

Kott: “There’s no denying this is a critical time in law enforcement”

The Bethlehem Gadfly Police September 24, 2020

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

selections from Christina Tatu, “Bethlehem mayor asks council to approve first female police chief.” Morning Call, September 23, 2020.

Mayor Robert Donchez has recommended Capt. Michelle Kott as Bethlehem’s new police chief.

Council will vote on the recommendation next month, though five of seven council members who could be contacted Wednesday evening said they are pleased with Donchez’s choice. If approved, Kott — who also was the department’s first female captain — will become the first woman to lead Bethlehem’s police department. The base salary for the position is \$106,000.



“Capt. Kott will no doubt bring a new perspective and energy to the department,” Donchez said Wednesday during a news conference to announce his choice. “She’s a strong advocate of community policing, partnerships, and she has additional training in the areas of mental health, cultural awareness, de-escalation tactics, implicit bias training and crisis intervention.”

Kott, 38, graduated from DeSales University in 2004 with a bachelor’s degree in criminal justice. She received her master’s degree in criminal justice from Saint 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.

"There's no denying this is a critical time in law enforcement, one that calls for strong leadership, coupled with empathy, compassion, respect and responsibility," Kott said Wednesday. "I believe I am more than up to the task and I look forward to taking on the challenges and working together with the men and women of the Bethlehem Police Department and the community."

Kott also thanked her family — wife Kristin Snyder, with whom she just celebrated 10 years of marriage, and children Noah, 6 and Allie, 2.

A hiring committee that included Cichocki, Donchez, city solicitor William Leeson, business administrator Eric Evans, and retired Upper Macungie police Chief Edgardo Colon conducted interviews last week.

Reached after the news conference, several City Council members, who will vote on Kott's appointment at their Oct. 6 meeting, said they were pleased with the recommendation.

"I think it's a great choice and a historic choice for the city of Bethlehem and our police department," Councilman J. William Reynolds said.

"I think in every conversation I've had with her, she understands the value of trust between a community and police department, and I think she understands that a police department needs to listen to the community and be an institution people feel they can trust," Reynolds said.

Councilwoman Paige Van Wirt said she was impressed with Kott's answers when Kott presented a recent report on the department's use of force to City Council.

"She was calm, insightful and her training was evident. She is someone who will help Bethlehem's police department become the finest it can be," Van Wirt said.

Other council members reached for comment, including Michael Colon, Grace Crampsie Smith and Council President Adam Waldron, also praised Kott.

selections from Sarah Cassi, “Meet the choice for Bethlehem’s new police chief. She would be the 1st woman to lead the department in city history.” lehighvalleylive.com, September 23, 2020.

After furor over a Facebook post led Bethlehem’s police chief to retire, the city’s new chief will make department history.

Capt. Michelle Kott, who serves in the professional standards division and leads the department’s crisis negotiation team, was nominated as chief on Wednesday. If approved, she would be the first female chief in the department’s history.

“I’m very humbled. I look forward to the challenge, and leading the men and women of this department, and hoping to inspire other girls that may be interested in pursuing a career in law enforcement,” she said.

The 38-year-old Kott has been with the department since 2004 and started as a patrol officer, before rising through the ranks of crime scene detective, patrol sergeant, detective sergeant, and then a detective lieutenant. She was most recently [promoted to captain](#) in February 2019.

Kott noted it is a critical time for law enforcement, and that it calls “for strong leadership coupled with empathy, compassion, respect and responsibility.”

“I believe I am more than up to the task and I look forward to taking on the challenges in working together with the men and women of the Bethlehem Police Department and the community,” she said.

Kott and her wife, Kristin, who celebrated their 10-year anniversary on Wednesday, live in Macungie with their 6-year-old son, Noah, and 2-year-old daughter, Allie.

“They’ve all stood by me throughout my career and they’re my ‘why,’ for who I am and what I do,” Kott said.