


“It just feels different now”

The Bethlehem Gadfly George Floyd killing October 8, 2020

 *Latest in a series of posts in the wake of the George Floyd murder* 

City Council Meeting, October 6, video

“I have a few questions. I know we done this before. But for some reason 2020 feels a little different. Today it feels a little different.”
Councilwoman Negron

“It just feels different now than it has in the past.”
Councilman Reynolds

There was a rather remarkable moment during Tuesday’s City Council meeting.

About 15 remarkable moments, in fact.

Nothing to do with the anointing of Chief Kott.

It was the summoning of George Floyd.

For 15 minutes the tragic spirit of George Floyd hovered over Town Hall.

Without being named.

We were in the ho-hum Resolutions part of the agenda.

When, especially because we’re attending from home, you can take a leisurely bathroom or soda break.

You know, the time of the meeting when wireless leases are approved and sewer contracts allotted.

Routine.

Resolution 10.b was approval for retired Chief DiLuzio to purchase his firearm for \$300. **(video min. 43)**

In his two years on duty, Gadfly had seen this kind of thing whistled through several times.

Routine.

Not tonight.

Councilwoman Negrón's "Yes, I have a few questions" interrupted the rhythm of routine.

"I know we done this before," she said, "but for some reason 2020 feels a little different. Today it feels a little different."

She went on to ask in a slowish, probing way such things as how much the gun cost, what the "life" of a gun was, whether the officer's badge number was on it, have we ever denied such a request, what do we do with the old guns, do we buy new guns for new officers.

The answers did not always come quickly — answerers were taken by surprise, Gadfly thinks, answers were not always at the ready.

It felt to Gadfly like there was some awkwardness.

And Councilwoman Negrón did not seem to be in a hurry. There were brief pauses. As if she were thinking. She seemed to be shuffling around something. Like a person in bare feet around a snake.

Gadfly thought he could feel audience bewilderment oozing through his computer screen (there were 25 or so of us watching).

What was she up to? Where was she going with this? Could she really be worried about the expense involved? Was she going to vote no?

Comeback for Chief DiLuzio did flash through Gadfly's mind.

But then the explanation came, unexpectedly, like finally finding lost keys in the bottom of a coat pocket: "I just think that in 2020, with so many incidents that have happened across the nation, and to me, you know, I guess I feel it closer because people that look like me have been killed by one of those guns, so it's something that I would like for us to think about . . . but I also want to look at the budget, the cost, are we

really doing something that makes sense if the guns need to be saved for the officers we need to hire?” **(video min. 50:30)**

Gadfly choked on a sob.

“I guess I feel it closer . . . People that look like me . . . have been killed by one of those guns . . . something that I would like for us to think about.”

An aching heart had just opened a crack.

An aching heart that would soon be tread on.

Councilwoman Negrón did not suggest voting no on the resolution but ended with anticipation of future discussion with the Chief.

However, sensing only a slur or a slight against retired Chief DiLuzio — with whom Councilwoman Negrón may not have always been on the best of terms — Councilman Callahan sprang to the retired Chief’s defense: “I don’t know why this was brought up tonight. You know, I’m a little appalled at Councilwoman Negrón’s comments about the use of a gun in murders and things like that. The Chief has, DiLuzio, he has served our city, honorably, for 25 years. And we have all on Council voted for dozens and dozens of guns to be sold to the retiring officer as a momento. And they’re paying the market share for it, the market price of it. And to question it now, to me, I think it’s disgusting that you would even bring this up at a time like this when he’s leaving our department after all those years of service and make the comments that you just made.” **(video min. 51:38)**

Councilman Callahan appalled and disgusted at Councilwoman Negrón.

Gadfly gasped.

Gunfight at the OK Corral. Wyatt v. Ike Clanton. Been here before with these two. And it’s usually not pretty.

And then Councilman Reynolds intervened **(video min. 52:58)**.

We've done 19 or 20 of these sales since 2018 when the practice of bringing approval to Council started, he said, "but this is the first one we're selling since June." Referring like Councilwoman Negron to you-know-what. George Floyd was murdered May 25.

And this is not the first time that the practice of selling the guns has been scrutinized, for Councilman Reynolds recalled that he had previously asked Chief DiLuzio to direct the sale money to anti-gun or other community initiatives, but nothing was ever done.

"It just feels different now than it has in the past," said Councilman Reynolds, the white Anglo-Saxon Councilman Reynolds, agreeing with Latina Negron, and reflecting, it seems to Gadfly, a felt awareness of how the George Floyd murder has altered sensibilities about policing, about violence, about race.

"It's important to mention that this is the first [sale] we've had since June, and it's also something that we have brought up before as far as the message it is sending, [though] it obviously has the potential because it's the Chief to appear as if it is something else."

"I do echo some of Councilwoman Negron's concerns," said Councilman Reynolds, and Gadfly took his comment to mean more than just the budget concerns.

So Councilman Reynolds did not recommend voting no on this resolution, but he asked the new Chief to "entertain" the idea of directing sale money in the future to anti-gun violence.

To anti-gun violence.

"We should be taking that money, and we should be putting it toward things that we can be proud of."

Remarkable.

Just remarkable.