

What's missing in LVGNA's march to victory?

The Bethlehem Gadfly Budget, Lehigh Valley Good Neighbors Alliance, Police December 7, 2020

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

Gadfly has liberally quoted recent voices from the Lehigh Valley Good Neighbors Alliance without comment.

But he does not agree with them.

Here is some of his thinking on that.

- LVGNA's two highly placed but unnamed sources who indicated City Council was conspiratorially plotting as a bloc to "defund" the police department were wrong.
- In fact, two Council members were immediately on record weeks ago as totally opposed to "defunding."
- Gadfly followers would know that he, who looks forward to comprehensive discussion but not necessarily "defunding," has been whining precisely about Council inaction and saw no movement toward a vote of any kind.
- People paying attention would know that there would be no vote on the police department funding at the regularly scheduled Council meeting December 1, that if there were to be any voting at all it would happen at the budget hearing December 3 and the final vote would not be till December 15.
- Thus, LVGNA created a false sense of crisis for December 1.
- People paying attention would know that Council is planning public meetings with and about the police in January, and if there were to be any change in the way policing is done, it surely would not happen till after that public discussion.

- People paying attention would know that, on their own initiative, the police have instituted a pilot program involving a social worker, without any “defunding,” to be sure, but precisely in the kind of direction that “defunders” would like to see them go.
- That said, the new Chief has basically recognized that there is a problem to be addressed and Council and police seem to be working cooperatively not antagonistically.
- The notion fostered by LVGNA that people need to rally at the barricades to defend the police and save public safety from dissolution seems a false narrative.
- LVGNA has perpetuated the notion of “defunding” — admittedly a poor term to begin with (which is the reason why Gadfly tends to put it in quotes) — as a mindless or Marxist attack on the police rather than a good faith attempt to address some problems by re-imagining how policing is done.
- Those who call for “defunding” are not monolithic. Gadfly spent several posts on the “abolitionist” who presented at the NCC conference in October. He saw change gradual as public safety moved to a new structure.
- The notion that “defunders” or “abolitionists” want an immediate end to police departments, throwing civilization into chaos, returning us to the law of the jungle, misunderstands the movement.
- There *were* extreme public statements made against the police July 7 — that, yes, gave even Gadfly the shakes — but his response, like those expressed by some members of Council, was to try to understand the basis of such rhetoric not immediately condemn it. That seemed the neighborly thing to do, and certainly would be the role of a Council charged with representing the entire community.
- Since that time those speaking for change in public safety have been quite moderate both in tone and idea. Gadfly has come to think of them as *mainstream* “defunders.”

- In contrast, we find the LVGNA facebook pages filled with extreme hostility: Council members are characterized as “big city leftists,” supporters of “BLM, Antifa, and the criminal element,” toxic, disgusting, Socialist, simple minded, disgraceful, shameful.
- And we find callers referred to as “radical Marxist anarchists.”
- The kind of language hardly conducive to the good conversation that builds community.
- The LVGNA seems to believe that police should be allowed to operate without oversight, especially by the body legislatively charged with doing so.
- In short, Gadfly has a hard time seeing that LVGNA is doing any good. In fact, quite the contrary.

Without a doubt, the main thing that Gadfly has noticed in the recent self-styled LVGNA march to victory is what is not there.

Not a mention of George Floyd. Nor the other names on the necrology of tragic police encounters with people of color.

Not a mention of awareness of where and why the “defunding” movement started.

Not a mention of the problem the movement is trying to address.

It’s generally agreed that the “defunding” movement began with the 2014 killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri.

And in the past six months it crescendo’d with a series of such events spanning George Floyd to Walter Wallace.





If you don't try to understand the trauma of these events, you will never understand the "radicals."

LVGNA has 7000 signatories to a petition to defend the police. LVGNA could do a lot of good with that following.

Gadfly has suggested starting a conversation based on a specific "first contact" situation between the police and a member of the community.

Here's how he put it after **his discussion** of LVGNA's "coffee cup" brochure.

Does LVGNA see no first contact problem that needs to be addressed? Gadfly would be curious to know the basis for such a view. That would be good conversation.

Or does LVGNA see a first contact problem and have a solution (such as more training handled internally by a department) but are objecting to

“defunding” and/or to the presence of BLM? That would be good conversation too.

Such a conversation would better prepare us for the meetings Council will host with and about the police in January.

The Bethlehem Gadfly