

“Step 1 is agreeing that there is a wholistic problem”

[The Bethlehem Gadfly](#) [Police](#) August 13, 2020

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

[Public Safety Committee meeting video here](#)

Councilman Reynolds initiates another very interesting conversation.

He returns to the question of the use of force compared to overall population.

Capt. Kott repeats the idea put forward by the Chief earlier that there is no simple answer to why there is a higher use of force with POC than with whites and that it's frustrating because everybody wants the answer.

Importantly, She goes on to cite the need for a “wholistic” look at the issue. There is so much more at play here, she says. Yes, issues in law enforcement, but on a “grander level” we need to take a wholistic approach.

Bingo!

Councilman Reynolds picks up that ball vigorously, linking the Capt.'s comments to the purpose of the Community Engagement Initiative.

A lot of this conversation is not about police, says JWR, and he points out that what the Capt. said (as well as what the Chief said about the impact of lack of economic opportunity — Gadfly unfortunately left that out of his previous post about the Chief) comes close to the “definition of systemic racism.” It's bigger than the police department. What are the things — economic structures, healthcare structures, zoning codes, education, transportation, etc. — that are causing the situations that end up in a call to the police?

“That's the conversation a lot of people want to have.”



“That’s something that we are going to talk about with our Community Engagement Initiative.”

“It’s the failure of society to do something about those systems that at the end of the day ends up with a call to the police department.”

“Step 1 is agreeing that there is a wholistic problem, a structural problem that end up causing the disparities.

The Chief agreed with JWR and expanded valuably on his earlier comments (again, that Gadfly didn’t capture before). Worth listening to.

The Chief says that some people don’t have the opportunity path that he and JWR had, and that goes back to housing, poverty, education, healthcare — this is systemic racism, and it is embedded in the criminal justice system. And that the police are on the same page as JWR. The Chief understands the anger of people denied their share of the American Dream.

The one thing Gadfly didn’t understand in regard to systemic racism was when the Chief said, “it may not be here in the City, but it’s in the overall system.”

We need to be careful about self-absolution.