

INTRODUCTION

On September 2, 2025, *The Intercept* published an article detailing how Marshall Freeman, the Chief Administrative Officer (“CAO”) of the Atlanta Police Department (“APD”) reportedly “duped” multiple cities into signing multimillion dollar contracts with the police technology company, Fusus.¹ An ethics investigation by the City of Atlanta’s Ethics Office culminated in a final decision and report (hereinafter, the “Ethics Report”) finding that Freeman violated multiple provisions of the City’s Code of Ethics/Standards of Conduct. According to the Ethics Report, these violations arise out of: (1) Freeman’s participation in at least fifteen official city matters involving Fusus; (2) Freeman’s failure to disclose that he sat on Fusus’ board and that Fusus was a client of his private consulting firm, Blue Maverick; and (3) Freeman’s misuse of his city email account for private advantage and to conduct personal business on at least six occasions.² The Atlanta Ethics Office fined Freeman \$5,000 for these violations.³ Mr. Freeman has appealed the decision, and because of bureaucratic delays, his appeal will not be heard until September 2026—more than a year after Ethics Office completed their investigation. .

Drawing on the public reporting in *The Intercept* and other news publications, the Oversight Project announced that it launched an investigation into police contracting in American cities.⁴ We submitted public records requests to cities mentioned in the Ethics Report

¹ Timothy Pratt & Andrew Free, “Duped”: How One Atlanta Cop Secretly Shilled for Police Tech, *The Intercept* (Sep. 2, 2025), <https://theintercept.com/2025/09/02/atlanta-seattle-police-axon-fusus-surveillance/>.

² Marshall B. Freeman, No. CO-25-001, slip op. at 1, 13–17 (Atlanta Ethics Off. May 27, 2025) (final dec. & rep.) [hereinafter “Final Dec. & Rep.”], <https://s.ipvm.com/uploads/cd8d/5442/co-25-001-final-decision-and-report-m-freeman-1.pdf> (last visited Aug. 12, 2026).

³ *Id.*

⁴ Press Release, Oversight Project, Oversight Project Launches Investigation into Corrupt Police Contracting Scandal (Jan. 20, 2026), <https://itsyourgov.org/oversight-project-launches-investigation-into-corrupt-police-contracting-scandal/>.

to obtain additional information about potential corruption in police contracting. On May 18, 2026, we published the first report of our investigation, which revealed troubling findings relating to police contracting in the Chicago suburb town of Oak Brook and DuPage County, Illinois.⁵ In that report, we published communications between police leadership and Axon-Fusus personnel which highlight a suspicious relationship between government officials and the vendor. We called on relevant authorities to conduct an exhaustive investigation into our findings and take appropriate action based on relevant ethics and contracting laws and regulations. This report is the second report in our investigation and draws on new, unreported documents obtained from the City of Atlanta.

According to the Ethics Report, Freeman told investigators that “he consulted on behalf of Fusus from approximately September or October of 2022 to late January 2024.”⁶ On May 19, 2022, Axon Enterprises announced that it had entered into a “strategic partnership” with Fusus to expand the capabilities of real-time crime data gathering capabilities.⁷ As part of the deal, Axon acquired a minority stake in Fusus for \$21 million.⁸ Axon announced its complete acquisition of Fusus on February 1, 2024.⁹ Axon paid \$241.3 million to acquire the remaining stake in Fusus.¹⁰

⁵ Press Release, The Oversight Project, Oversight Project Releases First Report on Police Contracting Investigation (May 18, 2026), <https://itsyourgov.org/press/oversight-project-releases-first-report-on-police-contracting-investigation>.

⁶ Final Dec. & Rep at 10.

⁷ Press Release, Axon, Axon and Fusus Partner to Provide Enhanced Real-Time Community Policing Solutions, Axon Enterprise, Inc. (May 19, 2022), <https://investor.axon.com/2022-05-19-Axon-and-Fusus-Partner-to-Provide-Enhanced-Real-Time-Community-Policing-Solutions>.

⁸ Axon Enterprise, Inc., Current Report (Form 8-K) Ex. 99.1 (Aug. 9, 2022).

⁹ Press Release, Axon, Axon Accelerates Real-Time Operations Solution with Strategic Acquisition of Fusus, Axon Enterprise, Inc. (Feb. 1, 2024), <https://investor.axon.com/2024-02-01-Axon-Accelerates-Real-Time-Operations-Solution-with-Strategic-Acquisition-of-Fusus>.

