

Chief DiLuzio: “Right now there is a message to be heard”

The Bethlehem Gadfly George Floyd killing, Police June 3, 2020

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

photo by Kurt Bresswein, lehighvalleylive.com

*from Tony Rhodin, “Local police chief on protests: ‘Our community wants to be heard. It was important for us to be there.’”
lehighvalleylive.com, June 3, 2020.*



Bethlehem police Chief Mark DiLuzio said President Trump wasn't thinking about cities like these when he insisted on violence being crushed by military intervention.

Protests happen during the day, DiLuzio said. Riots and looting happen at night, he said.

“It's a day-night thing,” he said, adding that Bethlehem's protest was during the day.

His city often faces protests during Musikfest and other big events. They are mostly nonviolent and people “get their message out,” DiLuzio said.

But if they were to ever go sideways, city police are prepared, he said.

“If any violence does occur, we would squash that immediately,” he said.

But none of the past week's events had to happen, he said.

DiLuzio was “horrified” when he first saw the video of Derek Chauvin with his knee on Floyd's neck.

“You know what I see there?” DiLuzio said of the video. “Four police officers with no direction or training.”

It often happens in departments with financial constraints, he said. The first thing to get cut is training, he said.

“They were not following training, policies or doing what they’re supposed to do,” DiLuzio said.

“... Police have done a lot of great things in this country. This just put us back 25 years. It makes us look like prehistoric Neanderthals out there.”

“He could have done a very simple thing,” DiLuzio said of Chauvin. “When the guy said he couldn’t breathe, he takes his knee off of him.”

That one little, monumental thing and there’s no rioting. “That would have ended it right there,” DiLuzio said.

But Chauvin continued as Floyd died, authorities say. And that in no way absolves the other three officers there, DiLuzio said, calling their inaction an act of omission.

“Not doing anything is a crime too,” DiLuzio said. “I wouldn’t blame the AG’s office for charging them. I think it would be appropriate.”

But, as with Grantiz [the Allentown chief], Diluzio said the protests were a chance to listen.

“Right now there is a message to be heard and it’s shouldn’t be forgotten,” he said. “We need to update our systems, our training, the way police operate. It’s something that hasn’t been done” across the country.