

# “The structure proposed in the resolution is basically useless until a genuinely inclusive process is created”

[The Bethlehem Gadfly](#) [George Floyd killing](#) July 13, 2020

 *Latest in a series of posts responding to the George Floyd killing* 

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Gadfly,

I believe the Councilmembers Reynolds and Crampsie Smith have good intentions. However, their responses didn’t convey an understanding of some key points raised by the callers/speakers who opposed the resolution. Even if Councilmembers Reynolds and Crampsie Smith were only trying to institutionalize a structure to bring people together and can therefore convincingly claim that it is because of these meager goals that the resolution makes no substantive commitments, they still failed to address some important problems that the callers and speakers raised.

First, in the spirit of collaboration and recognition that their own perspectives on how to address issues of racial injustice might be limited, the Reynolds and Crampsie Smith really should have asked the LatinX members of council for some input prior to proposing a resolution. It was not long ago that both Reynolds and Crampsie Smith voted against Councilwoman Negrón when she was nominated to be Council president, despite some thirty people showing up to a meeting to support her nomination. One wonders, precisely at this moment, what Council’s response to the current moment would look like if Negrón had been affirmed in that vote. She seemed to reluctantly support the resolution only after significant changes. It’s nice (and rare) that Reynolds agreed to her changes, but this should have been done on the front end of the process, not the back end, after Negrón’s refusal to support the resolution in a formal meeting forced Reynolds to accommodate her perspective. The hypocrisy of Reynolds proposing a process to address an important problem without first getting the support of key people on

Council is evident if you simply recall the anger he expressed at Councilwoman Negrón for proposing an ethics ordinance (that he declined to support) without first seeking out the input from every member of Council, the mayor, and his staff.

Second, when the message of a movement is that the problem of racial injustice is structural and needs to be addressed at a foundational level, people who are not the ones suffering from those injustices may want to pause before proposing to address the problem through the same institutional structures that have thus far failed to address the problem. As the speakers explained, they (the activists) are already meeting, they are already organizing. If councilmembers really couldn't wait to do something, why not start by learning about the problem they've thus far failed to address from the activists who are doing something about it? Councilmembers could go to their meetings, they could ask them how they could be helpful in their positions as elected officials. They could stop assuming that the normal processes and venues they provide for addressing problems will work. They could take a minute to wonder about how they might build new tools, proceed in a different way, include more people whose voices are generally silenced, etc. The structure proposed in the resolution is basically useless until a genuinely inclusive process is created. So far any discussion about how to make the process inclusive has been rather shallow. For instance, one caller explained the need for a person to organize the forum who actually knows the people who Council apparently wants to join this discussion. This and many other good ideas were never mentioned in the efforts by Reynolds and Crampsie Smith to defend their resolution rather than actually hear what people were saying. Councilman Callahan had a remarkably astute night in recognizing the appropriateness of tabling the resolution and for explicitly asking Councilwoman Negrón what she wanted to do.

What we ended up with is a resolution that essentially asks all those people who came to the meeting (and those who never will but who are nonetheless supposed to show up and talk to councilmembers about racial justice) to make their views relevant by showing up at a forum that Council creates. I hope the activists do come because I think our elected officials could learn a lot from them. But I'm not sure why they would show up. Maybe they want to spend their time helping members of

Council do their jobs better. Or maybe they should just spend their time supporting candidates who better reflect their goals and concerns, or running for elected positions themselves. Beating one's head against the wall to achieve what is likely to be mostly more of the same from the same people is probably not a winning strategy.

Sincerely, Breena