

Councilman Reynolds: “It is not enough just to say that we can have peaceful demonstrations here”

The Bethlehem Gadfly City government, George Floyd killing June 6, 2020

 *Latest in a series of posts on the George Floyd killing* 

On behalf of the department, Chief DiLuzio read a statement on “George Floyd’s Death & Policing in America” at the Council meeting Wednesday night. You can find the text [here](#) and the audio below. (The Mayor’s May 31 statement was not read into the record but can be found [here](#).)

Audio Player not available in this archive

The Chief’s statement was the occasion for response to the local and national events of the last ten days or so by each member of Council.

Followers know that a main purpose of this blog is to help you know your Council members better. These Council responses are a good way to do exactly that, so Gadfly will take the next day or so to present each one individually for better focus.

Listen to the voices of our elected officials.

We began with President Waldron and are proceeding in the order in which the comments were presented at the meeting. Previously we have posted on Councilmembers Van Wirt and Crampsie Smith.

Councilman Reynolds

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“I want to thank the Chief for making sure that the rally last week on Saturday was peaceful, and I also want to thank the Mayor for reaching out to the organizers as well as his comments. I do share the feelings of my colleagues, though, when I think it is really only the beginning of the conversation here. I think that the fact that everybody in this country just about agrees that what happened to George Floyd was horrific, it was a tragedy, it was an injustice unlike what we have seen on camera for a

long, long time. But there's also a difference between not doing something wrong and doing what's right. And I think that's part of the conversation we need to have in the city. And to piggyback on what other people have said, we need to start with the understanding that we don't have the same experience in this country based on our skin color. We don't. And I think as a government we need to be creating institutions that are equitable and fair. Ms. Crampsie Smith just gave the line and Dr. Roy just said that recently, that it's just not enough to be against racism, but we need to pro-actively be anti-racist. A 150 years ago you could be an ally of African Americans by being against slavery. A hundred years ago you could say Jim Crow laws were wrong. 60 years ago you could say desegregation is wrong. Today it takes more than that. It's conversations about where highways are built, and how you draw zoning codes, and how you can make sure you can't make a house on a lot smaller than a certain amount so that you can improve affordable housing. And those are the conversations. We're not to blame for those things, but it is our responsibility to fix those things. Look at the history of Bethlehem _____?, look at our African American population compared to Allentown or Easton. A lot of that has to do that Bethlehem Steel didn't want to hire African Americans for a long time. So we have, what's our population of African Americans according to the census — 6. 7. 8%? What has that done? It has created generations of African American families in this city that have inherited that discrimination and had to face those challenges. Look at what's happened to our Hispanic community as people have moved to this city. We are not to blame for those things, but it is our responsibility to understand that a lot of the anger we are seeing in the country over the past several days is not about what happened in Minnesota. It's about the discrimination, the anger, the frustration that has crossed over generations that we have inherited as elected officials. And one of our jobs here is to understand that as our country's identity changes, our city's identity is changing as well. And we need to do everything we can to make our institutions and build the trust because a lot of us are teachers, I guarantee you, Mr. Callahan, Ms. Crampsie Smith could tell you the same thing. When students walk in to

our classrooms and a lot of times they are angry at us or they're angry or pissed off at the world, they're not actually angry at us. It is traumatic experience that has led to damage, hurt trust to the people standing in front of them. As a teacher, it took me years to understand that. That when a kid was angry, he wasn't angry at me. And it's not our police department's fault, it's not our fault that this has happened, but it needs to be a wake-up call to us, and we need to be inspired going forward that it is not enough just to say what happened in Minnesota is wrong. It is not even enough just to say that we can have peaceful demonstrations here. It's gonna be enough when people that are in marginalized communities are able to look at us as our elected officials and look at things we've done and say, you know what, they made things better, they made things more inclusive, they gave power to people that didn't have power before, because as I said before, it is more difficult sometimes to point out some of these biases and existence of racism than might have been fifty or a hundred years ago. It's a challenge for us to do that, but that is our job. I would agree with Ms. Crampsie Smith when she said that she wouldn't be up here if she didn't feel strongly about these issues, and I think we need to make more of an effort as a community, as individuals, and this does not all fall on our police department. It falls on every public institution, every governmental institution to make sure that we understand both the history, the pain, the anger, the frustration, and we need to be committed to creating better, fairer institutions that are equitable and that our citizens can look at and say that they believe them. And that's the challenge for all of us going forward."