

Chief Kott's memo on fostering police-community relations

The Bethlehem Gadfly Community Engagement Initiative, Police December 21, 2020

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

ref: **Chief Kott outlines plan to engage our community**

*Here's the actual Kott memo that I didn't have when posting on Friday.
Add this to the info on implicit bias training that I didn't have when I*

posted on Friday, and it looks like Chief Kott has been busy.



CITY OF BETHLEHEM

10 East Church Street, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania 18018-6025

DEPARTMENT OF POLICE

www.bethlehem-pa.gov

SUBJECT: Police Department Community Engagement Plan
TO: Mayor and City Council
FROM: Chief Michelle Kott
DATE: December 14, 2020

Mayor Donchez and members of City Council,

During these divisive times, community-police engagement opportunities can genuinely and organically build understanding, trust, confidence, and respect between police agencies and the communities they serve. This correspondence serves as a general outline of the Bethlehem Police Department's plan to engage our community. Through this comprehensive approach that will seek to remove barriers to participation, embrace diversity, and encourage two-way communication, we will strive to identify the community's public safety priorities, build trust, increase understanding, improve satisfaction, and initiate a collaborative effort with community stakeholders towards addressing community issues/concerns. The following are some of the measurable actions that will be implemented/explored:

- Community safety surveys to determine past experience with BPD, satisfaction with services, public safety priorities, other community concerns, and open comments
- "Your neighborhood, your police department" events that will be geographically located throughout the city and will provide community members and police officers with in-person engagement opportunities to meet and participate in productive dialogue
- Community walks, where a limited number of Bethlehem police officers, including members of the police administration, visit various neighborhoods, going door to door to meet or reconnect with residents
- Community-Police Forums to provide an outlet for community members and the police to voice concerns, share information, and enhance trust
- Citizen and Jr. Police Academies that will provide an opportunity to expand community understanding of law enforcement, crime prevention, and public safety
- Expand upon our partnerships with other City of Bethlehem departments, such as Parks & Recreation and the Health Bureau, by participating in joint events that foster positive relationships and build long term meaningful trust
- Partner with community and stakeholder organizations to set up structured and unstructured events, such as listening sessions and focus groups, where community members and officers can share their experiences and perspectives
- Explore options that would enable and encourage different officers, not just members of the police administration, to participate in community events
- Increase the department's social media presence and utilize these platforms to promote available community resources

As stated above, this is just a general outline that is in no way static. I am interested in and open to additional concepts for community-police engagement opportunities and I'm grateful to the officers and community stakeholders that have already reached out to me with suggestions. By focusing on uniting our community, I am confident that we can improve communication and increase the department's credibility with the public. I look forward to sharing our progress with you.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Michelle Kott
Chief of Police

The Bethlehem Gadfly