CITY OF DETROIT
DEPARTMENT OF ELECTIONS

City Code Section 17-5-453
SURVEILLANCE TECHNOLOGY SPECIFICATION REPORT

September 17, 2026

INTRODUCTION

The City of Detroit Department of Elections is committed to operating with full transparency and with the utmost respect for the citizens, stakeholders, and governing authorities of the City of Detroit.

This Surveillance Technology Specification Report provides a detailed overview of the specifications, intended purpose, operational benefits, and fiscal impact associated with the deployment of proposed equipment for the Department of Elections.

This report reflects the Department's responsibility to safeguard the democratic process, uphold voter trust, and ensure that all election-related technologies are deployed and managed in compliance with applicable City ordinances and Michigan election law.

OVERVIEW

The Department of Elections is implementing enhanced ballot-handling security measures through the acquisition of **two Sentinel Secure Smart Dropboxes**, produced by Runbeck Election Services. The Sentinel Secure Smart Dropbox is designed to strengthen the integrity of absentee ballot handling by creating a verifiable record of each ballot submission. The system captures a still image of the voter depositing the ballot and a digital image of the ballot envelope, along with its barcode, to establish a reliable link between the individual submitting the ballot and the ballot envelope itself. This supports secure chain-of-custody documentation and provides an auditable record of each drop-off.

The units will be deployed at the **Department of Elections headquarters (2978 W. Grand Blvd.)** and the **City Clerk's Office at the Coleman A. Young Municipal Center (2 Woodward Ave.)** to ensure geographic coverage, ADA access, and secure public dropbox options.

CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

City Code Section 17-5-453 - Surveillance Technology Specification Reports.

(a) The Department of Elections certifies that this information contained in this document reflects the complete and accurate proposed use of the technology.

(b) This report has been approved by the Director of the Department of Elections.

1. DESCRIPTION OF THE SURVEILLANCE TECHNOLOGY AND ITS CAPABILITIES

The Sentinel Secure Smart Dropbox is a secure ballot-deposit system containing integrated surveillance capabilities designed specifically for election administration:

- Front-facing camera capturing a still image of the voter at the moment of ballot envelope

insertion.
- Barcode scanner linking envelope barcodes to the associated voter-insertion image and envelope images.
- High-resolution capture of both sides of each envelope deposited.
- Automatic creation of secure audit files including images, barcode data, timestamps, and metadata.
- Administrative dashboard providing access to activity logs, extraction tools, and system reports.
- Optional cellular connectivity for audit-data transmission.
- Reinforced steel structure, locking mechanisms, ADA-compliant design, and fire-suppression system.
- Waterproof, fire-resistant backup drive protecting captured data.

2. PURPOSE OF THE TECHNOLOGY

The integrated camera and barcode scanner create a digital record intended to improve transparency, reinforce proof-of-delivery, and support tracking of ballot envelopes throughout established chain-of-custody processes. Supporters of such technology view these features as tools for strengthening public confidence in vote-by-mail systems, enhancing documentation, and addressing common concerns about ballot drop box security and handling.

The Department will continue to rely on official election procedures and State-mandated safeguards to ensure secure, trustworthy ballot handling and will evaluate all captured data strictly within the scope of legally defined election administration practices.

The Sentinel Secure Smart Dropboxes are intended to:
- Enhance chain-of-custody verification for absentee ballots.
- Increase transparency through timestamped and audited documentation of ballot deposits.
- Provide an ADA-accessible, secure method for voters to deposit absentee ballots.
- Improve administrative oversight and retrieval documentation.
- Protect ballot envelopes from tampering, weather damage, or fire.
- Support high-integrity election operations and public confidence.

Use of this technology is limited exclusively to lawful election administration functions.