¹⁰ Axon Enterprise, Inc., Quarterly Report (Form 10-Q), at 24 (May 7, 2024).

The newly obtained documents from the APD further call into question Freeman's statements to the Atlanta Ethics Office about his relationship with Axon-Fusus. We uncovered new documents revealing additional contacts with and on behalf of Axon-Fusus that were not addressed in the Ethics Report. In particular, we found:

- **Freeman Continued Communications with Axon and Fusus Representatives While he was Under Investigation:** The Atlanta Ethics Office's investigation into Freeman ran from early 2024 through May 2025. Freeman was aware of the ethics investigation on or before June 12, 2024. Records show Freeman maintained communications with Fusus and Axon representatives, brokering introductions, promoting Fusus to other vendors and government procurement officers, and hosting Fusus company visits at APD headquarters while he was under investigation.
- **Freeman Maintained Communications with Axon and Fusus After the Ethics Investigation Concluded:** After the Atlanta Ethics Office concluded its investigation and issued the Ethics Report finding wrongdoing by Freeman and imposing monetary sanctions, it appears that Freeman returned to business as usual with Axon-Fusus. These contacts include organizing both a Fusus presentation to the City of Vancouver, Canada deputy police chief, and a private dinner involving representatives of both Fusus and Citizen (another surveillance tech company), along with APD Police Chief Darin Schierbaum in January 2026.
- **Delayed Closure and Accountability:** The Atlanta Ethics Office completed its initial investigation of Freeman's alleged conflicts of interest and misuse of city property on May 27, 2025 and assessed a \$5,000 administrative sanction. More than a year later, the matter remains unresolved. Freeman has appealed the initial decision articulated in the Ethics Report. However, due to bureaucratic delays, including Atlanta's status as a host city for the World Cup, Freeman's appeal hearing will not be held until November 2026.

FREEMAN MAINTAINED COMMUNICATIONS WITH AXON-FUSUS REPRESENTATIVES WHILE HE WAS UNDER ETHICS INVESTIGATION

On March 8, 2024, the Atlanta Community Press Collective ("ACPC") sent Freeman a series of questions concerning his relationship and with Axon-Fusus.. In particular, the ACPC inquiry noted that Freeman's January 23, 2024 ethics disclosure "identif[ied] a financial conflict of interest and document[ed] [Freeman's] recusal from discussion and voting on 'all financial

matters and decisions that have financial impact for the vendor Axon.”¹¹ The ACPC inquiry further noted that Freeman’s ethics disclosure “identified the source of [Freeman’s] financial conflict of interest as [Freeman’s] ‘interest in a company that is currently in talks with Axon around acquisition and investment.’”¹² Despite these claims in Freeman’s ethics disclosure, ACPC explained that records they received under the Georgia Open Records Act revealed that Freeman “corresponded with Axon representatives and/or Fusus representatives about additional uses of their technology by APD or other departments on January 9, January 18, and January 25 [2024]”, and “[was] quoted in a February 1, 2024 Axon press release announcing its acquisition of Fusus.”¹³ ACPC then submitted a series of questions to Freeman.¹⁴

Within 30 minutes, Freeman routed ACPC’s questions to Atlanta Chief of Police Darin Schierbaum, Chief Administrative Officer Peter Aman, and Public Affairs Director Chata Spikes.¹⁵ On March 11, Spikes informed ACPC only that “the appropriate ethics filing[s] were submitted.”¹⁶ ACPC submitted additional follow up questions to Spikes, and it appears that APD did not respond to them.¹⁷

On March 12, 2024, Atlanta Ethics Advisor Ibidapo Onabanjo confirmed to the ACPC that her office was actively reviewing whether Freeman’s conduct complied with Atlanta’s ethics rules.¹⁸ On March 21, 2024, the ACPC informed Freeman of its impending report on Freeman’s financial interests in “several City of Atlanta vendors.”¹⁹ It is unclear exactly when Freeman

¹¹ App. A (Ex. 1) at 003

¹² *Id.*

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ *See id.* at 003-004.

¹⁵ *See id.* at 002.

¹⁶ Final Dec. & Rep. (Ex. 6) at 42.

¹⁷ *See id.*

¹⁸ *Id.* (Ex. 12) at 74.

