

“Defunders” criticize the proposed police budget; the “defenders” are absent

The Bethlehem Gadfly Budget, Police November 15, 2020

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

Budget Hearing November 9 video

public comment, begin min. 3:53:49

“We expect this Council to invest in anti-racism.”

“We are not being listened to.”

“Part-time social worker? A band-aid.”

“Unconscionable to pass a budget without a reduction in the police budget.”

The Budget meetings can be hum-drum. The one November 9 was going into its 5th hour, and Gadfly thought it would sleepily just whimper to close. Who could believe that there would be public comment after all that? But the police were on the agenda, we are in the post-GeorgeFloyd era, and interest was there. So we were all woken up a bit by the ringing phone. 8 people called in. All finding dissatisfaction with the budget. All — in the unfortunate term we are stuck with — “defunders.” Where, O where were the “defenders,” especially right after the November 2 post complaining about not being heard. Strange.

Gadfly encourages you to listen to the voices of your fellows. The text is just quick and dirty highlights.

Horona Ochs (6 mins.) (min.3:53:49)

Police pensions higher than others because of the clout of their collective bargaining units and thus slight others. Increase of police budget at expense of other public servants is moving in the wrong direction. We expect this Council to invest in anti-racism. Cuts to police personnel are difficult but others have done it. Need to invest in things that bring us together not institutions of force. The Chief has good goals but not sure that the money needed for them is best given to the police department. Armed officers not likely to increase a feeling of inclusivity in the community.

John Irons (5 mins.) (min. 3:59:50)

We're not being listened to. The budget is not responsive to what we've been talking about. We don't need police officers doing things outside of their job descriptions. We need less police officers. We're taking personnel away from critical services like fire. Police doing things with trees, abandoned cars, etc., that City services should be doing. We would like to see the police department take some of the personnel cuts other departments are. We put you into power, we delivered the 2020 election. We hope that Council will respect the priorities the community has already stated.

Anthony Downing (3 mins.) (min. 4:07:26)

We've made our beliefs clear. Police responding to every single call with a gun is not what makes folks feel safe. Police responding to cars is not called for. Council not answering the concerns of the community. Part-time social worker? A band-aid. Continue to deal with drug addiction,

homelessness, etc., with people armed with weapons. This budget does not address concerns of the community. Fire department and other social services that help our community should be getting the money. We demand it. Hope that the final budget will include those concerns.

Allison Mickel (3 mins.) (min. 4:10:30)

Massive voter turn-out in recent election. 91% said police violence was an issue. We have shared data with Council. Mandate is there to reduce police violence. Unconscionable to pass a budget without a reduction in the police budget. A moral imperative.

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