

The activists speak at last night's City Council meeting

The Bethlehem Gadfly Community Engagement Initiative, George Floyd killing July 8, 2020

 *Latest in a series of posts responding to the George Floyd killing* 

City Council Meeting July 7 video mins. 41:50-56:10

Start your listening with the activists themselves, who came in person to the meeting to speak and to speak against the Community Engagement Initiative resolution.

Please listen and not just read Gadfly's skeletal notes.

Listen.

Matty Fall (min. 41:50):

- The Community Engagement Initiative is problematic in even the first sentence when you decide to thank the police department and the Mayor in facilitating a peaceful protest and not the black members of the community who actually organized it.
- This entire documents appears like an effort to appease us instead of taking necessary action.
- Have you consulted black people in the creation of this coalition?
- It seems that the entire message of these protests is lost on you.
- We are actually protesting the very existence of the police.
- There needs to be a complete dismantling of policing as it stands.
- We ask you to defund the police and invest significantly in our community.
- [The resolution] has no substance. It was very vague. And it seems entirely like a piece to silence us and keep us quiet, just to say that you are doing something, which is not the case.
- I am demanding a public discussion . . . before the resolution is voted on.

Mike Enriquez (min. 44:45):

- Have you reached out to the organizers of the Black Lives Matter protest?
- Are you listening to the Black and people of color who will feel the consequences of this initiative?
- Why are you not consulting the Latinx members of City Council?
- Do you believe our relationship with the police will eradicate systemic racism or just heal a symptom of injustice?
- You are asking members of the community to form a relationship with an evil inanimate system that wasn't created to serve blacks or people of color.
- I am demanding a public discussion so the people can help construct a city we all love before a resolution is voted on.

Julie Bradley (min. 47:30):

- What this resolution seemed like to us . . . was an attempt to pacify the movement toward defunding the police.
- We are not asking for a stronger relationship between the cops and the community, we are asking for a stronger community.
- We need not . . . a coalition . . . to start conversations. These conversations have been happening for decades.
- You need to defund the police, you need to hire transformative justice workers, you need to address mental and physical health in schools.
- You need to make a concerted effort to amplify black voices.
- There needs to be direct action [to defund the police].
- There are solutions already proposed, and you are simply not listening.
- You should be listening to conversations already being had regardless of the existence of a coalition.
- I support concrete plans to defund the Bethlehem Police Department . . . and allocate funds . . .

Shelly Cooper (min. 50:35):

- . . . a band-aid rather than a solution to a much bigger issue.
- I believe we need to defund the Bethlehem Police Department and redistribute these funds to public services
- schools . . . mental health professionals

Eric Stat (min. 51:50):

- [The CEI] is a public relations initiative for the Bethlehem Police.
- It's not trying to change anything. It's trying to appease activists. And make the police department look good.
- Under no circumstances do protestors actually like when there are a lot of cops at protests. It doesn't actually make us feel safe.
- Cop-sponsored pizza parties aren't going to appease us. That's basically what this {CEI} is.
- It's a joke.

Recent Moravian graduate (min. 54:10):

- The resolution seems much like a band-aid,
- Why is 20% of your budget going towards police rather than education?
- We should be looking at mental health services . . . different areas for the community to become better and not just make everyone get along so that you can continue to police us.
- I find it very disheartening to see a lack of diversity within the City Council.
- You are not listening but having blinders on and trying to give us something that maybe we'll take.
- We are not ignorant. We know exactly what's going on.