

# If you were Chief of Police, what would you do?

The Bethlehem Gadfly George Floyd killing, Police June 13, 2020

 *Latest in a series of posts on the George Floyd killing* 

Gadfly often asks you to role play, usually to role play a City Council member.

Since Gadfly wants you to be the best voter you can be, role playing a City Council decision can help you understand the job and the responsibility and to determine the kind of person we need to elect to sit at the Head Table.

But today Gadfly's going to ask you to role play the Chief of Police.

Everybody in city government associated with law enforcement is on a hot seat right now in the aftermath of the George Floyd killing — mayors, police chiefs, city council members.

Let's think about the hot seat our Chief is on.

Two City Council members have asked him to respond by Monday to a request for information on the department's use of force directives and his willingness to establish a Community Engagement Initiative within the department.

The Chief has made a strong public statement denouncing the Minneapolis police behavior and has already sketched out before Council what he considers strong department policies and training procedures regarding the use of violence.

Responding to the request for information on the directives at this point doesn't seem like a big deal. The Chief doesn't seem worried about that. That seems normal accountability.

But how about responding to the major **Community Engagement Initiative** idea?

That does seem a big deal. And might be taken as a reflection on his job performance.

Role play.

If you were the Chief you might be thinking, hey, I've been in law enforcement around 40 years, I've been in Bethlehem law enforcement 25 years, I've been Chief 6 years, I have outstanding department policies and training, I have made a strong statement decrying what happened in Minneapolis, I seem to have cordial relations with Council, our city is reasonably free of such racial incidents and tensions that mark other cities — so, hey, what's all this about not trusting the department all of a sudden?

Previously, Gadfly hypothesized three possible ways the Chief could respond:

- 1) that he is open (or not) to participating actively (maybe even lead — not clear) in the development of what looks like a major enterprise
- 2) that he would like to withhold comment and commitment till the two Councilors provide much more detail on how such an initiative would operate
- 3) that he could suggest another way to achieve the same goals.

Subsequently, Gadfly has thought of a 4th option: that the Chief wants to wait to see if the CEI idea has the support of the full Council rather than just two members before he “engages” with it.

Gadfly doesn't know anything about Council dynamics backstage. Perhaps the full Council was involved in or at least alerted to formulation of the Reynolds/Crampsie Smith memo.

But **their memo** is on the agenda for Tuesday's City Council meeting as a “Communication” and will no doubt be discussed then or under New Business.

What do you think the Chief is likely to do? What should he do? What would you do?