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## Body cameras for St. Louis officers will cost \$1.2 million-plus

September 16, 2014 11:00 am • By Nicholas J.C. Pistor [npistor@post-dispatch.com](mailto:npistor@post-dispatch.com) 314-436-2239 85

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**ST. LOUIS** • The cost to outfit the city's police force with body cameras will come with a price tag of \$1.2 million — and that's just the start.

Richard Gray, the city's public safety director, told an aldermanic committee on Tuesday morning that the department would need an additional \$500,000 to cover labor and maintenance costs, plus an increase in the department's annual budget of about \$800,000 to \$900,000 for replacement and maintenance costs.

Officials are exploring the purchase in the wake of the crisis in Ferguson, in addition to the fatal shooting of Kajieme Powell last month by city officers, where a cellphone video revealed inconsistencies with the initial police account.

Police union officials appear skeptical and could mount a challenge to the deployment of the cameras.

Gray said the individual units range from \$295 to \$695, but they also need docking stations that charge the devices and download their data.

Gray said the city would purchase about 1,000 cameras to outfit most of its force if aldermen approve funding.

Jeff Roorda, business manager of the St. Louis Police Officers Association, wouldn't disclose the union's position on cameras at Tuesday's meeting.

"That's a conversation we'll have with the city's bargaining team," Roorda told the aldermen.

But Roorda warned that ordering the cameras before negotiating with the union "would be problematic."

Roorda said city officers didn't have helmets when they had bricks and bottles thrown at their heads while they were in Ferguson. He questioned how the city would suddenly have money for cameras.

The aldermen appeared largely supportive of purchasing cameras, but they haven't set a date where they will formally consider funding them.

"This does appear to be the wave of the future," said 28th Ward Alderman Lyda Krewson, who represents the Central West End neighborhood.

The cameras, which constantly record video, can be worn



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Chief Sam Dotson pledges transparency in police shootings with the creation of a new unit to investigate use of force. [Read more](#)

around an officer's neck or attached to sunglasses. The officers plug the cameras in to download the recordings at the end of their shifts. The video is kept on a data server.

Several area departments, including Ellisville and St. Louis County, have turned to the cameras since the fatal shooting death of unarmed teenager Michael Brown in Ferguson.

Video recordings would allow judges and juries to see events unfold, helping to shed light through the often-conflicting or hazy recollections of eyewitnesses. They also enable officials to clear up discrepancies between initial accounts and what actually happened.

For example, the police shooting of Powell on Aug. 19: Powell was pacing and muttering after taking items from the Six Stars Market, 8701 Riverview Boulevard, according to witnesses. When police arrived, they said Powell urged them to shoot and approached them with a knife. Two officers fired 12 shots that killed Powell.

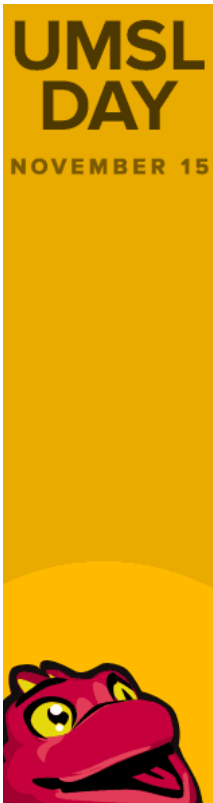
The shooting was captured by an onlooker's cellphone camera.

[Police Chief Sam Dotson initially told reporters that Powell came within 2 to 3 feet of the officers while gripping a knife and holding it high.](#)

The cellphone video, which [Dotson released the next day](#), appeared to show Powell at a farther distance, with his hands constantly at his waist.

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*Follow reporter Nick Pistor on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/nickpistor](https://www.twitter.com/nickpistor)*



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**Tags** St. Louis, Missouri, Law Enforcement, Richard Gray, Ferguson, Police Officer, Jeff Roorda, Public Safety Director, Roorda, Kajieme Powell

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