

The city attorney, Jim Barlow, said he had additional concerns.

“There’s no due process that goes along with public judgment and scrutiny,” he said. “Oftentimes, that public judgment can be more damaging to an individual than the criminal penalty.”

Occasionally, the public attention can also be an opportunity. The Police Department in Stockton, Calif., embraced social media as a way to talk with residents even as the city’s bankruptcy led to reductions in the police force. Officers posted booking photographs for gang- and gun-related arrests to Facebook.

Last summer, the department arrested Jeremy Meeks, then 30, on felony weapons charges and posted his photograph on Facebook. The image of a photogenic Mr. Meeks went viral. Though he is in federal prison, he has secured a talent manager, who says Mr. Meeks will become a star upon his release.

“The camera loves his face,” said Jim Jordan, the talent manager.

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