

## Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative Feedback 2/13 – 2/26/2021

\*\*\* If you supply your name and/or hamlet, it will be shared with the Advisory Committee as well as online. \*\*\*

### Received Monday, February 16 via web form

**Name (optional)**      **Field not completed.**

**Hamlet (optional)**      **Delmar**

**Feedback (9999 characters max)** What is the racial ethnicity distribution of police department staff who are not officers?

### Received Thursday, February 18 via web form

**Name (optional)**      **Emily Marynczak**

**Hamlet (optional)**      **Field not completed.**

**Feedback (9999 characters max)**      Hi Everyone, thank you for your attention. What most of us want is a fair and just society where people feel valued and cared for. A lot of whites have this. However, people who have been marginalized suffer the double whammy of being over policed while being under protected. There are many reasons that contribute to these disparities. As a society we tend to blame police for problems that are out of their control; income and opportunity inequality, poverty, a crappy profit-driven healthcare system, and an education system funded by property taxes that makes education wholly unequal, we even have for profit prison systems across the land, that is so inhumane- America is in pain and things are a mess of cruel capitalistic failures, and so much racism woven through it all. However, to blame our Gina and Adam and Jim for these atrocious social failings is unfair. But it is time that our police own up to the history of their uniforms, learn to talk about it openly and honestly, have compassion for those who are scared and angry in their presence, and begin to make up for the crimes of their uniform's past. This, I assume, would be easier if there weren't so many guns on the street. I understand that police find it hard to feel compassion for their community when they are terrified they will be shot. (You should all join me in an effort to amend the second amendment but I digress.)

All of this big picture stuff is directly related to this advisory committee's work here in sweet little Bethlehem because we are wholly American. As the advisory committee's work is soon coming to a formal conclusion, I am sad that there has yet to be any discussion of what "systems of white supremacy," means. But it defines us, regardless of our understanding.

Common sense dictates that a community oversight board with full subpoena powers is a necessary component of equitable law enforcement within a democratic society. Not only is community oversight the only way that we can truly self-govern, as our country's constitution calls us to do, but given what we learned during the Insurrection on January 6, 2021, it is of the

utmost importance that we pull back the traditional curtains of secrecy that law enforcement has enjoyed in our town. We learned beyond a reasonable doubt, on January 6th that law enforcement across the country has been infiltrated with insurrectionists and white supremacists. We need community involvement to help root out and/or prevent any such infiltrations here. We have white supremacists in our town too. So, we need a community oversight board with ample powers to investigate and hold people accountable for any potential violations of conduct or other bad stuff. However, community oversight boards are plagued with failures around the country. When local elected officials, and police work together to place their own, Look-the-other-way-people, the community loses and corruption wins. I urge the town to adopt policy that protects the powers and autonomy of a truly equitable and democratic oversight board.

Body cameras are largely seen as a useful tool. There is evidence that finds their use improves the quantity and quality of civil behavior. But body cameras can also be weaponized against the public. And at this point my faith in town and police leadership leaves me uncertain as to whether or not I can trust the combined forces to actually write policy that is fair and just. I hope the town proves me wrong, and transparency and accountability remain true guiding principles.

Addressing the police overtime scandal, the town should be able to hire Social workers, and more officers too- if needed, as I suspect that will be very cost effective. We have a need for social workers with crisis experience. I know first-hand. I have a family member with a serious mental illness, and I once had to call the Bethlehem police in a terrible moment when our family member was missing. The police came right away and were so kind and professional to me. Thankfully, as they were here, our family member returned home. I was so relieved, but that was short lived. Because the two police officers who had only moments ago been kind and compassionate to me, took on angry and accusatory tones trying to intimidate my family member from ever doing anything like that again! They scared me. They terrified my family member who was suffering already from very distorted thinking. The police left and they likely had no idea or concern as to what fresh hell they had just created with their disrespectful demeanor towards my sick family member. We didn't recruit, or train our police to do many of the jobs we ask them to do. This disconnect does not serve the police or the community.

And lastly, I will say that I was very happy to watch the last advisory meeting. Finally, work that needs to get done seems to be getting off the ground. However, it is a failure of a transparent government that there has been no public posting of what the groups are and who is on them and if a chair has been selected. And it is entirely frustrating that there has been so clear information about how the work of the committees is to relate to the document given to the governor, or anything about how the work of the subcommittees is to continue beyond the April 1 date.

Thank you for your time, Emily Marynczak

Received Friday, February 26 via email

**Name (optional)**      **Name withheld.**

**Hamlet (optional)**      **Field not completed.**

I listened to your webcast last night and I wanted to share my concerns as I'm not convinced there is enough intellectual and philosophical diversity on the panel. I do not doubt the sincerity of the participants in trying to achieve something good. However, it is not clear what that objective is. How are we defining "disadvantaged background?" I heard Gina suggesting treating citizens of "disadvantaged backgrounds" differently. I hope that this is not a reference to race. That seems like very backwards thinking and I can't imagine there are too many tax paying citizens in favor of or comfortable with that. Equal protection and treatment is the goal, not unequal application of the law.

Gabriella, an Albany County public defender, seems convinced there are "expensive things" that need to be done, but she didn't cite any quantitative analysis that definitively demonstrates the efficacy of these things. She just stated they are "non-negotiable". Budgets are in rough shape. Unless she is paying for everything, everything is negotiable. We have to be careful of ideas that sound good vs. ideas that are proven to be successful for public safety, which is the paramount goal. This is a large area for cognitive bias pitfalls. There are also several false assumptions made about the "History of the Bethlehem Police," which is not defined by an isolated incident. It's defined by decades of professionalism, community partnerships, and a highly desirable safe community. They're a big reason we have good schools, safe streets, and solid home values.

Xavier mentioned that your plan should be reviewed by the Center for Law and Justice (CFLJ). The City of Albany has been listening to the CFLJ for decades. They are in a very deep hole. Ideologues have driven Albany into the ground. There is no evidence the CFLJ collaboration with the APD is having a positive effect in Albany. Albany should be looking to Bethlehem for an example of what adequate public safety looks like, we do not want to adopt what they are doing.

Furthermore, "reform" and "reimagining" has taken place across the country with very little success. Here are some examples:

<https://www.startribune.com/minneapolis-violent-crimes-soared-in-2020-amid-pandemic-protests/600019989/>

<https://www.startribune.com/minneapolis-to-spend-6-4-million-to-hire-more-police/600022400/>

<https://www.q13fox.com/news/some-seattle-business-owners-are-at-their-breaking-point-over-crime>

<https://www.dailynews.com/2021/02/17/300-homicides-council-presses-lapd-on-dramatic-rise-in-violent-crime/>

<https://www.city-journal.org/rise-in-violent-crime-threatens-new-yorks-recovery>

I could go on, but you get the point. Please do not gamble with public safety. 1 additional victim of rape, murder, home invasion, assault etc is 1 victim too many. For all the criticism “broken windows” policing gets from certain groups, it’s the most effective model to date for maximizing public safety. There is a mountain of evidence for this.

Lastly, you need a police officer on any review board. It’s impossible to analyze an incident without their expertise, insights, and input.

Thank you. Have a great day.