

Residents support police, reject defunding

The Bethlehem Gadfly Budget, Lehigh Valley Good Neighbors Alliance, Police December 3, 2020

 *Latest in a series of posts about the Bethlehem Police* 

Largely through the efforts of the Lehigh Valley Good Neighbors Alliance, public comment was lively at Tuesday night's City Council meeting and focused on the police part of the City budget discussions.

Word was out — unreliably — that a move was afoot on Council to “defund” the police department and perhaps that a vote would be taken, and the majority of the callers expressed their support for the department and disapproval of any attempt to “defund” the department.

Here are those voices. Gadfly encourages you to listen. If the audio clips are hard to hear, click to the video of the meeting for better quality.

Gadfly's text is not meant to be exact or complete. Listening best.

See how these callers support their positions.

If your time is limited, Gadfly's picks on which to focus would be George and Greg.

Steve McGowan (3 mins.) (min. 6:15)

Concerned about full funding for the police. Family moved here from crime-filled city. Love this town. Thanks you for making us feel safe.

Shook up by incident in which daughters' school door was shot through. Professionals and essential workers insecure with the way the world is these days. Police presence at Musik-Fest a huge deal. Incident where there wasn't. Brawl. Grabbed daughter and ran away. Opportunists look for opportunities where there are no police. Thank you. Wish more support for police. Grandfather was a cop. Police essential for well-being and safety of our community. Thanks to police for doing what they do in these difficult times.

Michelle Dalgren (2 mins.) (min. 9:34)

Glad we're just talking about rumors here. Long-time resident. I love our country. I love our city. I support the police. They have a lot of honor and should have a lot of respect from all of us. They're going through a rough time. It's a great time to support police and make sure they have what they need for training and accountability. They are first and last line of defense. Daughter with car trouble, officer on the scene and got her going. Lehigh Valley is nice area and we can show leadership to the rest of the country if we go in a positive direction.

Margot (3 mins.) (min. 20:06)

Thank you for your service to the city. Life-long resident of the Valley. I'm calling because I heard there was an effort to defund our police. Reassuring that that is not happening. I highly value the Bethlehem police department. Exceptional. Have had great interactions with police. Terrific interactions. Great reputations in the LV. One of the best departments in the Valley. Want to make sure that they are funded and even a little more. Public safety is paramount. I as a tax payer support your efforts.

Lucy Lennon (5 mins.) (min. 24:10)

Total and heartfelt support of our police department. Extremely blessed by leadership. Good men and women who work hard to keep community safe. Department is 1 of 800 of 17,000 nationwide with accreditation. Statewide only 120 of 824 departments have it. Only 4% nationwide have dual accreditation like we do. Only 24 complaints out of 61,000+ calls. 2 complaints a month. Lots of time and effort put in on their own volunteering, fundraising, etc. Good humans. We are blessed. If you are looking for funding, take back department head raises. City Forester, Zoning inspectors, etc. I hope you will look deeper into the budget. Don't cut police and fire. They keep historic neighborhoods quiet, deal with crazy domestic calls, etc. Mentally ill. They know how to deal, that's what trained to do. If you don't support them, you should be ashamed of yourselves. They are doing a great job despite what I hear from some of you. They make our city a great place to live.

Michael Sasser (3 mins.) (min. 40:30)

Very happy not defunding and that police are getting raises. Our police deserve it. Military kid, lived many, many place. Bethlehem police best I've ever encountered. Best in state. Very proud. Bethlehem lately built on tourism. We can have best festivals and etc but if people aren't safe, it's all for naught. Extremely happy we're not defunding. Proof in the pudding. Reading articles every day about cities like Portland, etc., where there's a direct correlation between defunding/devaluing of police, mass retirements, and crime has spiked upward. New York City used to be great place to take a family. Mass exodus there. More police, safer we are.

George Roxandich (4 mins.) (min. 43:52)

Reading comments by other people (from survey?). May be no current proposals to defund, it's obvious that sympathies of some council members are with radicals to undermine or re-structure the police force. It's stunning that City Council would make one of these radical groups

with no practical knowledge of policing de facto subcommittees of the Council. Anyone afraid to call the police shouldn't call the police, they should call anybody they feel comfortable calling. And see what happens. Sending a social worker to a domestic violence call, not good even for police. Words of comfort and consolation inadequate in these volatile situations. The folks who are trying to defund the police departments have other agendas in their minds. A lot of these activists became activists because they were conditioned to be activists. It's very easy to be pulled into these organizations. Violence we see elsewhere hasn't come here yet because we have what we need from the police and the community. But other cities have said the same thing til it turns on them.

Greg Ragni (5 mins.) (min. 47:48)

Much has been made of tone of political statements and how much words matter. If simply relating quotes elected officials make upsets them, maybe they should think more carefully about what they say. I'll spare Council the pain of hearing their own quotes in favor of hearing the voice of the people. Over 7,000 signed a petition to defend the police department from defunding and many left comments representatives should hear. [Reads series of vivid comments.] Hopefully from those voices of your constituents you get the idea.

Carrie (5 mins.) (min. 1:08:20)

Defunding an emotional issue for us. Events across the nation riveting and troubling. Reminded about how important police are to us. Accountability is at the core, for everyone not just the police. We are 50% of situations. We choose how we respond. Choose well. Although our police great, 911 is not only option if you don't want to encounter police. If in mental health crisis, both Lehigh and Northampton county have hot lines. Mental health assistance offered at county level. Majority of people feel 911 ok. Gives crisis intervention numbers. Thanks Chief DiLuzio for

decades of service. Shares more comments by respondents to the petition to defend police. Thanks you for hearing the majority of Bethlehem residents with common sense and belief in our police force.

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