

# Public Safety meeting August 11

The Bethlehem Gadfly George Floyd killing, Police July 22, 2020

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

## **video City Council meeting July 21, 2020**

We know that the public comment on the Community Engagement Initiative at the July 7 City Council meeting was, as the newspaper report characterized it, “lukewarm at best.” There was, for instance, a series of what we might call “activist” comments in favor of various ways of what we might call defunding the police — the need for radical change.

A balance of a sort was struck at last night’s City Council meeting when we at last heard several calls from the “other side,” indicating that those comments at the previous meeting did not speak for the whole community, counseling Council to go slowly, and to have broader dialog.

Gadfly will get to that later today, focusing on that “other side.”

Go to the **City Council video** of last night’s proceedings if you can’t wait for Gadfly to get his life in order today. Start about min. 15:00.

But let me jump to the big news, the long anticipated big news.

Chair Colon announced that the Public Safety Committee will be held in three weeks, August 11 at 6PM (**video min. 1:15:15**).

It will be a virtual meeting.

An announcement with instructions and details will be forthcoming “soon.”

The agenda for the meeting, said Councilman Colon, will be “Policing, to go over the use of force policy that the city released, The Mayor, and we’ll talk further before the meeting, but the presentation that has been presented at different meetings by the police department I think would

be good, for members of Council to see that presentation about the use of force, and then also have the discussion about the Community Engagement Initiative and that resolution that was passed. . . . I encourage anyone to reach out prior to a Public Safety Committee meeting, after a Public Safety Committee meeting. . . . As we move forward through the process and as we tackle different meetings, and this Public Safety Committee meeting is going to be the first of what would be many since the goal isn't to have a bunch of Public Safety Committee meetings but to move forward that Community Engagement Initiative which I expressed last time will be something that will be gaining shape and something that's going to be dynamic moving forward.”

#### **AUDIO FILES NOT AVAILABLE IN THIS ARCHIVE**

Councilwoman Crampsie Smith, sensing confusion that, frankly, Gadfly feels, followed Councilman Colon in an attempt to bring clarity (**min. 1:21:50**): “There seems to be still a lot of confusion about the Community Engagement Initiative. . . . I feel like some of the callers . . . are not feeling what I'm feeling about what it's going to look like. The Community Engagement Initiative is really to allow another avenue for public input beyond City Council meetings or a Public Safety Committee meeting. And from there to provide some framework to the City and the Council and the police to move forward to address systemic racism as well as build bridges and build better relationships within the community and with our police department. I'm going to read what the resolution states . . . time to create a consistent public space for the long-term discussion of issues surrounding systemic racism, discrimination. . . . A community-wide coalition. . . . People need to feel validated and that they matter, and I hope this Community Engagement can help to meet that goal at least partially. . . . A way to engage all members of the community.”

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Gadfly, again, frankly, is still in a bit of a muddle.

We have the Mayor participating in an NAACP “Community Advisory Board.” Gadfly expected a report on a major meeting of that Board last week with a presentation by the Police. Now this is not the Mayor’s Board, so maybe he feels that it’s up to the NAACP to make commentary. But no mention at all? Gadfly is still confused about where this CAB fits in. And the Mayor didn’t say anything about anything regarding this whole ball of systemic racism wax and the City’s response to it. Is Gadfly the only one who feels this is odd? What is our leader thinking, doing?

We have the Public Safety Committee. We now have a date for a meeting. And details will follow. Gadfly assumes that Chair Colon is in charge. But, to Gadfly anyway, he felt so tentative. He will talk “further” with the Mayor about the format of the meeting but “thinks” a reprise of the police presentation would be a good thing. We know Gadfly is impatient, but it doesn’t sound like there’s a clear idea of an agenda. And there’s been plenty of time to think. And Gadfly feels vague focus — the meeting will be about policing, the use of force directive, ok, but also about the Community Engagement Initiative? What role does the Public Safety Committee have regarding the CEI? Does the Public Safety Committee meet once, then it morphs into the CEI? Wasn’t the CEI turned over to the Mayor to create? Policing . . . Community Engagement initiative — two huge issues. Gadfly is not a young man anymore. He has to pee every time he stands up. But to him these two topics feel much too big for a single meeting.

And then there’s the Community Engagement Initiative. Councilwoman Crampsie Smith certainly sensed Gadfly’s confusion, but, frankly, her attempt at clarity failed him. She repeated the rhetoric of the resolution. Gadfly gets it, gets the concept, and loves it. But he can’t “see” the CEI yet. And he’s not sure who is in charge of its creation. Yes, Gadfly gets the concept. He’s heard it over and over. Now he’s looking for the road map to that goal and wants to hear from the driver. It’s time to be on the road. Didn’t the Council resolution “urge” the Mayor to set up the CEI? And

yet aren't both Councilman Colon and Councilwoman Crampsie Smith talking and acting as if Council is in control?

Gadfly feels precious time passing and doesn't feel firm direction.

I know, I know, poor Gadfly.