

Regarding DOJ offer, Minneapolis Council member is “skeptical that investing more in the same police model is the answer”

The Bethlehem Gadfly George Floyd killing October 25, 2020

 *Latest in a series of posts in the wake of the George Floyd murder* 

As you know, Gadfly has been keeping an eye on what’s happening in Minneapolis, the GeorgeFloyd ground-zero. As you also know, Gadfly recently slow-walked us through a presentation from a Minneapolis community abolitionist. Ratifying the historical mess in public safety that activist portrayed as a rationale for totally re-imagining public safety there, here we see the Department of Justice stepping in to offer to help the department, but in reform not abolition. Even the police chief has been working on “plans to create a new MPD.”

Selections from Andy Mannix, “DOJ offers to help train Minneapolis police; City Council surprised by proposal.” October 20, 2020.

The U.S. Department of Justice has offered to partner with the Minneapolis Police Department as part of a new nationwide effort to provide extra support for police, with emphasis on reducing excessive force, building community safety and retaining staffing.

Some City Council members say they were surprised to learn of the proposal at the same time as the general public, and they questioned whether “doubling down” on policing is the right step in this pivotal moment for the future of the public safety system.

“Mr. Floyd’s death provoked outrage, both here locally and nationally, and that outrage remains. We’re here today to help this city and to help our nation heal,” said Eric S. Dreiband, assistant attorney general for the Civil Rights Division.

Minneapolis police Chief Medaria Arradondo, also appearing at the news conference, said he’s “excited and encouraged” about the offer, though the city has not committed to it.

“We have been, and I have been, working on our plans to create a new MPD,” Arradondo said. “And this would be a key component to that.”

The offer, part of an initial investment of \$3 million in grants, would include a coordinator to help support the chief, as well as technical assistance and training to implement use-of-force policies and resources to help with recruitment, retention and officer safety and health, said Office of Justice Programs Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Katharine T. Sullivan.

The program would also focus on training Minneapolis officers on how to effectively respond to people suffering from mental health or drug abuse issues or impairment, said Dreiband.

In June, following protests and riots after Floyd’s death, a majority of City Council members declared that years of slow reform had failed, and they [committed to “begin the process of ending the Minneapolis Police Department](#) and creating a new, transformative model for cultivating safety in Minneapolis.”

Ellison agreed that the city needs to bring the violence under control, and he said constituents are looking to the government for ways to keep them safe.

But he is skeptical that investing more in the same police model is the answer.

Ellison said he planned to take a close look at the partnership once it’s made available to the council.

Arradondo said he strives to remain apolitical in his role as chief. “At the end of the day, if there are resources I know will help instill crime-preventive tools ... I’m obligated to look into that,” he said.