

Councilwoman Van Wirt: “I ask you to do something, to look at our own city and address economic and social racism where it exists”

The Bethlehem Gadfly City government, George Floyd killing June 5, 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.

Councilwoman Van Wirt

“Thank you, thank you, Chief, I agree with everything President Waldron said about the commendable bonds that the police formed in a difficult situation, but I’m going to raise the bar a little bit. Thank you for addressing recent civil unrest nationally and locally; however, what I explicitly did not hear from Chief DiLuzio was an acknowledgment of systemic racism at the heart of Minneapolis police officer Chauvin’s murder of George Floyd. That racism was the reason for this event and many other similar events and not just a lack of training. That racism played a role in the other three officers looking away. Mayor, you’re a good man, Chief DiLuzio, you’re a good man, if the only thing necessary

for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing, then I ask you to do something, to look at our own city and address economic and social racism where it exists. Chief, you said in the paper that the one thing he could have done, our friend Officer Chauvin, was to take his knee off of him. My question to you is why did he not? It was not a lack of training here, clearly, it was because of institutionalized racism in the police department. I too am glad that the Bethlehem Police Department modeled a calm attitude and insured protestors could have this day. But that is simply not enough. I'm going to read a letter published locally from a Lehigh professor which encapsulates my concern over both the Mayor's letter and the Chief's response. And while this letter might paint broad strokes for police officers — I think implicitly it doesn't mean every police officer, and explicitly I certainly don't mean every police officer —

*PVW then read **the post from Breena Holland** published here on Gadfly June 2*

Now I know this doesn't leave us with a great Bethlehem Moment feeling, but if you can't speak the truth for what it is, I don't know what the use is in saying anything. We are very used to handing out attaboys up here, but the quality of good leadership is how they respond to the pointed criticism of it. And I do fully place this burden on your shoulders, Chief and Mayor, and I do thank you for listening.”