145,000 for additional equipment, specifically the hardware to permit automatic triggering of the cameras when squad car light bars are activated—an essential part of a successful BWC program, as discussed and recommended elsewhere in this report and Model Policy. MPD estimates, preliminarily, that thereafter annual operating costs might be approximately \$311,000 plus projected maintenance costs of \$65,000 per year, for an annual cost of approximately \$376,000. MPD cautions that these are all just preliminary predictions, based on estimates from its contract with Panasonic (the vendor that currently provides MPD with its dashcams); these estimates are not, however, based a formal RFP process, and hence are just rough estimates. These estimates also do not appear to include camera replacement costs, yet it can be expected that each camera will have a limited lifetime. If the City adopts an electronic file-sharing system to facilitate transfer of digital footage from police to prosecutors and public defenders, that will also impose additional costs (although over the long run the efficiencies of such a system might produce some offsetting cost savings, and the initial costs of such a system might be shared with the District Attorney’s Office and the Public Defender’s Office).

Also not included in these estimates are additional demands on officer and supervisor that BWCs might create. In particular, it is likely that patrol officers will be required to spend a portion of each shift uploading, logging, and annotating footage, and supervisors will have to spend some time reviewing footage and supervising footage management. Currently, MPD does not anticipate a need to hire additional patrol or supervisory staff to make up for this increased workload demand. If not, any extra time required of officers will of necessity come at the expense of other activities they might otherwise undertake. MPD also noted—as have other

departments—that some of this increased work time will likely be offset by reduced court time later in BWC cases (because the BWC footage is expected to reduce the range and number of litigable issues in cases).

Assessing just how much officer time will be required is very difficult, however. Survey data collected from officers in a few jurisdictions give one insight into the scope of the demands. In sum, the survey data suggests that officers believe they spend on average somewhere in the neighborhood of 39 minutes each shift classifying and/or reviewing video footage from the cameras.<sup>1</sup> Supervisors also spend time reviewing video footage. One survey reported that staff sergeants estimated that they spent roughly 25 minutes on average per shift reviewing body-worn camera footage, but that most said it did not require them to take overtime and “[t]hose who did require overtime said they did not claim it or adjusted their shift to accommodate the extra work.”<sup>2</sup> Additionally, “investigators estimated roughly that it took 3 to 5 hours a week toward the end of the pilot to review video and confirm what needed redaction; as cases involving body-worn camera video reach court, this time will increase. However, investigators also acknowledged that this longer time spent on case preparation could potentially cut down on the amount of court time required later.”<sup>3</sup>

Another glimpse into the potential total costs of the system comes from the Milwaukee Police Department. Milwaukee, which has 1110 patrol officers (compared to Madison’s 475 total officers) has a contract with Axon for a five-year camera and storage solution for a total of \$4,351,014. This system includes the added hardware that activates the cameras as soon as the squad lights go on or the officer starts running, or dispatch engages the system remotely. Milwaukee Police also informed the Committee that the costs of storage did not turn out to be as big a problem as they thought it would, as their contract with the vendor includes unlimited cloud storage (currently, Madison, by contrast, stores all dashcam footage on site). But they said the big unexpected impact was the enormous amount of time it takes law enforcement agencies to process public records requests, because they must redact non-disclosable material in the footage. On the other hand, they reported that the redaction process itself turns out to be not that difficult, as the technology has made it pretty easy to do.

In Fitchburg, ...

Other cities have reported markedly higher costs than these. The Worcester, MA, Police Department, for example, which is very similar in size to MPD (Worcester apparently has 461

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<sup>1</sup> Following a pilot project in Spokane, Washington, a survey of officers reported that “[t]he majority of officers stated the camera added anywhere from 30 minutes to 1 hour of extra work. The remaining group was divided evenly between adding less than 30 minutes and adding at least 1 hour of work.”

<https://bja.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh186/files/media/document/body-worn-camera-pilot-program-audit.pdf>. A survey of officers in Toronto reported that “Overall, the officers who wore the cameras during the pilot project estimated that, roughly, they spent an average of 39 minutes each shift classifying and/or reviewing video footage from the cameras.”

<https://bja.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh186/files/media/document/tps-body-worn-camera-pilot-project-evaluation.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* p. 45.

<sup>3</sup> *Id.* p. 46.

officers and Madison has 482), reports that bids from three vendors came in at total costs ranging from \$9.75 million to \$11.05 million over five years.<sup>4</sup> Those bids, however, included purchasing many more cameras than MPD would purchase (Worcester budgeted for 453 cameras—apparently one for each individual officer, whereas MPD budgeted for 289 cameras—apparently planning for cameras to be shared and used by officers as they came on shift), and Worcester budgeted for purchasing tasers for every officer, while Madison has no need to purchase any tasers. Worcester also budgeted for purchasing cell phones for every officer, while MPD has proposed no cell phone purchases. It is safe to say, then, that whatever the cost in Madison might be, it will likely be lower than the projected costs in Worcester.

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<sup>4</sup> : [http://www6.worcesterma.gov/WebLink/PDF/ooo1jljskmpk5qiy01upjnlc/4/20200721ccm%20\(27\).pdf](http://www6.worcesterma.gov/WebLink/PDF/ooo1jljskmpk5qiy01upjnlc/4/20200721ccm%20(27).pdf).