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DA'S OFFICE PRESENTS PLAN FOR CRIME PREVENTION CAMERAS IN HIGH-CRIME AREAS OF POTTSTOWN

NORRISTOWN, Pa.—The Montgomery County District Attorney's Office presented plans tonight to Pottstown's Borough Council regarding the installation of crime prevention video cameras that will be live monitored 24/7 by the Pottstown Police Department.

Brianna Ringwood, Assistant District Attorney and Captain of the DA's Community Prosecution Unit in Pottstown, discussed the plan, saying 10 cameras will be installed initially in stationary positions throughout the highest crime areas of the borough.

"Cameras like the ones to be installed in Pottstown have the capability of producing clear images by day and by night and have been proven to be key tools in apprehending suspects and aiding investigations prosecutions," said Ringwood. "Real-time monitoring by police is a key element to the effectiveness of the cameras."

The mounted cameras are stationary but can be moved to other locations as the need exists. All cameras will be positioned to display public views of streets and sidewalks—exactly what an officer or anyone else would see who was physically present onsite—and each camera will be connected to a wireless network with images monitored in real time from the dispatch room in the Pottstown Police Department. Installation is expected to take approximately two months.

This significant investment in the video system is being funded by the District Attorney's Office, showing a level of commitment to the community and to reducing crime in Pottstown. The system has the capabilities to expand to 36 cameras, and the District Attorney's Office is looking to partner with community stakeholders and businesses for the expansion of the system as more cameras mean more areas that are safer.

Chief F. Richard Drumheller said he is excited about this new policing tool. "I'm a big fan of all technology, and cameras are the wave of the future for policing," said Drumheller. "This system is like assigning a mini-patrol officer to watch your street 24/7."

An independent study of video camera usage by police in three cities conducted by the Urban Institute and funded by the U.S. Department of Justice (published in 2011) found that when the cameras were actively monitored, they were effective at cutting down crime and allowed for intervening in real time. Police, prosecutors and other stakeholders thought the cameras were a useful tool. Additionally, the savings and benefits of fewer crimes outweighed the cost of the surveillance system.

Approved for release:

Kevin R. Steele