3. DEPLOYMENT

The technology will be deployed at:

1. Department of Elections Headquarters, 2978 W. Grand Blvd., Detroit, MI 48202
2. City Clerk's Office – Coleman A. Young Municipal Center, 2 Woodward Ave., Detroit, MI 48226

Deployment factors considered:

- Voter-access needs
- Anticipated absentee ballot volume
- ADA accessibility
- Safety, lighting, and visibility
- Secure placement and retrieval logistics
- Compliance with chain-of-custody procedures

4. FISCAL IMPACT

Equipment Costs (Year 1):

- Sentinel Outdoor Units (2 × $15,000) …… $30,000
- Software/Support/Warranty (2 × $2,500) …… $5,000
- Add-ons (cellular, solar, batteries, wraps, charging station) …… $9,900
- **Total Initial Procurement: $44,900**

Ongoing Annual Costs (Years 2–5):

- Year 2–5 Support/Warranty …… **$21,546 total**

5. CIVIL RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES IMPACT

Potential Impacts

- Voter-insertion images may raise concerns among individuals uncomfortable with any form of recorded activity.
- Risk of deterrence among voters who misinterpret the camera as an identification tool.
- Possibility of unauthorized access to images or metadata if safeguards fail.

Safeguards

- No continuous monitoring; only a single still image captured per deposit.
- Images are used strictly for chain-of-custody verification, not voter identification.
- Access restricted to authorized Elections personnel only.
- Data stored securely with fire and water-resistant backup hardware.
- Clear public communication describing the limited purpose of the image capture.
- Compliance with state election-security standards.

These measures collectively safeguard civil liberties and prevent misuse.

6. AUTHORIZED USES AND PROHIBITED USES

Authorized Uses

- Capturing envelope images, barcode data, and voter-insertion photos for chain-of-custody documentation.
- Secure storage of deposited absentee ballots.
- Retrieval and audit processes conducted by trained staff.

Prohibited Uses

- Identification or verification of voters.
- Any law-enforcement or non-election-related activity.
- Continuous video surveillance.
- Sharing data beyond legally required channels.

7. DATA COLLECTION

Collected data:

- Still image of voter inserting the envelope
- Front/back images of ballot envelopes
- Envelope barcode data
- Timestamps and location metadata
- Administrative access logs (dashboard, data extraction)

Inadvertent collection is limited because images occur only at the moment of insertion. Non-pertinent images will be flagged and securely deleted under retention rules.

8. DATA PROTECTION

Safeguards include:

- Access-controlled dashboard
- Secure internal storage
- Fire-resistant and waterproof backup drive
- Reinforced steel structure and locking mechanisms
- Encryption and City IT-compliant transfer methods
- Restricted access limited to trained personnel

9. DATA RETENTION

Retention governed by:

- Michigan election law
- City records-management policy
- Legal guidance
- Audit and certification timelines

Data is retained only as long as necessary for election verification, then deleted through secure methods with documented auditing.

10. SURVEILLANCE DATA SHARING

Not Shared With:

- Law enforcement
- Private entities
- Political organizations

Shared Only When Legally Required:

- Court orders
- FOIA requests
- Mandatory audits
- Cybersecurity incident review (internal departments only)

11. DEMANDS FOR ACCESS TO SURVEILLANCE DATA

Access to surveillance data will require:

- A lawful court order, subpoena, or statutory mandate
- FOIA review and approval by the Law Department
- Compliance with Michigan election confidentiality provisions

No third-party access will be granted absent legally binding authority.

12. AUDITING AND OVERSIGHT

Oversight procedures include:

- Internal Elections chain-of-custody audits
- Cybersecurity compliance review
- Director-approved system configuration changes
- Post-election verification of audit logs, access records, and incidents
- Data-retention compliance checks

These mechanisms ensure ongoing adherence to this Surveillance Technology Specification Report.

13. TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

Training covers:

- Chain-of-custody procedures
- Dashboard operations and audit generation
- Privacy and civil-rights protections
- Technical troubleshooting and incident reporting
- ADA-compliant voter interaction standards

Training must be completed prior to use.

14. COMPLAINTS AND PUBLIC FEEDBACK

Members of the public may submit complaints or questions regarding the Sentinel dropboxes to the Department of Elections by email to Dejon.johnson@detroitmi.gov.