

Allentown Police Chief: “I will be on the right side of it, whatever it is”

[The Bethlehem Gadfly](#) [George Floyd killing, Police](#) July 13, 2020

 *Latest in a series of posts responding to the George Floyd killing* 

Kayla Dwyer, “Protesters confront Allentown mayor, police Saturday night about video of officer kneeling on man’s neck.” Morning Call, July 12, 2020.

A large group gathered Saturday night in downtown Allentown to demand answers from the Allentown Police Department and Mayor Ray O’Connell about a video taken earlier in the day that showed an officer pressing his knee into a man’s neck during an arrest.

A video circulated Saturday night on social media showing officers arresting a man outside St. Luke’s Hospital-Sacred Heart on West Chew Street in Allentown.

The video, less than 30 seconds long and taken from an unknown person’s car, shows three officers arresting the man. One of the officers appears to put his shoulder and elbow on the man’s back before pressing his knee on his neck.

Both O’Connell and Allentown police Chief Glenn Granitz Jr. showed up to the protest to answer questions and acknowledged they had seen the video. Granitz said there will be an investigation.

Speaking to some of the protesters Saturday night, O’Connell called the video “disturbing,” but said, “I think we need to gather all the facts and information before we go forward.”

The group first gathered at Seventh and Hamilton streets around 11 p.m. Saturday, after Hasshan Batts, executive director of Promise Neighborhoods of the Lehigh Valley, issued a call to action in a [live Facebook video](#).

“Where are we going to make it loud and clear that this is not OK?,” he said, en route to the meeting spot. “If this is not OK to you, meet me on Seventh and Hamilton, right now.”

They then marched to the police precinct at 10th and Hamilton, with chants such as “Say his name, George Floyd,” the Minneapolis man who was killed in May after an officer knelt for nearly nine minutes on his neck.

Some knocked repeatedly on the doors and windows of the precinct while others blocked the street out front, continuing chants like “Hands up, don’t shoot.”

Some also made phone calls to the precinct and to the mayor.

O’Connell arrived shortly before midnight, and Granitz soon after.

Protesters asked for the name of the officer who pressed his knee against the man and asked Granitz for his response to what he saw in the video.

“As a human being, a knee on the neck, is that OK?” asked Maegan Llerena, director of Make the Road Pennsylvania.

“We’re going to take a look at it. We’re going to go through everything. And we’re going to give you an update as soon as we can,” Granitz responded.

“I don’t have a 24-hour, 48-hour time table for you,” Granitz said when a resident asked how long an investigation would take.

The protest ended around 12:30 a.m. Batts took to the megaphone to urge a peaceful dispersal, saying two point people would be following up with police.

Granitz could not give many details about the video Saturday night.

“I just got here, and I’m here to look at it,” he told protesters gathered in a circle around him. “I’ve seen a short clip.”

“Just be on the right side of this,” a protester said to him.

“I will be on the right side of it, whatever it is,” Granitz responded.