

An “historical night”: Michelle Kott appointed Chief of Police

The Bethlehem Gadfly Police October 7, 2020

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

In what Mayor Donchez called a “historical night,” Michelle Kott was unanimously confirmed at the new Chief of Police last night at the City Council meeting. Chief Kott is our first female police chief. Each Councilperson had words of appreciation and congratulation.

- “Ms. Kott has always been a consummate professional, someone whom I’ve appreciated her thoughtfulness and transparency and engagement. . . . I can’t think of a time in my professional career where I saw someone who was as qualified for a position based on both their experience coming through the ranks of the department for the last 16 or so years and finding time somewhere in there . . . to complete the educational pursuits that you have.” Councilman Colon
- “I think she understands the frustration a lot of people feel but also the potential, the hope, the capability of what we’re able to do if we look at, talk about, listen to these issues in a different manner. I think just listening to the Captain talk about these different issues over the past year or two, I’m confident she understands where people are coming from, and what they’re looking for in law enforcement . . . in 2020 in general, it’s going to look a little different than it has in the past.” Councilman Reynolds

selections from Christina Tatu, “Bethlehem’s first female police chief unanimously approved by City Council.” Morning Call. October 6, 2020.

Bethlehem City Council unanimously approved the city’s first female police chief Tuesday night, promoting Capt. Michelle Kott to the position after Mayor Robert Donchez recommended her last month.

“I’m so humbled to have this opportunity to serve the community and the men and women of the Bethlehem Police Department. I will not let you down. Through challenge comes real change and I’m ready to get started,” Kott said during Tuesday night’s virtual council meeting.

Council members spoke highly of Kott, 38, who was also the department's first female captain.

"She is well qualified and most importantly has a great perspective for this position. She said 'people want to be heard,' and that's a great perspective — the essence of human interaction," Councilwoman Grace Crampsie Smith said.

Councilman J. William Reynolds, who along with Crampsie Smith [has been spearheading a community engagement initiative](#) to get residents, police officers and city stakeholders talking about issues of social justice and reform, said he hopes Kott will help foster a relationship between police and community members.

"I think if this is going to work and we are going to expand the conversation, we need to find a way to get not just the chief there, but other police officers as well," Reynolds said.

Kott agreed.

"It's time we listen not only to our community members but to our officers who want more community engagement. It can't be just the two same faces going to these community events. We need to have a top to bottom approach to have all members of the department engaged in community policing," Kott said.

Kott graduated from DeSales University in 2004 with a bachelor's degree in criminal justice. She received her master's degree in criminal justice from St. Joseph's University in Philadelphia in 2010.

Last May, she was among the first group of students to earn a doctorate in criminal justice from California University of Pennsylvania.

She has been with the department for 16 years, serving in various roles including patrol officer, crime scene detective, patrol sergeant, detective sergeant, detective lieutenant and captain. She is also a member of the department's professional standards division and is a team leader for the city's crisis negotiation team.

Those with the rank of lieutenant, captain or deputy chief were invited to apply, making a total of nine eligible. All but Kott were men, and only one of those candidates was Black, according to Cichocki.