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Report: Jim Reeves' Investigative Coverage of Visalia's Flock Safety ALPR Program

Written by [Porterville College Yearbook Project](#) in [Uncategorized](#)

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Source Material: "Consent Calendar – Burying the Lede," Jim Reeves commentary, October 24, 2026

Classification: Public interest / civic oversight analysis

1. Executive Summary

Jim Reeves, a retired Visalia resident and independent blogger, has produced a sustained, multi-year body of investigative journalism documenting the City of Visalia's adoption and expansion of Flock Safety automated license plate reader (ALPR) technology. His October 24, 2026 post, "Consent Calendar – Burying the Lede," serves as both a capstone summary and a new revelation in a series that now spans more than two dozen published entries.

This report assesses three dimensions of Reeves' work:

1. The substance of his findings — what the public record shows about how Visalia approved Flock without meaningful public discussion.
 2. The thoroughness of his documentation — his use of agenda packets, public records requests, presentations, video, and primary-source attachments.
 3. His evolution into the de facto Flock expert of Visalia — how a retiree with a blog became the most persistent institutional memory on this issue, and what that says about local press coverage and civic engagement.
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2. Background: The Subject Matter

Flock Safety is a private company that sells ALPR camera subscriptions to municipalities. Key characteristics relevant to Reeves' reporting:

- The city owns no equipment; cameras, poles, and solar panels remain Flock property.
- The city does not control the installed equipment; it is a subscription service, not a purchase or lease.
- Data is stored off-site — Reeves discovered it is hosted on Amazon AWS GovCloud (US), not Flock-owned servers.
- Flock requires users to permit anonymized data use for AI training.
- Retention periods (e.g., 30 days) and access policies are governed by contract and company policy, not direct municipal control.

These features form the factual backbone of Reeves' ownership-and-control critique.

3. Substantive Findings in the October 24, 2026 Post

3.1 The “Buried Lede” Thesis

Reeves argues that Visalia officials repeatedly placed Flock-related approvals on the consent calendar — the portion of a council agenda reserved for routine items passed in bulk without discussion. Because no council member pulled these items for separate consideration, there was no public debate, and the full calendar passed unanimously each time. His rhetorical framing (“City of Visalia, I’m looking at you”) positions this as a deliberate or negligent pattern of obscuring newsworthy facts behind dull procedural language.

3.2 Documented Timeline of Council Actions

Date	Agenda Placement	Public-Facing Text	ALPR/Flock Mention	Vote
Nov 6, 2023	Consent calendar	Grant funding; “agreement” with Sheriff’s Office	Buried at bottom of page 1 of packet; described as “joint purchase program”	5-0, not pulled
Oct 21, 2024	Consent calendar	First time Flock ALPR named in the listing itself	Visible in agenda listing	5-0, not pulled
Jan 21, 2025	Consent calendar	Grant acceptance /appropriation only	Buried in packet; “Prior Council Action: None” (incorrect)	3-0 (Nelsen, Wynn absent)

Date	Agenda Placement	Public-Facing Text	ALPR/Flock Mention	Vote
Sep 21, 2026	Regular item (public presentation)	Full public presentation by Chief Salazar	Explicit	Presented publicly

Reeves highlights two anomalies: (1) the November 2023 description of a “joint purchase program” when no purchase occurred, and (2) repeated “Prior Council Action: None” entries despite prior approvals – which he attributes to copy-paste error but flags as a records-integrity concern.

3.3 The September 2026 Public Presentation

After public questions and social media concern – which Reeves claims partial responsibility for generating – VPD brought the item as a regular agenda item. Chief Jason Salazar acknowledged that “typically grant approvals come to the council on the consent calendar,” effectively confirming the procedural pattern Reeves had documented. Reeves attaches the official presentation (26-0110) and links the YouTube video.

3.4 Performance Claims vs. Records

VPD credits Flock with solving two homicides and reducing stolen vehicle reports. Reeves counters that the stolen-vehicle reduction is hard to attribute given low public awareness of the cameras. Critically, his California Public Records Act (CPRA) request covering January 1, 2025–May 29, 2026 found no missing persons recovered – despite missing-persons recovery being a commonly cited justification for ALPR deployment.

