

The Post and Courier

Charleston, SC
August 20, 2009

No cameras

Your story in the Aug. 19 Post and Courier titled "Cameras to keep watch," about the City Council's decision to approve a contract for surveillance cameras asserts that "the American Civil Liberties Union in South Carolina has not opposed the cameras outright but has raised concerns about the project. ..." In fact, we do not endorse any state-run surveillance camera program.

Our discussions with Charleston Police Chief Greg Mullen represent an attempt to improve the policies governing the use of the surveillance cameras after the decision was made to approve their use. This should not be interpreted as endorsement of the underlying decision. We remain opposed to their further expansion.

Surveillance cameras have not been proven to deter crime, and rules to limit privacy invasion are generally inadequate. We believe that the prevalence of surveillance cameras in Charleston will have a chilling effect on citizens' freedom of speech and assembly in the "public areas" where their expansion is forecast.

We also are concerned that the efforts made by the police department to build community trust may be undermined by potential abuses or invasion of privacy.

We hope that city officials will review the policy and practical use of surveillance cameras after a reasonable interval and make public the results of the review.

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