

Let's continue the good conversation

The Bethlehem Gadfly Police August 17, 2020

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

*Good conversation builds community.
The Gadfly*

Gadfly has done a slow walk through the police presentations and Council discussion on the police use of force policy at the August 11 Public Safety Committee meeting.

He has asked you to think about what struck you, and we've had posted responses from Messrs. Hackett and Zahm. Tip o' the hat to them. And a continuing beckoning finger to you to join the conversation.

Gadfly is now about ready to put the substantial public comment on the police part of the meeting (remember that the second agenda item was the Community Engagement Initiative — more on that later) on the table for us to analyze and discuss.

But how to do that interestingly?

That commentary was a feast for Gadfly, whose project was largely motivated by trying to amplify the good resident voices he was hearing at City Council meetings. Gadfly has always been proud of the high quality of Bethlehem citizen discourse.

Chair Colon said in his opening remarks that the August 11 Public Safety Committee meeting “had nothing to do” with abolishing or defunding the police.

That's not how the callers saw it. D-funding was d-focus.

Gadfly counted 27 commenters, pretty close in numbers, but definitely tilting against defunding.

Gadfly would like to keep the conversation going, particularly today and tomorrow prior to the Council meeting tomorrow night in which we hope to hear more about Council members' views and plans for further activities.

We want to take every opportunity to make Council members aware of what we are thinking.

So what Gadfly has done and what you will see in the next series of posts is go down the list of commenters in chronological order and randomly and arbitrarily pair them, one supporting the police and against defunding, the other for defunding or other modifications of the police department status quo.

Thus you will see in the next post Allison Mickel, who was the first commenter, paired with Don Szabo, who was the fourth.

And Gadfly will continue in subsequent posts to work down the list and create pairs of contrasting views by people who spoke close to each other.

The idea is to keep civil and courteous conversation between two fellow community members going.

Gadfly invites each member of the pair to respond to the other, *civilly and courteously*. What do you agree with in the other's post, what disagree? Why? What did the other post make you think about? What more would you like the other poster to think about? Do you see any chance for common ground, or do you think you are unalterably opposed? That kind of thing. Imagine that you are face to face. What would you be saying to each other?

Now maybe neither Allison or Don are followers of the Gadfly, so some of you who know them might have to alert them about this interesting opportunity to interact and to spur further thinking in all of us.

But even if we don't get further buy-in from the actual commenters, Gadfly hopes this narrow point/counter-point presentation will help us focus.

Gadfly is big on focus.

Try to put your own view aside for a moment. Stand outside. Be objective. You're a fly on the wall. How is each side arguing? What is the basis for each position? What are the strengths of their positions, what

weaknesses? What did they make you think about? Were there any surprises, anything new? That kind of thing.

Granted, these are arbitrary pairs, people not precisely responding to each other, but pretend that they are.

Please listen to the voices. Gadfly says always go to the primary source. His text is not a transcription, his text does not transcribe everything, only enough to give you the gist.

And then please comment.

Good conversation builds community.