

Community engagement has to be based on building *relationships*

The Bethlehem Gadfly George Floyd killing, Police June 13, 2020

 Latest in a series of posts on the George Floyd killing 

Peter Crownfield is officially retired but spends most of his time working with students in his role as internship coordinator for the Alliance for Sustainable Communities–Lehigh Valley.

Gadfly:

It's a lot easier to say “**community engagement**” than to do anything that actually engages a wide spectrum of community members.

Block Watch is a program started to connect police with the community but primarily so they would get info from the community. And, as we've seen in other cities, it can become a cover for vigilante groups. Decades ago, most block-watch groups in Allentown became Neighborhood Associations, with some support from the city; this seems to be a much more community-centric model, since it deals with all manner of issues.

I think the city should report the home location of police and all other city employees!

If the “CEI” is a group or the city controls who participates, I think it would be a waste of time and money. Community engagement is more than a group / committee or even a process — community engagement has to be based on building *relationships*.

Rumor has it that community policing was phased out in favor of a department-wide community-oriented-policing approach; unfortunately the actual result seems to be much less — not more — community policing.

There used to be a Regional Community Policing Institute in Allentown, but they gradually became less and less effective. (Although many states still have RCPI, I don't know of one for PA.)

I'm going to repeat that is it easy to talk community engagement. The talk is often self-serving or posturing, and I hope we don't see any of that here.

Peter