The lengthy and intense City Council debate this week over the future of ShotSpotter, the heavily hyped and deeply flawed policing technology, came at a fitting time: just before Memorial Day weekend, when the summerlong fight against violent crime begins in earnest.

Summer is when the Chicago Police Department is put to the test, and ShotSpotter has been a key tool since 2018, when then-Mayor Rahm Emanuel signed the contract.

The 34-14 council majority who voted to take authority to cancel ShotSpotter out
of Mayor Brandon Johnson’s hands paid little mind to the steady stream of research — focused on ShotSpotter’s performance in Chicago, Boston, Kansas City and elsewhere — that exposes ShotSpotter’s unreliable performance.

Never mind that three U.S. senators this month called for a Department of Homeland Security investigation into alleged racial bias in how ShotSpotter is deployed nationwide. Never mind reports from the city of Chicago’s inspector general and Cook County State’s Attorney Kim Foxx that raise serious questions about the reliability of ShotSpotter’s technology and its usefulness in prosecuting crimes.

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