¹⁹ App. A (Ex. 1) at 002.

became aware of the City of Atlanta’s ethics investigation, however, the Ethics Report shows Freeman voluntarily participated in its investigation as early as June 12, 2024.²⁰

Public records obtained via the Georgia Open Records Act show that Freeman continued serving as the point man in communications with Fusus and others on Fusus’s behalf despite having knowledge of the ongoing investigation.²¹ These records do not appear in the Ethics Report, so we are inferring that they did not factor into the Atlanta Ethics Office’s findings and decision to render a \$5,000 administrative sanction. On August 1, 2024, with the ethics investigation well underway, Freeman personally brokered an introduction between GunTag CEO Troy Deus and former Fusus CEO-turned-Axon Senior Vice President Christopher Lindenau, writing to both: “As we think through the possibilities of working with GunTag at APD, it would be helpful for you both to connect as Fusus as [sic] the system that powers our intelligence.”²²

By November 12, 2024, Freeman was directly involved in an internal email chain entitled, “Atlanta Fusus Acknowledgement.”²³ The email chain began with an Axon representative requesting a formal acknowledgment of Fusus in the new Axon contract with APD.²⁴ Prior to its acquisition by Axon, APD never had a direct contract with Fusus. APD accessed the deliverables through the Atlanta Police Foundation’s (APF) contract with Fusus.²⁵ Yolanda Paschall, the Budget Management Chief, expressed confusion for why they would acknowledge Fusus without ever having a contract with them.²⁶ Freeman pushed back against

²⁰ See Final Dec. & Rep. (Add.) at 304.

²¹ See generally App. A.

²² App. A (Ex. 2) at 006–009.

²³ See *id.* (Ex. 3) at 011–014.

²⁴ See *id.* at 014.

²⁵ See *id.* at 012. This fact is a central point in the rebuttal that Freeman, through counsel, submitted to the Ethics Office and will likely be addressed in his appeal.

²⁶ See *id.*

this notion, writing: “From my perspective, this would need to be acknowledged. Without it being in the Axon paper, how else would we keep the solution? Fusus was paid for by APF for the initial term so now it would rollover to the existing agreement.”²⁷ Six days later, on November 18, 2024, Freeman organized and chaired an internal follow-up meeting on that same contract question.²⁸ Freeman’s response did not address Paschall’s concerns about why they would acknowledge Fusus under the Axon contract. Questions remain about why Freeman would advocate for the acknowledgement and why he was still involved in a contractual decision relating to Fusus and Axon while under active investigation for failing to disclose his financial ties to Axon-Fusus.

On February 13, 2025, Freeman hosted an in-person visit at APD headquarters for a joint Axon-Fusus and Citizen team.²⁹ Citizen’s representative, Maximilian Kramer thanked Freeman afterward for feedback described as “insightful and valuable.”³⁰ Four days later, on February 17, Freeman emailed the full joint team with Axon CEO Christopher Lindenau copied writing: “Thank you all for the visit to Atlanta. We enjoyed the conversation and look forward to next steps.”³¹ On March 3, 2025, Axon’s Director of Product Sanchit Agarwal emailed Freeman directly to coordinate the upcoming Citizen/Fusus integration launch, asking who would lead it from APD’s side. Freeman replied personally: “We are looking forward to the launch later this month.”³²

Citizen is a free smartphone application that provides users with real-time safety information, user generated content, and live updates about nearby emergencies, fires, and safety

²⁷ *Id.* at 011–012.

²⁸ *See* App. A (Ex. 3) at 015.

²⁹ *See id.* (Ex. 4) at 017–020.

³⁰ *Id.* at 019.

³¹ *Id.* at 018.

³² *Id.* at 017

incidents.³³ Citizen launched in Atlanta in 2020 and its “alerts are generated using publicly available emergency services data, and give users immediate, actionable insight into public safety in their communities, helping keep themselves and their families safe.”³⁴ Axon-Fusus provides the technology for Connect Atlanta, “which ties together license plate readers, public cameras, and privately owned cameras into a single surveillance platform” via a contract with the APF.³⁵ Freeman described himself as the “architect of the Connect Atlanta program” to ethics investigators.³⁶

In April 2025, Axon-Fusus and Citizen announced that they had integrated their systems. The Axon announcement stated, that the partnership created an “enhanced communication and situational awareness for cities using the Axon Fusus real-time crime center platform—giving agencies live context, especially in areas without traditional infrastructure.”³⁷ The Axon release explained further that the relationship “allows public safety teams to communicate directly with communities through the Citizen app during and after active incidents.”³⁸ The Citizen announcement touted that the relationship leverages the “power of Axon Fusus” to connect first responders, public safety agencies, and trusted organizations to faster, accurate alerts and real-time information when every second counts.”³⁹

³³ Citizen, *About*, <https://citizen.com/about> (last visited Aug. 12, 2026).

