

## **RESOLUTION 2026-071**

### **COLUMBIA HEIGHTS STATEMENT ON ANOKA COUNTY DRONE UTILIZATION**

A resolution of the City Council for the City of Columbia Heights, Minnesota,

The City Council of the City of Columbia Heights recognizes that the Anoka County Sheriff has proposed a county-wide Drone First Responder program that raises important questions regarding municipal consent, public transparency, privacy, and the management of data collected through law enforcement technology.

The City of Columbia Heights recognizes the Anoka County Sheriff's legal authority to utilize law enforcement technology throughout the County, including within Columbia Heights, and acknowledges that the City may not have the legal ability to opt out of deployments conducted under that authority.

The City expresses its disappointment that the County publicly represented that municipalities could "opt-out" of the program without providing a clear process or mechanism for doing so.

The City has concerns regarding data retention, access, sharing, and security, as well as community distrust associated with Flock technology and the broader use of surveillance tools.

The City acknowledges that Metro Surge contributed to distrust among members of the Columbia Heights community regarding large-scale law enforcement operations involving outside agencies, reinforcing the importance of transparency and accountability.

The City Council has confidence in the Columbia Heights Police Department and supports the City's ability to independently evaluate and operate its own drone program, with policies established by the City and data remaining under City control.

Anoka County representatives discussed the creation of a public transparency portal at a public open house, which could allow residents to track drone deployments and understand the rationale for their use.

The City believes that permanent drone infrastructure within Columbia Heights should not be established without meaningful local consultation and the City's express consent.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COLUMBIA HEIGHTS, MINNESOTA, AS FOLLOWS:**

**Section 1. Municipal Consent and Local Control.** The City Council expresses its opposition to implementing a county-wide Drone First Responder program without meaningful consultation and consent from affected municipalities. The City recognizes the Sheriff's legal authority to conduct law enforcement operations throughout Anoka County but believes such authority

should be exercised in partnership with local governments and with appropriate consideration of community concerns.

**Section 2. Drone Dock Placement.** The City Council requests that Anoka County not establish a drone dock within Columbia Heights.

**Section 3. Public Transparency.** The City Council urges Anoka County to establish the transparency portal discussed at the public open house. To the extent legally permissible, the portal should provide timely information regarding drone deployments, including general locations, dates and times, the agency initiating the deployment, and the rationale for use, subject to necessary protections for active investigations and legally protected information.

**Section 4. Data Governance and Privacy.** The City Council requests that Anoka County publicly disclose clear policies governing the collection, retention, access, sharing, security, and deletion of drone-generated data, including safeguards against unauthorized access and use beyond the original purpose of a deployment.

**Section 5. Community Trust and City Operations.** The City Council recognizes the impact that Metro Surge and concerns regarding surveillance technology have had on community trust. The City reaffirms its confidence in the Columbia Heights Police Department and supports exploring a City-operated drone program under locally established policies, with data collected through City-operated drones remaining under City control.

**Section 6. County Accountability and Collaboration.** The City Council expresses its disappointment that the County communicated an “opt-out” option without providing a clear mechanism to exercise it. The City requests that the County continue meaningful engagement with affected cities, and involve municipalities in decisions concerning infrastructure placement, deployment practices, transparency, and data governance.

**Section 7. Distribution.** The City Manager is directed to transmit this resolution to the Anoka County Board of Commissioners, Anoka County Sheriff, Anoka County Administrator, and other appropriate governmental representatives.

Passed this 26<sup>th</sup> day of October 2026.

Offered by:

Seconded by:

Roll Call:

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Amáda Márquez Simula, Mayor

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City Manager