

# It takes a very special type of person to want to be a police officer

The Bethlehem Gadfly Police September 19, 2020

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

*Bud Hackett is a Bethlehem resident who raised 4 kids in the City. He recently became very interested in quality of life issues in the city and hopes to offer a balance to the approach City Council is taking.*

Gadfly:

We are living in a time (Fall of 2020) where our City and our nation are experiencing an unprecedented health crises, one of the worse economic circumstances of the past 100 years, and a level of civil unrest that exceeds any in my lifetime.

Police across the country have been a target of the civil unrest with new language being used to described the situation: “defund the police” and “systemic racism” – both are generalizations, but are the flashpoints for so much civil unrest.

Some, like the authors of the report Gadfly references, are suggesting “more training” and “better screening of new police officers.” OK, more and better is always good. Reference the same about school teachers a few years ago.

The question of “what kind of person wants to become a police officer” is a question beyond my knowledge. Yes, we all want:

- the “Officer Friendly” of our youth,
- the kind and forgiving traffic cop who let’s us go with a warning, and
- the social worker who comes to the door of the domestic or neighborhood disturbance call.



Let me relate a story about another characteristic of a police officer.

Around this time last year, I stopped at the Dunkin' Donuts at 4<sup>th</sup> street on the Southside of Bethlehem. It was around 11 pm, and I watched as the Bethlehem Police were handling a situation of 3 white kids, one a female, and I figured they were possibly students from Lehigh.

The female was the most drunk; she was literally kicking and screaming at the police. I watched her spit at one of the cops. Fortunately, the two males were relatively calm. The language and arrogant behavior of that young woman was, in my opinion, disgusting. The police restrained the young woman, despite her amazing resistance and taunts, "do you know what my Dad is going to do to you?" **Restraint and patience** were the police behaviors I observed, firsthand. I could never be that patient.

So, in addition to:

- the boredom of being a cop – just waiting for the next call,
- the uncertainty about what is going to happen when "they roll up to the next call,"
- the cell phone videos in their face when they walk up to a disturbance,
- the anger, drunkenness, fentanyl abuse they encounter,
- the insanity of the domestic disturbance,
- the occasional situation when they must deal with a very hurting person with a gun, sometimes pointed at their own head, and
- the increasing situation where guns are at play with gangs and other crazies.

. . . I really wonder why anyone would do the job, but I do hear police officers say, in earnest, "to protect and serve."

I, for one, think police are very special people, you have to deal with the worst of the worst in our society, they have a very special combination of skills and values. We're lucky anyone signs up for the job.

Bud