³⁴ Citizen, *Citizen Launches Real-Time Safety Tools in Atlanta*, Medium (Oct. 15, 2020), <https://medium.com/citizen/citizen-launches-real-time-safety-tools-in-atlanta-8a96cc2e2d09>.

³⁵ Timothy Pratt & Andrew Free, “Duped”: How One Atlanta Cop Secretly Shiled for Police Tech, *The Intercept* (Sep. 2, 2025), <https://theintercept.com/2025/09/02/atlanta-seattle-police-axon-fusus-surveillance/>; see also Connect Atlanta, <https://connectatlanta.org/> (last visited Aug. 12, 2026); Axon, *Axon-Fusus*, <https://www.axon.com/products/axon-fusus> (last visited Aug. 12, 2026).

³⁶ Final Dec. & Rep at ¶ 55.

³⁷ Press Release, Axon, Axon Announces New Fixed ALPR Camera Solutions and Next-Gen AI Advancements to Expand Real-Time Public Safety Ecosystem (Apr. 22, 2025) <https://www.axon.com/newsroom/press-releases/axon-announces-new-fixed-ALPR-camera-solutions-and-next-gen-AI-advancements-to-expand-real-time-public-safety-ecosystem>.

³⁸ *Id.*

³⁹ Citizen, *Verified Partnerships for Safer Communities*, <https://citizen.com/partnerships> (last visited Aug. 12, 2026).

These communications show that Freeman was still deeply involved in Axon-Fusus-related operational decisions, planning, and consulting while not only under active investigation for alleged conflicts of interest with Axon-Fusus, but also in spite of his January 2024 ethics disclosure attesting that he had recused from Axon matters.

FREEMAN RESUMED REGULAR CONTACT WITH AXON/FUSUS AFTER THE ETHICS INVESTIGATION CONCLUDED

The Atlanta Ethics Office’s investigation concluded in May 2025 and found that Freeman violated the City’s Code of Ethics by participating in at least 15 official city matters involving Fusus, a client of his private consulting firm, Blue Maverick, without disclosing his financial stake in the company, and by misusing his city email account at least 6 times for personal business.⁴⁰ Despite these findings, Freeman quickly resumed frequent contact with Fusus personnel and appears to have spoken to the Vancouver, Canada Police Department (“VPD”) about Fusus.⁴¹ On June 10, 2025, Chief Schierbaum organized an in-person meeting with Freeman and VPD Deputy Chief Alison Laurin with the calendar entry stating plainly: “The CAO [Freeman] will present a high level overview of the CAO for Vancouver D/C A. Laurin . . . A FUSUS presentation will also be provided.”⁴² According to the Ethics Report, Freeman was formally assigned the CAO role on May 15, 2024, making him the CAO referenced in that entry.⁴³

The Oversight Project received Freeman’s calendar entries in response to our records request. One curious entry reads, “Dinner with Citizen, Fusus & APD Leadership (Chief Schierbaum & CAO Freeman)” scheduled for January 12, 2026.⁴⁴ Given the previously

⁴⁰ Final Dec. & Rep. at 14–15 (citations omitted).

⁴¹ See App. A (Ex. 5) at 022.

⁴² *Id.*

⁴³ Final Dec. & Rep. at 1.

⁴⁴ App. A (Ex. 6) at 024.

announced integration between Axon-Fusus and Citizen, it is concerning that Freeman would participate in a dinner with the two companies following the Atlanta Ethic Office’s investigation and promulgation of the Ethics Reoport.

