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LAW ENFORCEMENT

# ACLU lauds Parker Police's roll-out of body cams

## Parker PD works with ACLU, DA's office on policy



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The entire Parker Police Department began using body cameras last month. From right, officer Salvador Blea, Sgt. Michael Buoniconti, Sgt. Steve Tarr, police chief David King and Lt. Chris Peters. Photo by Chris Michlewicz

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**Chris Michlewicz** (<mailto:cmichlewicz@coloradocommunitymedia.com>)

The Parker Police's introduction of body-worn cameras and policies guiding their use has earned the department praise from an unlikely source.

Parker Police sought advice on the department-wide implementation of body cams from the American Civil Liberties Union, which later issued an article that calls the policy one of the best in the nation.

It was in 2013, well before the officer-involved shooting of Michael Brown and other incidents that have made national headlines, that Parker Police Chief David King began contemplating body-worn cameras for the 67 commissioned officers under his watch.

Lt. Chris Peters, who was charged with creating the body-cam policy, said the consideration of constitutional rights and privacy was an element that was missing from other agencies' guiding documents. The idea of reaching out to the ACLU, which occasionally calls out law enforcement agencies for perceived heavy-handed tactics, "raises some eyebrows," Peters said, but it was viewed as a necessary proactive step.

"They're just trying to make sure that the constitutional rights are upheld, and that's all we want to do as well," Peters said. "The whole purpose of a police department is to uphold the Constitution and the laws, so it just makes sense that we get a policy that balances all of that."

The department also involved local stakeholders, including the 18th Judicial District Attorney's office, Parker officers, nearby law enforcement, the Police Executive Research Forum, the International Association of Chiefs of Police, and the federal government.

The department took its time in laying a foundation for the policy. The roll-out of body cams was in response to the transparency expected from a police force, King said, and technology was far enough along to introduce them to the whole department.

"Even before Ferguson, we have always tried to be innovative when it comes to technology here in Parker," King said. "For me and for the organization, I just knew that this was going to be something that law enforcement was going to have to face in the future and I think we were right when it comes to making that decision."

Chad Marlow, who serves as advocacy and policy counsel for the ACLU's national office in New York, said the biggest challenge is striking a balance between transparency and accountability and protecting individual privacy. Marlow said police agencies "coast to coast are reviewing Parker's policy

right now” as they explore the use of body-worn cameras.

“It’s not within the mission of the Parker Police Department to serve the entire country, but it has done that and I think that is extremely commendable,” Marlow said.

Parker officers and command staff who interact with the public began wearing body cameras in September. The department started its research in January 2014 and launched a pilot program that ran from May to early September this year. Officer feedback was a significant factor in the department’s decision to order 67 Tazer Axon cameras at a cost of \$399 apiece.

The total cost for the cameras, video storage, a service agreement, and docking stations for the first two years was \$152,000, which came from a drug-seizure fund and not the town’s general fund or taxpayer money, Peters said. Annual costs for body cams are expected to be around \$66,000.

Parker tested products from three separate vendors — Tazer, VIEVU and Panasonic — before selecting Tazer. Aside from officer reports on ease of use, the department considered functionality in uploading videos and the security of cloud-based storage. Costs comparisons between Tazer and VIEVU, the two final contenders, were similar, Peters said.

The department will decide within six months whether it will need to hire an additional evidence technician to manage requests for videos.

King said he expects the cameras will not only eliminate doubt on how an incident transpired, but will be a time-saver for officers and the court system. They also could potentially de-escalate situations before they get out of hand.

“People are going to act differently when they know they’re being recorded,” the chief said.

A well-thought-out approach to body-worn cameras and accompanying policy make the Parker police unique, as does the ACLU’s glowing endorsement, Marlow said.

“It’s easy in government to wait for a crisis to occur and react to it,” he said. “The fact that the Parker Police Department is this proactive, this is one of their hallmarks.”

## Keywords

Parker Police Department (/search\_mode/keyword/browse.html?search\_filter=Parker Police Department), body cams (/search\_mode/keyword/browse.html?search\_filter= body cams), ACLU (/search\_mode/keyword/browse.html?search\_filter= ACLU), Chris Michlewicz (/search\_mode/keyword/browse.html?search\_filter= Chris Michlewicz)

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### Muchoconfused

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Proud to live in Parker. A professional police department that other cities should look up to.

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### Dictatorship

“They’re just trying to make sure that the constitutional rights are upheld...”, by violating peoples’ 4th amendment rights to privacy. This world is turning into a living hell. We’re being watched everywhere. It’s creepy. There’s no sense of privacy anymore. The world really is turning into that movie “1984”. Thanks, PPD, for being such control freaks. And a special thank you to the ACLU for completely compromising our liberties all together. What a dictatorship this country is becoming. Life has risks, people. You don’t even have to leave your house to have your life at risk. Get over it. If I need help with anything, I’m never calling the police again. I’ll take care of it myself.

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