

# What fresh hell is this? Part 1

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

🌿 Latest in a series of posts about responses to the George Floyd killing 🌿

*from Andrew Scott and Jon Harris, “Three Allentown council members call for Gerlach and Siegel to be censured for joining Black Lives Matter protests.” Morning Call, August 2, 2020.*

Three Allentown City Council members say they support a resolution demanding a censure and no-confidence vote against council members Ce-Ce Gerlach and Joshua Siegel, urging them to resign and alleging conflicts of interest in their participation in Black Lives Matter protests.



The resolution, which was drafted by council member Ed Zucal and could be presented at Wednesday's meeting, claims Gerlach and Siegel betrayed the oath of office and "are unfit and not worthy to hold the position of councilperson." Council President Daryl Hendricks and member Candida Affa said Saturday they support the resolution, agreeing that Gerlach and Siegel's demonstrating raises questions about their objectivity in matters pertaining to the Allentown Police Department.

Gerlach and Siegel defended their actions, saying that standing with citizens does not pose a conflict of interest. It's unclear whether they will be censured, with Hendricks and Affa noting the resolution will need four yes votes to pass. That means the resolution hinges on votes from council Vice President Julio Guridy and member Cynthia Mota.

Guridy didn't return a call about his vote. Mota didn't wish to discuss her vote, but said she was disgusted and saddened by the situation. "I was elected to do the right thing by the people. I didn't sign up for nonsense," Mota said. "I really would like to tell people that we have to be united, this is not the time to be divided. It just pains me when I see all the negativity going around."

Gerlach and Siegel recently proposed reforms to police department policy, such as a requirement that officers intervene when they see force being used inappropriately, that a citizen's board review allegations of excessive force, and that some of the department's funding be reallocated to nonprofits providing mental health and addiction services. Council will discuss the measures at its Aug. 12 meeting.

The resolution alleges Gerlach and Siegel:

- used social media to make derogatory remarks against other council members and the police department.

- violated the city charter by joining protesters who “attempted to question the police and ask for defunding the police” after a July 11 incident outside St. Luke’s Hospital-Sacred Heart in which an officer used his knee to restrain Edward Borrero Jr.
- were both seen carrying signs that said “Defund the police”; and Siegel was heard saying “F— the police.”
- put pedestrians at risk with their involvement in protests, which blocked intersections, causing drivers to go the wrong way down streets.
- undermined the police department by publicly apologizing to Borrero after the July 15 council meeting, where a number of citizens angry at Borrero’s arrest urged council to reform the police department and protested outside.
- In addition, Siegel gave the mayor’s cellphone number to “an already angry group of protesters,” which the resolution calls a moral and ethical violation that led to him being harassed.

Their actions, the resolution alleges, placed the city in “a position of future litigation” and showed they can no longer be objective about the police department or trusted by citizens.

Gerlach and Siegel took issue with the allegations, saying they were protesting systemic racism. They noted that other council members, including Hendricks, Zucal and Affa, joined Allentown’s first Black Lives Matter protest just days after a white police officer in Minneapolis pressed his knee on the neck of George Floyd, killing him, during a May 25 arrest.

“And I’m glad my fellow council members were there, but does this mean there was a conflict of interest in that protest as well?” Gerlach asked.

“No,” Zucal said. “We were not there to protest. We were there to support.”

Gerlach said she never carried a “defund the police” sign, yelled anything offensive at the police or posted disparaging remarks about council online.

“I’d like to see those posts they’re claiming I put out on social media,” she said.

“Conflict of interest is really being misconstrued here,” Siegel said. “I can argue it’s a conflict of interest for council members Zucal and Hendricks, both former police officers themselves, to vote with the rest of council on any matters involving our local police department.”

Siegel said he has apologized to Mayor Ray O’Connell for giving out his phone number, adding he did so in the heat of the moment.

The reforms he and Gerlach have proposed, Siegel said, aren’t anti-police but a reexamination of public safety issues and the money the city spends on them. He said it wasn’t council’s place to determine if he and Gerlach were worthy of holding office, that that’s up to the voters.

“What they’re really censuring is the Black Lives Matter movement, which is bigger than me and Councilwoman Gerlach,” he said. “They’re making it real clear what their stance is.”

*This is only part 1. Buckle up!*