FREEMAN’S ETHICS APPEAL IS STILL PENDIG

On May 21, 2025, Freeman, through his attorney, responded to “Preliminary Findings” underlying the Ethics Report.⁴⁵ Freeman’s counsel admitted that his actions created an “appearance of impropriety” but otherwise asserted that the findings relating to Freeman’s failure to disclose interests connected to his consulting company’s relationship with Axon-Fusus and his improper use of city property “do not have merit.”⁴⁶ He requested that the City reconsider its preliminary findings and exonerate Mr. Freeman of these allegations.⁴⁷

The City of Atlanta underwent a corporate restructuring of its Ethics Office, splitting the board that previously oversaw both the Ethics Office and the Office of Inspector General into two separate bodies.⁴⁸ Following that restructuring, the Atlanta Board of Ethics lacked a quorum to hear cases and appeals between February 2025 and March 2026 and went nearly a full year in between board meetings.⁴⁹ The lack of quorum not only prohibited the holding of Board meetings, but also put on hold appeal hearings challenging the investigatory findings and sanctions administered by the Atlanta Ethics Office. The Board generally meets monthly, on the third Thursday of each month.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Final Dec. & Rep. (Add.) at 293–313.

⁴⁶ *Id.* at 294.

⁴⁷ *Id.*

⁴⁸ *New Atlanta Ethics Board Holds Its First Meeting*, Center for Civic Innovation (Mar. 27, 2026)

<https://civicatlanta.org/blog/2026-03-22-new-atlanta-ethics-board-holds-its-first-meeting>.

⁴⁹ See Atlanta Ethics Office, *About Us*, <https://atlantaethics.org/about/> (last visited Aug. 12, 2026).

⁵⁰ City of Atlanta, GA, *Governing Board of the Office of Inspector General and Ethics Office*, <https://www.atlantaga.gov/government/governing-board-of-the-office-of-the-inspector-general-and-ethics-office> (last visited Aug. 12, 2026).

Each Board meeting contains an update on enforcement actions. At the March 2026 Board meeting, Deputy Ethics Officer Carlos Santiago reported to the Board that Freeman's appeal hearing was set for June 18, 2026.⁵¹ The Board cancelled the April 2026 meeting.⁵² At the May 21, 2026 meeting, Deputy Ethics Officer Santiago informed the board that the scheduled June appeal hearings (including Freeman's) had to be moved, in part, because of potential transportation issues and issues accessing City Hall connected to Atlanta's status as a host city for the 2026 World Cup.⁵³ Santiago informed the Board that Freeman's appeal hearing is set for November 2026.⁵⁴ The Board did not ask any questions or engage in any discussions on the schedule change.⁵⁵ The Board cancelled its July 2026 meeting.⁵⁶ It's next Board meeting is scheduled for August 20, 2026.⁵⁷ Recall, the Atlanta Ethics Office completed its investigation and the Ethics Report in *May 2025*. The investigation was thorough and the fine substantial. But bureaucratic delays have left this saga without finality and closure for more than 18 months. The citizens of Atlanta deserve a more responsive government that conducts effective oversight of their hard earned taxpayer dollars.

CONCLUSION

This report uncovered records showing that Marshall Freeman maintained regular contact with Fusus and took actions that furthered Fusus's interests while he knew he was under

⁵¹ See Atlanta Ethics Off., *Ethics Board Meeting*, ATL 26 (Mar. 19, 2026), <https://play.champds.com/atlantaga/event/1097>.

⁵² City of Atlanta, *Public Notice*, <https://citycouncil.atlantaga.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/19528/639118633390870000> (last visited Aug. 12, 2026).

⁵³ Atlanta Ethics Off., *Ethics Board Meeting*, ATL 26 (May 21, 2026), <https://play.champds.com/atlantaga/event/1166>

⁵⁴ *Id.*

⁵⁵ *Id.*

⁵⁶ City of Atlanta, *Public Notice*, <https://citycouncil.atlantaga.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/20154/639197221303430000> (last visited Aug. 12, 2026).

⁵⁷ City of Atlanta, *Public Notice*, <https://citycouncil.atlantaga.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/20264> (last visited Aug. 12, 2026).

investigation and after that investigation concluded unfavorably. Freeman's continued contact with Fusus during and after the Atlanta Ethics Office's investigation is deeply troubling. Even after he was found to have violated Atlanta ethics rules and was fined thousands of dollars, calendar entries show Freeman likely participated in a dinner with the vendor at the center of the scandal. These revelations raise serious questions regarding compliance with proper ethics rules and should play an important role in his upcoming appeal hearing before the City of Atlanta Board of Ethics.