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LOCAL

AG urges Coralville to remove ICE restrictions for license plate readers

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Iowa City Press-Citizen

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A Flock Safety-branded license plate reader camera site on a lamppost in Ventura, California, on Sept. 9, 2025. ISAIAH MURTAUGH/THE STAR

Coralville residents continue urge the city to stop using license plate reader cameras following the state attorney general's request to remove restrictions on immigration enforcement.

In a letter to City Attorney Kevin Olson dated Dec. 17, 2025, Solicitor General Eric Wessan said that Coralville's latest Flock policy amendment, [passed in September](#), violates [Iowa Code 27A.4](#), which outlaws city policies restricting enforcement of federal immigration law.

The Iowa Attorney General's Office received an initial complaint in the fall about Coralville Police Department policy that prohibits the use of its automated license reader technology "solely for immigration purposes."

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How do Flock cameras work?

Several Automated License Plate Reader (ALPR) cameras, commissioned by [Flock Safety](#), are in use around Coralville.

The cameras are one of several products offered by [Flock](#), a technology-centric security hardware and software company.

The cameras store data for up to 30 days, allowing law enforcement to "act in real time, not after the fact." Stationary cameras are solar-powered and are used by more than 5,000 agencies in over 6,000 communities, according to the company. The plate-scanning cameras enable operators to conduct a general search when locating a vehicle.

The City of Coralville secured a two-year contract with Flock for \$36,000.

State letter assails immigration-related Flock policy

Wessan's letter says the state is "authorized to file a civil action in district court to enforce any ongoing or continuing violations of this chapter." He notes that cities that violate state law can be sanctioned, potentially making them ineligible for federal funding.

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In Olson's reply on Jan. 15, he clarifies that the city has removed a "Strict Access" section from its website, which previously stated, "It is against Coralville Police Department policy, and against our contract, for Flock data to be used for immigration."

Olson also said he recommended removing Coralville's policy prohibiting the Flock inventory from being used "solely for immigration purposes."

Olson told Wessan that Chief Kyle Nicholson and Coralville's two most

recent police chiefs haven't received immigration detainer requests, and that they remain compliant with Iowa law.

Wessan replied on Jan. 20, saying Olson's proposed alterations would resolve the complaint. His letter requests that the department change its policy "within 30 days," which would be by Wednesday, Feb. 18.

Coralville councilors consider nixing specific Flock policy

Instead of simply altering the policy, a few members of the Coralville City Council are suggesting that they scrap the use of the license plate readers.

Four of the five Coralville councilors want to reconsider the city's Flock contract, possibly as soon as the council's next meeting on Feb. 24.

"\$36,000 is not cheap, but it's not a number that's worth a human life," Councilor Hai Hyunh said during the city council's meeting on Tuesday, Feb. 10, referencing the cost of the city's two-year agreement with Flock.

Councilor Royce Peterson said it was a toss-up when he originally voted "yes" on the city's contract, but he has since changed his mind, considering the city may need to provide access to immigration enforcement officials. Mike Knudson and Katie Freeman said similar things.

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Coralville residents remain against camera use

Coralville resident Dan Wohlers has 25 years of experience in information technology. He first noticed automated license plate readers on a cross-country trip to visit his parents in Florida in June 2025. He spotted them everywhere he went, including on "little two-lane roads in the middle of nowhere."

He planned to speak to the council, expecting to be the only one. Instead, he discovered others sharing their frustrations. He said he has a "very negative view" of license plate readers, especially in Coralville.

"It feels like we're paying this \$36,000 [contract] to normalize the idea that being tracked by a private company is the price of living in Coralville," Wohlers told the Press-Citizen before Tuesday's meeting.

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Tara McGovern told the Press-Citizen they are "disappoint(ed) and sad" that the city is considering dropping the Flock restrictions to aid

immigration enforcement. They said it's "past time to admit the contract was a mistake." McGovern said they believe the council hasn't canceled its Flock contract because of "an unwillingness to admit fault and prioritize community safety."

"There are councilors who have expressly stated that they would never support sharing Flock data with ICE," McGovern told the Press-Citizen ahead of Tuesday's meeting. "And it's my expectation that they would stand behind their word."

Former government official opposes 'oppressive government overreach'

Former councilor Jill Dodds said at Tuesday's meeting that she had "every confidence" Coralville police would write "thorough policies" intended to protect residents, but she was "outrage(d)" after reviewing the attorney general's office's letter.

"I am here calling for you to stand against this oppressive government overreach, and stand beside and for the people you represent," Dodds told the council. "Those who rely on you, trust you, to serve and protect their best interests."

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