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Office of Eleventh District Alderman

March 14, 2008

Honorable Gary Becker, Mayor
Members of the Common Council
City of Racine
730 Washington Avenue
Racine, WI 53403

Dear Mayor Becker and Members of the Common Council:

Last year, we discussed a citizen request for cameras to monitor an alley. As part of that discussion, members of the Police Department informed us they were working on a system to provide security or surveillance cameras to parts of the city. At the time, I expressed some reservations about this and requested that the Common Council discuss this matter and work out a policy before we begin this type of program.

The city has been using cameras to secure its property for some time. However, we recently approved the use of cameras at some community policing locations that would also allow for surveillance of adjacent areas. There is a significant difference between securing property and the government surveillance of public places. The Mayor and Police Chief recently announced plans to have dozens of cameras monitoring other parts of the city as well. This may be common place in other cities, but it is new territory for Racine. While I am not necessarily against this, I do feel we should not take this step without talking about it and making an informed decision. Something of this gravity requires more than the implicit assent found in approving the purchase of the equipment. I believe it requires thoughtful deliberation and the explicit consent of the Common Council via a resolution.

Please refer to this important matter to the Committee of the Whole.

Respectfully,

Gregory T. Holding
Alderman of the 11th District

cc: City Clerk