

# Councilman Reynolds requests a Community Engagement Plan outline from the City

The Bethlehem Gadfly Community Engagement Initiative, Police December 4, 2020

 *Latest in a series of posts about the Community Engagement Initiative* 

Last night at the budget hearing, Councilman Reynolds read his November 30 memo to the Mayor and Chief Kott asking for a community engagement plan of meetings with a report at the end.

The Councilman provided some brief comments at the end of his reading as well.

Gadfly welcomes the movement the Councilman is prompting.

City Council Memorandum

**SUBJECT:** Request for Police Department Community Engagement Plan Outline  
**TO:** Mayor and Police Chief Michelle Kott  
**FROM:** J. William Reynolds, Member of Council  
**DATE:** November 30, 2020

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Mayor Donchez and Dr. Kott,

During the recent Police Department 2021 budget hearing, Chief Kott discussed her desire to evaluate and study the current operational structure of our Police Department. Chief Kott also discussed the importance of listening to the community when determining Police Department public safety priorities. I agree with Dr. Kott's prioritization of both of these areas in connection with the 2021 budget.

I would strongly encourage the Administration, Dr. Kott, and the Bethlehem Police Department to plan and implement an extensive public participation and information gathering process in 2021 as it relates to the above-mentioned priorities. While the pandemic has obviously created a great deal of uncertainty about the potential for in person-meetings, I believe the City should be able to draft a potential Police Department community engagement plan that exhibits our City's strong commitment to community involvement. Holding meetings in different parts of the City, with a variety of organizations, will be of paramount importance if we are to meet our goal of actively listening to our citizens.

I strongly encourage the design of a plan that prioritizes comprehensiveness and inclusivity of opinions over the time it takes to complete the engagement process. At the conclusion of the process, it would also be my suggestion that the Administration present an in-depth report to City Council on the information gathered from citizens and any potential recommendations. While my preference is a public report in front of City Council, I would defer to the majority will of my Council colleagues as to the format by which we receive the Administration's information and proposed engagement plan.

I would respectfully ask that an outline of a Police Department community engagement plan is submitted to City Council prior to December 15, 2020, which is the night City Council votes on the final 2021 City budget.

Thank you for your consideration and please feel free to contact me with any questions.



J. William Reynolds,  
Member of City Council