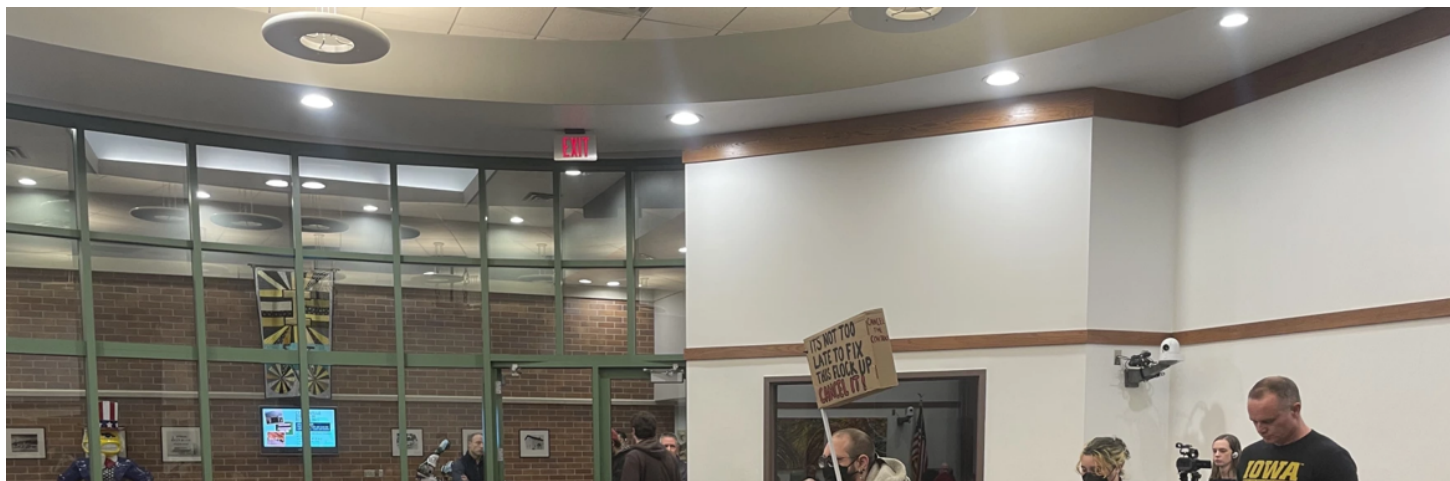


schedules

oralville considers taking down license plate readers following warning from iowa attorney general

Iowa Public Radio | By [James Kelley](#)

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Coralville residents urged the council to cancel its contract for Automated License Plate Readers, which pick up a car's license plate, make, model and color. It comes after the Iowa Attorney General's Office demanded the city adjust its policy, which currently prohibits the readers from being used for immigration enforcement purposes.

Several Coralville City Council members made verbal commitments in their latest meeting to reexamine the city's contract for [Automated License Plate Readers](#) (ALPR), citing concerns about current federal immigration enforcement efforts.

They were prompted by a letter from the Iowa Attorney General's Office stating that part of the city's ALPR policy prohibiting the readers' use for "solely immigration purposes" violates state law.

The letter points to Iowa Code section 27A.4, which states that a "local entity shall not adopt or enforce a policy or take any other action under which the local entity prohibits or discourages the enforcement of immigration laws." It also identifies a page on the city's website explaining its ALPR policy as being in violation of state law.

"It is against the Coralville Police Department's policy, and against our contract, for Flock data to be used for immigration," reads the insert, which [appears to have been removed](#) from the city's website. "Only trained officers with specific and valid reasons can access the data."

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Sent by email

December 16, 2025

Dear City of Coralville City Council:

The Iowa Attorney General's Office has received a formal complaint from Hendrik van Pelt under Iowa Code section 27A.8. Iowa Code chapter 27A explains your obligations under State law to cooperate with federal authorities regarding immigration law. Intentionally violating chapter 27A can lead a city, including the City of Coralville, to be ineligible for State funds.

The complaint points to public meetings held in August and September 2025 in which the City of Coralville City Council held hearings on cooperating with federal immigration authorities relating to a two-year agreement with Flock Group, Inc. Coralville Police Chief Kyle Nicholson stated that "if ICE requests our data, it's no." Below is the exchange between Chief Nicholson and City Council Member Mike Knudson as recorded in Coralville's minutes. Mr. Knudson in the exchange was characterized as saying "ICE is not abiding by due process."

purposes, and he believes anyone in this country is susceptible to this. ICE is Knudson's biggest concern because even if they own the data and have a policy to protect it in place a subpoena trump anything. Even if it goes to court the courts are not quite what they used to be. Knudson believes that we're to the point where they must be concerned that the data will be abused, especially for minorities. Knudson stated he is leaning towards voting no but looks forward to further discussion. Knudson asked Nicholson

The letter threatens civil action, demanding changes to the policy within 30 days.

The Attorney General's Office said it became aware of the code violations after receiving a complaint from Hendrik van Pelt, an Iowa resident who has previously been involved in disputes over ALPR public data availability with the state's public information board and who has voiced concerns about the city entering into the contract.

Many council members said that rather than updating the policy to conform with state law, they would prefer to reconsider [the contract](#) for the license plate readers

altogether.

"I was on the fence from the beginning," said council member Royce Peterson. "And with the way the state keeps continuing to take away local control from our cities and counties ... if this would have been the way it was back when we voted for it, I wouldn't have voted."

Other council members expressed a desire to protect Coralville's residents from state and federal overreach following the [killings of Minneapolis residents Alex Pretti and Renee Macklin Good](#) by federal immigration enforcement agents in January.

"I had no idea how far it would go," said council member Mike Knudson. "I would say it's far exceeded maybe my worst thoughts about how far it would go, in terms of shooting people in the streets."

Council member Hai Huynh said parts of the policy that the council put in place to protect residents are now being turned against them.

"We are trying to put in safety measures to protect our constituents, and it is being turned by state law[makers] who do not want local communities to be safe," she said. "So at this time, I don't think this technology is right for us."



Flock Safety

A Flock Safety Automated License Plate Reader.

ALPR are cameras positioned alongside roadways that capture a car's license plate, make, model and color. That data can then be accessed by other ALPR customers through a database.

ALPR themselves are operated by the contractor Flock Safety and offered on a subscription basis.

The Coralville City Council passed a policy regulating ALPR usage in September 2025 after earmarking \$36,000 in a two-year contract for six cameras with Flock earlier in the year.

Coralville Mayor Laurie Goodrich said most members of the council want the city attorney to move as quickly as possible in taking the cameras down. Council

members Katie Freeman, Hai Huynh, Mike Knudson and Royce Peterson said they support bringing the contract for reconsideration at their next meeting on Feb. 24.

The city's contract states that upon termination of the agreement, "Flock will remove any applicable Flock Hardware at a commercially reasonable time period." It also states the city can terminate the contract with 30 days written notice without penalty.

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James Kelley is IPR's Eastern Iowa Reporter, with expertise in reporting on local and regional issues, child care, the environment and public policy, all in order to help lowans better understand their communities and the state. Kelley is a graduate of Oregon State University.

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