

September 4<sup>TH</sup>, 2019  
GENERAL MEETING  
BERKSHIRE COUNTY BRANCH, NAACP

**NAACP OFFICE 730 TYLER STREET**

**Attendees**

See Addendum

**AGENDA:**

- 1. Meeting Called to Order 6:10 pm**
- 2. Opening Silence**
- 3. Review of Treasurer's Report**
  - a. Negative line item from of disposable income.
  - b. Jeff Turner made a motion to accept operating budget and Treasure's report.
  - c. Al Blake seconded.
  - d. Accepted.
- 4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
  - a. Jeff Turner made a motion to approve last meeting minutes.
  - b. Will Singleton second.
  - c. Approved.

**REPORT OF COMMITTEE CHAIRS:**

- 1. Finance & Freedom Fund - Will Singleton**
  - a. Freedom Fund Berkshire Hills Country Club November 9<sup>th</sup>, 6 to 11 pm.
  - b. \$75 for singles
  - c. \$100 for couples
  - d. \$850 table of 10
  - e. Dr. Shirley Whitaker, MD is the keynote speaker.
  - f. Honoring Churchill Cotton and Homer Meade
- 2. Face Book - Leah Reed**
  - a. Not present.
- 3. Education Committee - Leah Reed**
  - a. Not present.
- 4. PR Media- Megan Whilden**
  - a. Not present.
- 5. Membership & Life Membership - Chad Roberson**
  - a. No report.
- 6. Race Relations - Shirley Edgerton & Joel Priest**
  - a. Welcome back of elementary students at Crosby and Morningside
  - b. Principal and Dean of Students at Crosby are persons of color.

7. **Economic & Environmental Justice** - Al Blake, Chad Roberson
  - a. Report Submitted
  - b. Sept 20<sup>th</sup> a week of climate change protests.
  - c. Sept 20<sup>th</sup> Climate Strike from 12 – 1pm a protest in Pittsfield
  - d. Oct 7<sup>th</sup> Russ Vernon Jones will be speaking at Tyler Street Labs
8. **Thompson Social Justice Action Committee** - Drew Herzig & Rebecca
  - a. The presentation by guests serves as the report for this committee.
9. **Redress Committee** - Christina Dagnault & Doug Mishkin
  - a. The presentation by guests serves as the report for this committee.

**BUSINESS:**

10. **NEAC Annual Conference – Oct 4<sup>th</sup> to Oct 6<sup>th</sup>**
  - a. An open spot for someone to join the President and Secretary.
  - b. The President will be giving a presentation on the Jamestown to Jamestown trip.
11. **October Meeting**
  - a. The District Attorney of Berkshire County will be the guest.
  - b. Drew Herzig to coordinate using the Green as a meeting place.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

12. Drew for the Civil Service ect...
  - a. Introduced Chief and Mayor
  - b. Civil Service is a bottleneck for PPD in diversifying
  - c. North Adams Police has success in divesting from the Civil Service Program
  - d. North Adams Police Force has: 13 patrolman, 4 sergeants, 4 detectives, 1 lieutenant, 1 Chief
  - e. Mayor Bernard
    - i. Process began in Spring of 2018
      1. Will provide Branch with materials to review.
      2. Civil Service criterion
        - a. 18 years of age
        - b. A MA driver's license
        - c. Need to take the top two people from the list.
        - d. Some constrains on residency.
        - e. Be mindful of the current arbitration process.
      3. Mayor contacted NA PD on divesting from Civil Service
        - a. Some complexities
          - i. Vacation buy back
          - ii. Some amendments to contract
          - iii. Preference for veterans remain in the system

4. Police Officers are trained after they hired.
  5. Put forward an order to Labor Council asking to be exempted from Civil Service
    - a. 2 members abstained as they had family members on the Police Force
    - b. Did not impact people currently in the Civil Service System.
    - c. Council accepted
    - d. State Senator filed exemption with the Commonwealth
  6. Gov signed on Jan 2 2019
    - a. Went into effect in March
- f. Chief Wood
- i. New test administered in March of 2019
    1. Over 60 people took the test
    2. NA PD selected 20 people the next step, the physical test
    3. Average scores of both lists were combined
    4. Gave conditional offer to several candidates
    5. New class slated to graduate in February 2020
    6. Hired 5 part time officers.
  - ii. Drew Herzig question: How did the process of divestiture work with the unions?
    1. Older employees more in favor of it as it offered protections
    2. The past 5-10 years rulings were not in favor of Civil Service making getting rid of program much easier.
  - iii. Hugh Guilderson questions
    1. Work schedule of the officers?
      - a. Chief wood 3 patrolmen and supervisor on duty at a time
    2. Ideal number of officers per shift?
      - a. A total number of 30 is ideal.
    3. Would 30 officers increase trust between police and members of the community.
      - a. Chief yes, right now they are just filling shifts. New officers would free up time and energy of force.
      - b. Mayor: this will allow community police officers
      - c. Drew PPD have a similar problem of working overtime and spending a large budget on overtime.
    4. Their opinions of the Quinn Bill
      - a. Police Officer education incentive
      - b. The Commonwealth got rid of the Quinn bill.
  - iv. Rebecca Thomson: People of color are afraid to call the police. Now that they are out of civil service, is there are way to screen how well people would respond to people of various backgrounds.
    1. Chief Wood: Test they use has a psychological component.
    2. Can see the components of the test

