

How does LVGNA see first contact?

The Bethlehem Gadfly | Lehigh Valley Good Neighbors Alliance, Police | November 17, 2020

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

ref: **Putting the Heat on City Council (1)**

ref: **Putting the Heat on City Council (2)**

ref: **Community Engagement Initiative resolution approved July 7**

ref: **Has Council succumbed to the heat?**

ref: **Looking closely at the LVGNA position**

ref: **Gadfly has a “conversation” with LVGNA**

ref: **Gadfly continues his “conversation” with LVGNA**

Time for Gadfly to take his tongue out of his cheek.

To Gadfly’s mind, the Lehigh Valley Good Neighbors Alliance, as represented in the November 2 Facebook post and the “Coffee Cup” brochure, is going in the wrong direction in the discussion of policing made imperative by the killing of George Floyd.

Gadfly has nothing against our police department, but he is convinced that this is the time for a thorough analysis of how we do public safety.

The country is severely divided on this issue, as with many others..

Gadfly sees the LVGNA approach he has just analyzed as exacerbating division.

How can that be any good?

Gadfly seeks the conversation that builds community.

Gadfly would like to invite LVGNA into a discussion aimed at solving a specific problem in policing, a problem with what he calls the “first contact” situation.

Followers have seen him describe his thinking about the first contact situation here in many posts.

The necrology of problematic first contact situations that have riveted widespread public attention and stirred widespread public unrest includes George Floyd, Rayshard Brooks, Breonna Taylor, Jacob Blake, Walter Wallace.

Those names have become household names.

Gadfly sees a disturbing readily apparent pattern in these first contact situations: someone dies (often a POC), textbook police training is called into question, a rift between police and the community opens, officer careers get disrupted or ruined, residents are traumatized, racism is charged, rioting and unrest follow, lives and property of innocent people are lost and damaged, law suits result, tax payers typically pay millions.

Everybody loses.

And the cycle starts at that first contact.

Gadfly doesn't want to see such a pattern play out here. We had a botched first contact situation 20-some years ago and only finished paying for it not too long ago. Not to mention his worrying about the racial dimension to which we are now so sensitive in a city whose population is almost 40% POC .

The repetition of the pattern suggests to Gadfly an inherent problem about which something should be done.



It does not seem sufficient or satisfactory to him to say that the above mentioned “tragedies” are caused by chance or by “bad apples” — or by the citizen subjects themselves.

Gadfly has suggested that a meeting on policing take place with an image of the Walter Wallace first contact with two officers in Philadelphia October 26 (but it could be any number of images) framing this question for the discussants: “If you agree that there was not a good outcome here for either the subject, or the officers (it must be shattering to kill some one in any circumstance), or the community, how do we avoid such an outcome?”

Such discussions have led people around the country to suggest reimagining how public safety is done and reallocating resources appropriately. That's what is, in an unfortunate term, called "defunding" the police.

Gadfly may be wrong, but his sense is that those opposed to "defunding" are resistant to any analysis of, any change in the present state of policing, and Gadfly can only deduce that they do not see any problem the police are responsible for in the first contact situations that have become imprinted on our minds.

Does LVGNA see no first contact problem that needs to be addressed? Gadfly would be curious to know the basis for such a view. That would be good conversation.

Or does LVGNA see a first contact problem and have a solution (such as more training handled internally by a department) but are objecting to "defunding" and/or to the presence of BLM? That would be good conversation too.

Lets have good conversation from LVGNA. And see if we have common ground.

The Bethlehem Gadfly