

Mayor Donchez: “I look forward to a constructive discussion”

The Bethlehem Gadfly Police August 12, 2020

 *Latest in a series of posts on the Arts in Bethlehem* 

The Public Safety Committee met for 6 hours last night to discuss the Police Department Use of Force policy and the Community Engagement Initiative.

Gadfly counted over 25 public comments.

Interestingly, there were a smattering of complaints about publicity for the meeting. Several people mentioned learning about it almost by chance, and there were misconceptions about the purpose of the meeting.

Which suggests we have not mastered how to communicate with the public about important matters.

Among the voices were many supporters of the police as well as members of the CORE research team (Prof Ochs and company).

Representatives of Black Lives Matter, Lehigh Valley Stands Up,^{***} and members of the Latinx community (one exception?) were not noticeably present among the voices.

Unfortunately, the YouTube transmission went down (well handled by Chair Colon — no apoplexy), so there is no video of the meeting for you to watch. However, Gadfly believes that he heard that the Webinar record will be available later.

In the meantime, Gadfly will spin out portions of this important meeting for you.

Here’s the Mayor’s opening statement:

Audio Player not available in this archive

Before we begin I think it important to repeat some things I have said about the Bethlehem Police Department.

- I am proud to be Mayor of a City with a Police Department that enjoys an excellent reputation.
- That reputation was hard-earned from difficult experiences leading to determination and hard work to implement reform and to elevate our standards of professionalism.
- Bethlehem is the only department in the Lehigh Valley that is accredited by . . .
- Our department works hard every day, every year to retain those accreditations.
- Our department is involved in many aspects of the community . . .
- But I recognize that we are here to discuss legitimate issues about policing, locally and nationally.
- We should take this opportunity for self-reflection and to critique ourselves, and if necessary implement constructive recommendations that will continue to make the Bethlehem Police Department the best in the Lehigh Valley.
- I look forward to a constructive discussion on these issues.

****Tip o' the hat to Follower Downing for telling Gadfly that there were 8 members of Lehigh Valley Stands up at the meeting — Gadfly just doesn't remember any speakers identifying themselves.*