

# Nassau County buys 2,500 body cameras for police department

By [Robert Pelaez](#) - May 28, 2021



Nassau County Executive Laura Curran announced the purchase of body cameras for the county's police department on Thursday. (Photo courtesy of the county executive's office)

Nassau County Executive Laura Curran announced the purchase of 2,500 body cameras for the county's police department on Thursday.

Curran, who touted the police department's commitment to decreasing major crime throughout Nassau, said the use of body cameras will heighten "accountability, safety, and improved officer performance."

"Our goal is to build trust between police and the communities they serve," Curran said in a Thursday press conference. "Body cameras help build that trust. Police Departments across the country that have implemented body camera programs know that they are helpful for documenting evidence, officer training, preventing and resolving complaints brought up by the public, and strengthening police transparency, performance, and accountability."

The county selected Ronkonkoma-based Island Tech Services to provide the camera technology and handle training and technical support for the officers, Curran said.

Body cameras were one of several measures included in a [424-page plan](#) to reform Nassau County's policing that Curran released in February.

The plan, which the [county Legislature approved 16-3 in March](#), was submitted in accordance with an executive order that Gov. Andrew Cuomo signed in mid-June of last year requiring police agencies to devise plans to "reinvent and modernize police strategies" after Minneapolis cops killed George Floyd.

The estimated cost to fully implement the body-camera initiative by the end of the year will be around \$5 million, according to county officials.

Nassau County Police Commissioner Patrick Ryder said the body cameras will begin to appear on all patrol officers in one precinct by September before the initiative expands across the department by the end of the year.

The body-camera initiative features a \$3,000 annual stipend for each officer that wears a camera, which depends on the approval of a new labor agreement between Nassau County and its Police Benevolent Association, the cops' labor union.

In December, the union rejected a contract that would provide police officers with a 25 percent raise over eight and a half years along with the annual body camera stipend.

Union President James McDermott said the proposed contract was defeated on Dec. 23 by 143 votes, according to Newsday. McDermott did not provide further specifics on the action taken by the nearly 1,600-member union. Efforts to reach McDermott or another representative of the union for comment were unavailing.

Local activists have expressed their displeasure with the proposed initiative, saying the use of body cameras does not immediately resolve all of the issues with police departments.

"Body cameras don't mean a thing unless you change the culture," Hempstead-based Civil rights attorney Frederick K. Brewington told Newsday.

"There should be real, structural changes, and I'm not just talking about damn body cameras where they're going to get a stipend to wear them," Shanequa Levin of Long Island United to Transform Policing & Community Safety said when the PBA rejected the contract in December. "I'm talking about real

change, like how ticketing can be handled differently, how we handle mental health cases differently, how we handle drug cases differently. I'm talking about reducing the footprint of the police in our streets."