

Chief Kott demonstrates commitment to building trust

The Bethlehem Gadfly George Floyd killing April 19, 2021

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

ref: [Candidate Grubb and Chief Shiffer on community policing](#)

ref: [Interactions with police: the good times](#)

Gadfly's been bringing you parts of the Hispanic Center's timely April 12 [Community Conversation](#) on "Trust Building with Law Enforcement."

Unfortunately, he couldn't stay for the whole meeting. After about an hour, he had to buzz off to the long awaited launch of the Climate Action Plan.



The part of the meeting Gadfly missed was a break-out session with Chief Kott and the Bethlehem residents. He bets that was a good session. And if there are followers who attended that session and could fill us in, that would be greatly appreciated.

But Gadfly can present to you here three spliced together sections of comments by our Chief Kott that you will want to hear.

Gadfly followers will know that he has been whiney about City response to the post-GeorgeFloyd moment, but there can be no doubt of Chief Kott's commitment to building trust with the community.

And at the core of her comments is the description of a moment of unity — almost a religious experience — taking a knee with people demonstrating against the murder of Floyd.

Audio Player not available in this archive

- The community wants us to be members of the community. They don't want us to appear to be this separate occupying force.

- The little things matter . . . it goes a long way in creating that trust and those relationships in the community .
- I remember asking a member of the administration if I could go up and just try to talk with the group [Black Lives Matter demonstrators] and explain kind of what the danger was.
- When I got up there it was a very tense situation.
- Not only the officers that were at the intersection but members of the group really didn't know what to do, what to expect.
- I think I threw everybody off guard when I just explained that I was just there to talk.
- The cooperation and understanding and trust the demonstrators gave to me was amazing.
- I almost want to describe it as a religious experience.
- I was able to listen to a lot of their concerns and their questions and fears not only what happened in Minnesota but what could happen here in Pennsylvania.
- It as so important, it meant the world to me to have that conversation, to take a knee with those demonstrators and have trust in me.
- We had that peaceful existence in the City between demonstrators and law enforcement.
- Before something bad happens is the time to get out and start building those relationships and really showing the community who you are not only as a police department but as people.
- It's so disingenuous after something happens to be out there trying to build these relationships and asking people to trust you.

Meeting attendee Scott (Slingerland?), witness to the Chief's action, remarks on the value of what she did.

Also worthy of note, mayoral candidate Dana Grubb spoke of the value of police officers actually living in the community as a way of establishing trust, a plan with problems, for sure, but worthy of more discussion.

A valuable and profitable meeting, says the Gadfly. Tip o' the hat to the Hispanic Center.