# City Council Staff Report

## Council Meeting Date

- May 12, 2026

## Subject

- Declaration of Policy for Public Safety Tools; Asheville Police Department Grant Award and Axon Contract

## Staff Resource(s)

- Jackie Stepp - APD Interim Police Chief
- Elise Lewis - APD Financial Business Manager

## Action Requested

- Adoption of a (1) Resolution of the Asheville City Council to declare and reaffirm the protection of civil liberties of all residents and visitors in the collection and use of data obtained through the utilization of public facing cameras, license plate readers, and the operation of a real-time intelligence center; (2) Resolution authorizing the City Manager to apply for, accept, and sign all of the appropriate application and acceptance documents for the Community Project Funding (CPF) Award allocated to the City of Asheville as secured through Congressman Chuck Edward's Office and managed through the Department of Justice (DOJ) Office of Justice Programs, Byrne Justice Grants; and (3) Budget amendment in the City's Special Revenue Fund in the amount of $1,141,256.00.

## Background

- APD was contacted in April 2024 by a representative from Congressman Chuck Edwards' office regarding potential funding for Fiscal Year 2025 appropriations.
- APD completed a questionnaire from Congressman Edwards' office requesting funding to help implement a Real-Time Intelligence Center (RTIC). This funding would be to procure equipment, software, and hardware to establish a RTIC.
- Authorization from the City Manager's office to request funding was submitted on May 22, 2024.
- The Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 Appropriations request was not signed into law due to a year-long continuing resolution and had to be resubmitted by Congressman Edwards for FY 2026.
- APD was notified in February 2026 that $1,141,256.00 in funding had been secured in the FY 2026 Appropriations Bill.
- The award conditions, allowable uses, compliance requirements, and onboarding steps will be set at the Federal level.
- Once received, City staff will review the terms and determine the City's ability and

willingness to comply. This review will take into account any direction provided by the City Council
- Even though the CPF is part of an appropriations law and not a typical competitive grant, most agencies require a formal application and acceptance process before funds are obligated. Once formal guidance on this is released, the procedural steps for recipients will begin, and APD will follow DOJ processes to receive funding.
- A city-owned RTIC will serve as a centralized hub, bringing all existing and private camera feeds into a single location, prioritizing the safety of officers, residents, and the broader community.
- The RTIC will strengthen the operational effectiveness of the APD by improving coordination, increasing efficiency, and enhancing overall public safety.

## Vendor Outreach Efforts:

- Not applicable; funding for this grant is provided by the DOJ Office of Justice Programs, Byrne Justice Grants.

## Council Vision 2036 Focus Area(s):

- Fiscally Resilient City

## Council Priority Recovery Area(s):

- Infrastructure & Environment

## Committee(s):

- Public Safety Committee March 26, 2026. The Public Safety Committee approved moving this forward to City Council, with a 2-0 vote.
- April 14, 2026, City Council meeting - item continued to April 28, 2026, Policy, Finance, and Infrastructure Worksession
- Policy, Finance and Infrastructure Committee - April 28, 2026 - Information sharing

## Fiscal Impact

- No local match is required for this grant.

## Suggested Motion

- Motion to adopt a (1) Resolution of the Asheville City Council to declare and reaffirm the protection of civil liberties of all residents and visitors in the collection and use of data obtained through the utilization of public facing cameras, license plate readers, and the operation of a real-time intelligence center; (2) Resolution authorizing the City Manager to apply for, accept, and sign all of the appropriate application and acceptance documents for the Community Project Funding (CPF) Award allocated to the City of Asheville as secured through Congressman Chuck Edward's Office and managed through the Department of Justice (DOJ) Office of Justice Programs, Byrne Justice Grants; and (3) Budget amendment in the City's Special Revenue Fund in the amount of

$1,141,256.00.

## Attachment(s)

- Resolutions
- Budget Amendment

# City of Asheville Resolution Number 26-___

Resolution of the Asheville City Council to declare and reaffirm the protection of civil liberties of all residents and visitors in the collection and use of data obtained through the utilization of public facing cameras, license plate readers, and the operation of a real-time intelligence center

Whereas, the City of Asheville has long aspired to protect civil liberties and provide equal protection under the law to all persons within the city; and

Whereas, the City now wishes to reaffirm its strong support for the fundamental constitutional rights of every person and recognizes that the preservation of civil liberties is essential to the well-being of a democratic society; and

Whereas, the City further recognizes the immense importance of the right to privacy belonging to each individual, and appreciates the necessity in balancing the use of any security tool against the fundamental right of privacy; and

Whereas, the City opposes any measures that single out individuals within our diverse population for legal scrutiny or enforcement activity based upon race, skin color, national or ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, mental or physical disability, religious or political opinion or activity, immigration status, whether they are currently experiencing homelessness, or any other unauthorized reason; and

Whereas, the City of Asheville opposes any efforts to transfer federal immigration responsibilities to state and local governments; and

Whereas, the City believes that it should take all reasonable and legal steps to protect public safety, but that it must do so while simultaneously playing a leading role in the protection of civil liberties and consistently preserving constitutional rights, promoting tolerance, and exhibiting respect for all persons; and

Whereas, the City is committed to the application of the principles and values described herein when utilizing public safety tools such as public facing camera systems, license plate readers, and real-time intelligence operations; and

Whereas, the City recognizes that the use of these tools, though valuable to the protection of the public, also raises legitimate concerns regarding privacy, bias, and potential misuse; and

Whereas, the City desires to issue this resolution to recognize these community concerns, and to reaffirm its unwavering commitment to the utilization of these security measures in a limited and controlled capacity so as to be consistent with the values outlined herein; and

Now, Therefore, be it resolved by the City Council of the City of Asheville that:

The City’s use of public safety tools shall be solely for lawful purposes, which are intended to enhance or provide for public safety, and shall not offend any constitutional or other legal right.

