

Commenter asks for info about police policies

The Bethlehem Gadfly George Floyd killing June 4, 2020

 *Latest in a series of posts on the George Floyd killing* 

Gadfly is bunkered in because of the virus. He would appreciate followers attending local BLM events today 3-5 at Town Hall and over the weekend sending pictures, audio, video.

Our **Mayor** and our **Police Chief** made powerful statements deploring the country's racist climate and the actions of the police in the killing of George Floyd.

Which is good.

But **Breana Holland** has asked us to push beyond the rhetoric to self-examination and to action.

Which is good.

This is no time to be self-satisfied, self-congratulatory, smug, back-patting, complacent, resting-on-laurels, etc.

It's a time for rigorous self-examination even if we think we are doing a good job.

Holland reminds us of discussion barely three months ago of an incident at a traffic stop that is exactly the kind of incident that can blow up like Minneapolis did and that might only be the tip of an iceberg here. (See **Police** on the list of topics on the right-hand sidebar to refresh your memory. Gadfly will come back to this incident in another post shortly.)

“Does the mayor really think there are no problems with how our police department is dealing with people of color?” Holland asks, “The Bethlehem police may not be killing people, but that does not mean that they treat black and brown people the same way they treat white people.”

Hard words, Gadfly said, but a necessary tonic at this cultural moment.

Through the good offices of Councilwoman Grace Crampsie Smith, the Mayor was connected with local protest organizers Matty Fall and J. C. Lustre Villanueva. The Mayor reported that they had a 90-minute meeting yesterday and will meet again.

Which is good.

The Chief reported that there will be another Black Lives Matter event today 3-5 Town Hall and perhaps one Saturday and Sunday.

Which is good.

(Gadfly is bunkered in because of the virus. He would appreciate followers attending and sending pictures, audio, video.)

These are important next action steps after the rhetoric.

Public comment at the Council meeting last night by Alex Dobyán focused precisely on the need for self-examination — and making police policies transparent to us.

Audio Player not available in this archive

Dobyán asked about Bethlehem Police policies designed to reduce the likelihood that events that transpired in Minneapolis would happen here, mentioning the **Use of Force project**. Do we have policies to exhaust all options, warn before using deadly force, criminalize choke holds, report all threats to use violence with weapons, forbid hiring officers being investigated elsewhere, mandate use of least amount of force, etc.? All of these are examples that protect police and citizens and help reduce racism.

Good questions.

Councilwoman Grace Crampsie Smith elicited answers to such questions later in the meeting when she asked the Chief about the training our officers receive.

The Chief expressed confidence that the department already had in place the kinds of policies Dobyán was asking about, saying that the

department was accredited both by the state and nationally, a dual accreditation that only 4% of departments have, that the department followed guidelines by such organizations as the NAACP, and that officers must qualify every year — training is continuous, the Chief said.

to be continued . . .