Residents who support modifying the police budget

The Bethlehem Gadfly Budget, Police December 3, 2020

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

While those resisting negative changes in the police budget dominated the comment period at City Council Tuesday night, there were several voices on the other side.

If your time doesn't permit sampling all to see how this position is supported, Gadfly suggests you don't miss Glenn Nelson's tour de force. Then Alison Mikell.

Remember, not exact transcription. And go to the video if the audio is unsatisfactory.

Bill Scheirer (2 mins.) (min. 22:06)

Defunding is an unfortunate word. A better word would be "focusing," focusing the police on what they do well. Leaving the social work to others who are trained for that. Emergency medical services are only a half-century old, before that the police would transport to hospital. That gives some perspective on the whole issue. There have been changes in the past. A change of terminology would be helpful.

W. Broad St. resident (2 mins.) (min. 33:40)

Supports budget from Lehigh Valley Stands Up. More police funding doesn't mean safer communities. Systemic issues can't be solved by

greater incarceration and police presence. Invest in the people not the punishment of the people for safer, healthier communities. We're asking cops to do too much. Not enough mental health funding . . . let the cops handle it. Etc., etc. Policing was never meant to solve all those problems. My fear of men pales in comparison to children in my neighborhood when they see cops around here in broad daylight. Seeing this traumatizing presence and police brutality, I will avoid calling police at all costs. Council should look closer at the people's needs. Our community would prosper if much needed funds were allocated to other causes.

Glenn Nelson (11 mins.) (min. 53:20)

People have been saying they would be scared with fewer police on the streets. That's what everybody always says to people on our side. We have had to exist in states of fear because of the police. We've heard arguments like if you have one nothing wrong, you have nothing to fear from the police. This absurd claim completely ignores obvious facts and examples. Petty offenses used to justify the act of murder. Justinian's code argues that the punishment for a crime must not exceed the crime itself. Michael Brown. George Floyd. Eric Garner. None of these lives were granted due process. Killed extra-judicially by their local government. Bill of Rights. Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Power given to police to kill for disobedience regardless of the justness of the order or the character of the officer. Imperfect humans placed in position where deemed infallible. Officers word given credibility when known they manipulate facts to win cases. Such practices right here. Judges disproportionately jail people of color, etc. As a Jew, disturbed by way white supremacists have been allowed to infiltrate police. National problem. Police not immune to moral or personal failings. Accountability. Transparency. They behave with impunity. They kneel on necks, etc., and they walk away, etc. They violate the most sacred of human commandments. This is not a minor, casual issue but a matter of life and death. We hear from citizens that we'd be less safe without

police. Even if Bethlehem were an unsafe city, police would not be the solution. We have been raising police budgets for decades and have seen negligible changes in crime rates. We continue to put money into something that does not change outcomes. Inefficiency. We are safe because police are funded at appropriate level. As cities put more money in, outcomes are worse. Probably just correlation not causation. by giving so much money to police, opportunity is lost. Our city lacks critical services. We cannot continue to write blank checks to inefficient parts of the budget. Pandemic. People facing evictions, etc. Government is two-way street. Government becomes tyranny. Money needs to be administered in line with our values. Budget looks like we value police and little else. Prove us wrong by taking action now. Activists call in repeatedly expressing concern for civil rights of citizens. Council inaction. Not personally attacking nay individual officer. Yay for Chief Kott. Opportunity to present policies to improve lies. There has been a marked shift in the culture of the department. Appreciated. We are not as inflexible as portrayed. It takes a lot of energy to repeat ourselves over and over. We were told to come back in budget season. And here we are. You said we hear you in June. We don't expect you to abolish police tomorrow. We want to see incremental steps to invest in our community while divesting from police department. Let data dictate where we go. We are here because an office knelt on a man's neck. George Floyd. Does that look like liberty to you. Done to you, would you feel free. None of us are free till all of us are. All lives. Blue lives. Black lives.

Sebastian (3 mins.) (min. 1:04:30)

3% raise, ok. But police budget has become inflated over the past 4 years or so. Body cameras, etc., not pertinent to deter crime. Spike in crime in 2018. Budget increased. More overtime. Cut things that have been shown not to have an effect on crime. Defunding is not to take away salaries or livelihoods of the police officers but to refocus our attention on the police budget as a whole and how it acts to serve our community.

Alison Mickel (3 mins.) (min. 1:13:33)

Disturbed and confused by comments tonight. Proportion of police budget has increased over time. Nostalgia tonight is for a time when police got less. No statistical link between crime rate and funding. Alternatives to calling police often end up calling the police. If we are proud of those alternatives, we should be funding them better. How is claim that we are finest department measured, we are 5 times more likely to use force against people of color. Against minors too. Actually facts are embarrassing. Disheartened that Council is backing down. Statements supporting the police have been confusing, contradictory, problematic.

The Bethlehem Gadfly