These public safety tools shall not be used, or permitted to be accessed by any third party, in any manner that fosters discrimination, bias, or unwarranted invasions of privacy.

The City shall take all reasonable steps, through policy and action, to prevent unauthorized sharing of data, general surveillance of the public outside of a criminal investigation or other legally authorized activity, or unnecessary storage of data obtained through the use of these tools.

The City shall not apply these public safety tools in a manner which utilizes facial recognition, nor to target any individual or group based upon race, skin color, national or ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, mental or physical disability, religious or political opinion or activity, immigration status, whether they are currently experiencing homelessness, or any other unauthorized reason.

The City shall further remain accountable and transparent in its actions to the extent permitted by law with respect to the use of these systems, the data collected, and the sharing of information with third parties.

The access, and specific accessor, of any public facing camera or license plate reading system shall be documented and maintained to allow for subsequent audit and oversight.

The storage of data collected by the City while utilizing these tools shall have a duration no longer than specified by State law, and shall not be kept beyond the expiration of the legal purpose for the data's original collection.

In the absence of state, interstate, or international criminal or national security investigations, the City shall not utilize these public safety tools to participate in enforcement of federal immigration law.

This resolution is intended to encourage community trust in the City's commitment to the utilization of its public safety tools and systems only when reasonably balanced with its duty to protect and preserve the civil liberties of the individuals who make up this community.

The City Manager shall take all reasonable and prudent measures to implement these policies and ensure compliance therewith, and a report shall be provided to the City Council, at least annually, on the use of these public safety technologies and any actions taken to ensure alignment with the Council direction outlined in this resolution.

Read, approved and adopted this 12th day of May, 2026.

_____
Esther E. Manheimer, Mayor

_____
Brad Branham, City Attorney

_____
Magdalen Burleson, City Clerk

# City of Asheville Resolution Number 26-___

Resolution authorizing the City Manager to apply for, accept, and sign all of the appropriate application and acceptance documents for the Community Project Funding (CPF) Award allocated to the City of Asheville as secured through Congressman Chuck Edward's Office and managed through the Department of Justice (DOJ) Office of Justice Programs, Byrne Justice Grants

Whereas, the City has the authority pursuant to N.C.S.G. 160A-17 to apply for and receive grants from the Federal Government and to enter into contracts with said grants; and

Whereas, with prior authorization from the City Manager's Office, the Asheville Police Department (APD) completed a questionnaire provided by Congressman Chuck Edwards' office requesting DOJ grant funding to assist in procuring equipment, software, and hardware to establish a Real-Time Intelligence Center (RTIC); and

Whereas, the APD was notified in February 2026 that funding of $1,141,256.00 had been secured in the Fiscal Year 2026 Appropriations Bill; and

Whereas, even though the CPF is part of an appropriations law and not a typical competitive grant, most agencies require a formal application and acceptance process before funds are obligated. Once formal guidance on this is released, the procedural steps for recipients will begin, and APD will follow DOJ processes to receive funding;

Whereas, City staff, including the City Attorney's Office, shall review all award conditions, allowable uses, compliance requirements, and onboarding steps to be set by the Federal Government. This review shall be intended to determine the City's ability and willingness to comply, and shall take into account any direction provided by the City Council.

Now, Therefore, be it resolved by the City Council of the City of Asheville that:

The City Manager is hereby authorized to apply for, accept, and sign all of the appropriate application and acceptance documents for the Community Project Funding Award allocated to the City of Asheville as secured through Congressman Chuck Edwards' Office and managed through the Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs, Byrne Justice Grants.

Read, approved, and adopted this the 12th day of May, 2026.

_____
Esther E. Manheimer, Mayor

_____
Brad Branham, City Attorney

_____
Magdalen Burleson, City Clerk

# City of Asheville Budget Amendment Ordinance Number ____

## Be it Ordained by the City Council of the City of Asheville.

That Section 2 of the City of Asheville Annual Operating Budget Ordinance be amended to provide an appropriation of $1,141,256.00 to accept a federal grant funding the Asheville Police Department Real-Time Intelligence Center as follows:

## Special Revenue Fund

Revenues:

Federal Grants - $1,141,256.00

Expenditures:

Materials - $673,653.85

Contracted Services - $467,602.15

Read, approved and adopted this 12th day of May, 2026.

_____
Esther E. Manheimer, Mayor

_____
Brad Branham, City Attorney

_____
Magdalen Burleson, City Clerk