

Effort to mandate surveillance cameras grows in scope

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What started as a push to have Philadelphia bars install exterior surveillance cameras on Monday became a broader debate about mandating cameras elsewhere, including all parking garages.

The suggestion that garages be required to have cameras was made to City Council by the lawyer for a woman who was beaten and raped in a Center City garage on New Year's Day.

"Regrettably, common sense has not been sufficient to convince the parking garages - some of them at least - to go forward and have video surveillance in all areas of public access," **Shanin Specter** told Council.

The possibility of requiring cameras inside garages was warmly received by some members of Council, who met Monday to vet a bill that would require exterior cameras at some bars and restaurants. That legislation was introduced at the urging of Karen Montgomery, mother of Shane Montgomery, the West Chester University student whose body was found in the Schuylkill in January, five weeks after he went missing after leaving a nearby bar.

Councilman Curtis Jones Jr., who wrote the bill, said it would be

amended over Council's summer break to address concerns from the business community. The Pennsylvania Restaurant and Lodging Association has opposed the bill, saying it targets one industry and would be a fiscal burden.

Jones also said he wants to discuss where cameras are most needed to deter and solve crimes. Another councilman raised concerns about a lack of cameras in residential areas, and suggested the city might cover part of the cost for residents to install cameras, if police can access them to solve crimes.

"There's a lot of dialogue that needs to happen," Jones said. "And rightfully so."

Specter said his client was beaten and raped in broad daylight on the sixth floor of a garage at 17th and Callowhill Streets. He said the garage had just two cameras, and called garages without cameras a "pocket of vulnerability" where career criminals know they can commit crimes. (A man has been charged with the attack and is awaiting trial.)

Specter said he had talked with the city's parking association about drafting a joint camera proposal, which Council could consider adopting.

Parkway Corp. president Robert Zuritsky, who is also president of the parking association, said he was open to talking with his members about a camera mandate. He added

that many garage owners take security seriously.

"There are many, many very, very responsible owners of garages and operators of garages that are extremely security-conscious," he said.

Jones' bill, as written, would require cameras outside any business with a special assembly occupancy license, a license required of any space that can accommodate 50 people or more and is used for live entertainment, such as a DJ or band.

Half the cost of the camera, up to \$3,000, could be covered by an existing city program, as long as the recordings were made available to police investigating crimes.

Karen Montgomery on Monday asked Council to support the bill.

"I have no delusions that any camera would have saved my Shane," she said. "However, I am convinced without a doubt that had video shown his direction upon leaving his last stop, the suffering endured during searches without direction would have been lessened."

Correction: This story has been revised to correctly reflect the location where Shane Montgomery's body was found.