

Dueling complaints over the marijuana arrest

The Bethlehem Gadfly Police, Southside February 15, 2020

 *Latest in a series of posts about the Bethlehem Police* 

Fellow local blogger Bernie O'Hare of the longer-standing and no doubt much more widely read Lehigh Valley Ramblings and I do not cover the same beat and rarely are posting on the same subjects. But this time we have. [Click here](#) for Bernie's post yesterday.

This is the fourth post on an issue between the Bethlehem Police, specifically Chief Mark DiLusio and an unnamed officer, and District Judge Nicholas Englesson over the handling of a traffic stop of an Hispanic male that resulted in a marijuana charge and a subsequent November 14, 2019, conversation about the stop between the Judge and the arresting officer.

In yesterday's post Gadfly published a letter from the Judge to the Mayor dated December 20. Just shy of two months ago. Gadfly doesn't know what, if anything, has transpired since. The Council and the Mayor met in Executive Session before the last City Council meeting on a "personnel matter." Could the meeting have been about this issue? Don't know. Personnel matters are legitimately private. We would all want that if we were involved in such an issue.

But Gadfly is surprised that, as far as he knows, there has been nothing about this issue in our local news. Nothing. Did Gadfly receive these documents he posted the last three days "over the transom," as it were, because the local news had decided to not cover the issue? Don't know.

Should we not be talking about this?

Race. Racial profiling. Racism. Discrimination.

Not trivial matters.

Should we not be talking about this?

Bethlehem's Hispanic population numbers about 30%.

Not a trivial number, though numbers shouldn't "count" in moral matters.

Should we not be talking about this?

We have dueling formal complaints. If we believe the Judge, we may have a racially insensitive police officer in a city with a substantial Hispanic population. If we believe the police officer, we may have — Gadfly begs your pardon — a chief executive abusing his power and office.

We need to be talking about this, don't we? (But Gadfly is always ready to accept a slap upside the head.)

Go back to that email Gadfly got from the Mayor, posted Wednesday:

“The City Administration is well aware of the matter. It has been thoroughly reviewed internally. The matter is the subject of an ongoing non-criminal investigation. We caution you not to speculate as to the nature of the ongoing investigation. We caution you that it would be inappropriate to assume the truth of the allegations. We caution you that it would be inappropriate to assume there is good cause for the allegations. The City Administration will have no further comment because the information and evidence are subject to confidentiality under Pennsylvania law.”

It feels like a paragraph fashioned by a lawyer. Could be wrong. It feels like a message to shut up. Could be wrong. Tripled cautions. It feels like a gag order. Could be wrong. Caution = warning. It feels like a signal of personal danger ahead. Could be wrong.

But we really need to talk about this, don't we? Even as an abstract Criminal Justice course exercise of how to handle racially charged situations.

to be continued . . .