3.5 The “Twist”: AWS GovCloud Hosting

The post’s new revelation is that Flock stores its images and data on Amazon AWS GovCloud (US), not on Flock-owned infrastructure. Reeves

frames this as:

- Adding a third-party vulnerability layer to sensitive surveillance data.
- Potentially explaining Flock's carefully worded claim that "Flock has never been hacked" – any breach would occur at Amazon.
- Raising questions about whether AWS was implicated in the "system bugs" and "feature reactivations" Flock blamed for alleged unauthorized nationwide access to California data (February–March 2024 and a nine-week window in late 2024, in alleged violation of SB 34).

3.6 Civic Apathy Observation

Reeves notes that despite national momentum against Flock and ALPR systems, Visalia has seen almost no public comment at council meetings and minimal visible social media opposition. He concludes there is no political pressure on the council to end the subscription, closing with: "I'm not hopeful at this point."

4. Assessment of Thoroughness and Documentation

Reeves' post is notable for the density of primary-source citations embedded directly in the text. Specifically:

4.1 Documents Attached or Linked

- Agenda_11_06_2023_flock – November 2023 agenda packet excerpt
- 10_21_2024_consent_agenda_complete – October 2024 full consent agenda packet
- Agenda_01_21_2025_consent_agenda_item_flock – January 2025 agenda item

- Agenda_09_21_2026_regular_item_flock – September 2026 regular item packet
- 26-0110 – 2026 Flock – VPD PPT – official police department presentation
- YouTube video link – recording of the September 2026 public presentation

This is the document trail a professional reporter would assemble. Each claim about what the agenda said, when it said it, and what was hidden in the packet is verifiable against an attached file.

4.2 Methods Employed

1. Direct agenda and packet review across four distinct meetings spanning nearly three years.
2. California Public Records Act requests – notably the request yielding the Jan 1, 2025–May 29, 2026 missing-persons data.
3. Meeting video capture and quotation of officials (Chief Salazar's remarks).
4. Contractual/technical research – the AWS GovCloud discovery and the AI-training data-use requirement.
5. Cross-referencing of state law – SB 34 and alleged 2024 data-access violations.
6. Longitudinal tracking – comparing “Prior Council Action” fields across packets to detect inconsistencies.

4.3 Strengths

- Persistence over time: The series spans from at least the 2023 approval through 2026, giving it institutional-memory value no single news cycle could provide.
- Primary-source discipline: Claims are anchored to attached documents rather than recollection.

- **Willingness to self-attribute:** He openly notes he may be “responsible for some of” the social media concern that forced the September 2026 public presentation — a transparency rarely seen in advocacy writing.
- **Distinguishes position from persona:** He explicitly states he is “not against the idea of license plate readers in general,” separating his control/accountability critique from blanket technophobia, which strengthens credibility.
- **Falsifiable claims:** The “Prior Council Action: None” errors and the “joint purchase program” misdescription are concrete, checkable factual assertions.

4.4 Limitations (for balance)

- **Advocacy framing:** The blog is openly opinionated (“Flock you later,” “Flock the Lawyers”), which may limit its reach with skeptical readers, though it does not undermine the underlying documents.
- **Selective emphasis:** The post emphasizes omissions and procedural maneuvering; it does not deeply explore VPD’s operational rationale beyond quoting the chief’s procedural remark.
- **Speculation flagged as such:** The AWS-hack hypothesis and the Amazon-as-root-cause question are posed rather than proven — appropriately hedged, but still speculative.
- **No independent third-party verification cited:** The work is largely solo; there is no indication of editorial review, though the attached documents allow readers to verify independently.

5. The “Flock Expert of Visalia” Phenomenon

5.1 Breadth of the Series

The post’s closing list enumerates more than two dozen prior entries, including titles such as “What the Flock?,” “Flock the Lawyers,” “Hidden in

the Flock,” “Half A Million Flocks in May, 2026,” “Flock and Ding Dong Dash in Porterville,” “Visalia City Council Misled? Or is it just semantics?”, and “And the answer is still NO.” The series covers:

- Procurement and contract structure
- City council procedure and transparency
- Police department policy compliance (“Is Visalia PD following its own License Plate Reader policy?”)
- Public records litigation/requests (“Flock the Lawyers,” “Another Day, Another Public Records Request”)
- Regional expansion (“Another Flock of Cameras in Visalia,” Porterville coverage)
- Statewide scale (“Half A Million Flocks in May, 2026”)

This is not a single-issue rant; it is a **beat**.

