

Pullman to install surveillance cameras

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The Spokesman-Review

Tags: Pullman Pullman Police Department surveillance cameras

Public meeting

March 21

The next public meeting will take place at noon to 1 p.m. in the WSU Compton Union Building Lair on campus on March 21. The draft proposal can be found on the Pullman Police Department's website, Pullman City Hall, the Niell Public Library and the Pullman Chamber of Commerce.

Pullman Police Department officials plan to augment surveillance of what they think are problem areas in the city.

But they aren't adding more patrols. They're planning on installing cameras with live video feeds to the station and patrol cars in a move they hope will deter violent crime but has already drawn comparisons to Big Brother from a few wary residents.

"Our ultimate goal is to reduce serious assaults," said police Chief Gary Jenkins. "Every year we have a number of assaults. We really want to have an improvement on those."

The Department of Justice recently awarded the department a \$300,000 grant to install the cameras as a part of its Smart Policing Initiative. The police department is teaming up with criminal justice researchers at Washington State University to determine where the cameras will be placed and track how effective they are after they're installed.

Jenkins said the cameras will likely be installed in the summer and estimated they will be able to install about eight cameras.

Wednesday night, at the second of three public meetings on the cameras, Pullman resident Ed Schweitzer called the cameras "Orwellian" in a prepared statement read by resident Andrea New.

"Violent crime and neighborhood disorder are not really Pullman's problems and cameras are not a good solution to either should they arise," Schweitzer wrote.

Schweitzer also said the cameras are a costly and wasteful use of resources and expressed concern they will be costly to maintain.

Jenkins responded that students' freedom to enjoy themselves safely in the area is stripped by the possibility of violence. There will be signs notifying the public they are under surveillance, he said. The draft policy, which is still being refined, indicates the footage will be kept for up to two weeks, until it is determined it is of no evidential value. He said it's not unusual for police to respond to 30 incidents in the area of Adams Mall, one of the proposed sites to receive cameras, on a weekend night.

The department was one of 16 out of 179 applicants to receive the grant because the Department of Justice wants to see its effectiveness in college-town settings. Most other areas in the U.S. that have implemented video policing are larger cities such as Baltimore or Washington, D.C., and they are common in Britain.

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