

Councilwoman Crampsie Smith on the Community Engagement Initiative: building deeper, stronger, and more trusting relationships between the public, individuals, and the community as a whole

The Bethlehem Gadfly Community Engagement Initiative August 18, 2020

 *Latest in a series of posts on the Community Engagement Initiative* 

Co-sponsor with Councilman Reynolds, Crampsie Smith decries those instilling fear and anxiety in others and stresses her law enforcement genes as she joins JWR in kicking off the Community Engagement Initiative.

[The goal of the Community Engagement Initiative is] to address all issues relative to systemic racism as well as build bridges within the community and the police. Community Engagement is a framework of guiding principles that respects the right of all community members to be informed, consulted, involved, and empowered. Community Engagement allows everyone a voice over decisions that affect their lives and their cities and builds deeper, stronger and more trusting relationships between the public, individuals, and the community as a whole. That is our goal. What do we hope this will look like? I agree with Mr. Reynolds. . . . It could include community engagement in training, deliberate dialog and community input, and engaged research. But most important the direction that Community Engagement takes is guided by the framework of our community members because that's what its truly all about. While I strongly believe in our democracy's foundation of the right of all to express their opinions, it is very disturbing to have false contentions to instill fear and anxiety in others. No one on Bethlehem City Council ever said they want to or will eliminate our police department. This is ludicrous, and it is unfortunate that innocent citizens in our city have had fear and anxiety instilled in them needlessly due to these false accusations. I thank our



Administration and police for meeting with us and revising our use of force policies to comply with 8 Can't Wait. We'll meet to discuss the need for superior training and resources for mental health. . . . And this is only the beginning of our dialog. I feel I am in a unique position because I come from a family of police. . . . Thus I have personal insight into the professional challenges that police face daily. Concurrently, I have spent almost 40 years in the Human Services and Counseling field. . . . In my current role as a school counselor. . . . Thus, I certainly do not agree with any group that calls for the elimination of the police. I do feel that we need to work together as a community to be anti-racist. I also feel that we need to insure that we use funds within the police department to make sure that our police and community have the best training and resources available to them. . . . beginning of a long term process. . . . enhance the overall health of our community. . . .

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