5.2 How a Retiree Became the Expert

Several factors explain Reeves' emergence as the de facto authority:

1. **Time and continuity:** Retirement afforded the hours needed to read full agenda packets — the very documents the public-facing agenda summaries obscure. Most residents, and even many reporters, never open the packet PDFs.
2. **Institutional memory:** Council members rotate, staff turn over, and newsrooms shrink. Reeves' archive preserves what was approved, when, and under what wording — including the “Prior Council Action: None” inconsistencies that would otherwise vanish.
3. **Procedural literacy:** He understands consent calendars, packet structure, CPRA mechanics, and how to cross-reference “prior action” fields. This is the skill set of a municipal reporter or city clerk.
4. **Document attachment as method:** By embedding downloadable files in every post, he creates a public evidence locker that others — including journalists, activists, and possibly litigants — can draw on.

5. **Willingness to be a participant:** He acknowledges influencing the social media discourse that prompted the September 2026 public hearing, moving from observer to catalyst.

5.3 Implications

- **Local press gap:** The fact that a retiree's blog is the most complete public record of a multi-year surveillance procurement suggests a coverage vacuum in Visalia-area media on municipal technology contracting.
- **Accountability function:** Reeves' work has already produced a concrete outcome – VPD's decision to present Flock as a regular item with public Q&A rather than bury it on consent. That is a measurable transparency win attributable, at least in part, to his pressure.
- **Model for civic journalism:** The attach-the-documents, track-the-procedure, follow-the-series approach is replicable by residents in other cities facing similar ALPR and surveillance expansions.
- **Risk of single-point dependency:** The record currently rests substantially on one individual's volunteer effort. Without institutional adoption (e.g., a library archive, newsroom partnership, or public-records repository), continuity is fragile.

6. Key Takeaways

1. **The procedural story is the story:** Reeves' core finding is not that Visalia bought cameras, but that it approved them repeatedly through consent calendars with no discussion and, in some packets, no accurate prior-action disclosure. Procedure was the mechanism of obscurity.
2. **Documentation is the post's strongest asset:** Six attached/linked primary sources across four meetings, plus a CPRA-derived data point and a state-law cross-reference, make the claims checkable.

3. The AWS GovCloud revelation adds a new dimension: Data custody and third-party vulnerability are now part of the public conversation, framed with appropriate hedging.
 4. Reeves has become Visalia's Flock archivist and interlocutor: A two-dozen-post series, sustained over years, has made him the reference point for residents, press, and possibly officials on this issue.
 5. Impact is measurable but incomplete: The September 2026 public presentation is a transparency gain; the absence of missing-persons recoveries undercuts a key justification; but public apathy persists, and Reeves himself is "not hopeful."
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7. Recommendations (for civic stakeholders)

- For local media: Treat Reeves' document attachments as a tip sheet and independently verify the "Prior Council Action: None" discrepancies and the "joint purchase program" description.
 - For the City of Visalia: Correct prior-action fields in the record; consider a standing policy requiring surveillance-technology contracts to be regular agenda items with public presentation.
 - For residents: The consent calendar is where routine-looking but consequential items pass unexamined; request and read the full packet, not just the summary agenda.
 - For archivists/librarians: Preserve and index the Reeves series as a local government accountability collection, given its single-point-of-failure risk.
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8. Conclusion

"Consent Calendar – Burying the Lede" is the work of a disciplined amateur who has, through persistence, procedural literacy, and primary-source documentation, become the most thorough chronicler of Visalia's

Flock ALPR program. The post is opinionated but evidentially grounded; its attached documents do the heavy lifting, and its new AWS GovCloud finding extends the inquiry into data-custody territory. Whether or not one shares Reeves' conclusions, his archive now constitutes a de facto public record of how the city approved a surveillance subscription — one meeting, one packet, and one consent calendar at a time. That a retiree's blog fills this role is both a testament to his diligence and an indictment of the local coverage gap he has come to occupy.

Prepared as an analytical summary of the source post. All factual claims about city actions should be verified against the original agenda packets and public records referenced therein.

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