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Accord announced on funds for anti-crime cameras

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Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett and Common Council President Willie Hines Jr. have reached a deal to pay for 15 pole-mounted video surveillance cameras, the two officials announced Monday.

Of the 15 cameras, 10 are planned for high-crime areas, with three targeted at the Summerfest grounds and two near the Bradley Center. They would be monitored by police staffers, who could dispatch officers when the cameras spot a crime in progress.

The deal defuses a funding dispute that had threatened to stall the anti-crime initiative, clearing the way for council action today. The council's Public Safety Committee had backed the cameras, but the Finance & Personnel Committee had refused to pay for them with \$525,000 from the city's contingency fund.

Aldermen said they had been misled into believing federal aid would cover nearly all costs. During the two committee meetings and in interviews afterward, city administrators never clearly laid out the total cost of the cameras or explained exactly where all the funding would come from.

Counting five mobile cameras planned for the project's second phase, the total cost of the 20-camera system would be more than \$1 million, with federal aid covering \$404,000, said Eileen Force, Barrett's spokeswoman. Another \$597,000 would come from the Department of Public Works and Police Department budgets, she said.

The five mobile cameras would be shared with other law enforcement agencies in the region.