3. Mayor Bernard: The Commonwealth
- v. Arlen Tolopko: How many officers of color?
  1. Chief Wood 4 patrolmen out of 13 and a Police Officer
  2. Al Blake: Did Civil Service help with those numbers?
    - a. Chief Wood ending the Civil Service helped all around.
    - b. Mayor Bernard: The Commonwealth is reluctant to get rid of Civil Service in larger municipalities to avoid patronage.
      - i. Will Singleton: Have they made steps to get rid of nepotism.
        1. Mayor Bernard: No it is very challenging. He tries to minimize it
- vi. Ms. Roberts: Have other communities asked their advice?
  1. Pittsfield is the first community.
  2. He is open to talking to more.
  3. Advise on to think about how the legislature will think about divesting a city the size of Pittsfield.
- vii. Jeff's wife: Question on how police officers move from one to another
  1. Chief Wood. NA has not had the problem. The Berkshires are close knit and communicate with each other. They have turned people away who they have had problems with background.
  2. Christina/Drew there is no legal process to prevent that from happening.
- viii. Dennis: Do the officers have to pay for the academy.
  1. The City of North Adams pay for the academy.
  2. Only if the person transfers after not working for five years.
- ix. Marge Cohen: Clarification on people who are in the Civil Service will remain.
  1. Chief Wood. Unless they take a test and get promoted out of it.
- x. Arlene Tolopko: Are most officers living in North Adams
  1. 85% live in the city
  2. Contract says need to live 20 miles as the crow flies.
- xi. Stephanie Write: What is the process for getting rid of an employee who is not performing up to standards?
  1. Chief Wood: Grievance process. It is slow and not easy:
- xii. Drew: The pressure to make a deal can impact that you are to get a license to carry to be on the force anything on your record makes that hard.
- xiii. Drew: grassroots effort to get the word out of getting out the civil service

### 13. Christina Daignault Racists Incidences in North Adams

- a. Long time residence of Adams.
- b. No organizations in North County to support people color.
- c. Level of isolation for people of color in North County is detrimental.

- d. Early on in school children are singled out and being bullied, not getting support, and then being labeled the bad kid, and the domino effect hurts them, they drop out.
- e. Have been meeting with people of color and listening to community members.
- f. Collecting stories and will organize them.
- g. Ask the NAACP be more of a presence.
- h. Last week there was a listening session for students of color.
- i. Mayor Bernard
  - i. Thank us for providing space on the conversation
  - ii. Did not want to avoid addressing this topic.
  - iii. Wants to engage in listening
  - iv. Invested by the Commonwealth to engage in training as they saw the disproportionality of discipline of students of color.
  - v. Tracy Benison has written a book and will provide training bias.
  - vi. He may have an elegant answer, the conversation maybe uncomfortable
- j. Dennis Powell
  - i. Dr. Letitia Haynes, Shirley and Dennis have met with principal of BART. People should not have to call in outside parties for parents to get heard.
  - ii. Need to hold administration accountable
- k. Christina: Has had the police called on her
  - i. People from the outside are from homogenous cities. Their children have a different upbringing.
  - ii. People from outside the community have different ways to
- l. Stephanie Wright Are their resource officers in the school to monitor disciplinary data.
  - i. Mayor Bernard There is school resource officer mainly at the high school.
  - ii. There is no restorative process for students reintegrating from suspension.
  - iii. Its mandated that the school call DCF if they have been suspended multiple times.
- m. Rebecca Thomson question to Chief Wood drew focus on the incident with Ms. Moore. How prevalent are these problems Are there any reflecting on how they did handle the problem.
  - i. They have reached out to State Police for help with DNA testing.
  - ii. Law enforcement operates on the fly.
  - iii. The initial responding officer was not as sensitive as they would have liked.
  - iv. Reassigned officer handling the case.
  - v. Not an isolated incident for the family.
  - vi. The rest of the neighborhood has not responded to the problem.
  - vii. Need to find new education
  - viii. Do not believe that we will completely overcome it.
  - ix. Mayor Bernard: They are working on changing the culture of the city.
- n. Mayor admitted he prevaricated that he did not handle the comment to the press at first.
- o. Mayor Bernard believes unequivocally believes it was a hate crime.

- p. Al Blake: How can we best take advantage of the opportunity of us going up to North Adams
  - i. Christina Sept 24 at 4:30 pm listen session
  - ii. Mayor presence alone matters.
    - 1. Next Friday Sept 13<sup>th</sup> Norther Berkshire Community Collation meeting. The NAACP should come and invite people to Branch meeting.
    - 2. Mayor will promote the meeting to his audience.
    - 3. Build a stronger connection with MCLA.
- q. Will Singleton: Ask Chief Wood to change the culture of the police force.
  - i. The new generation of officers coming up have a different attitude.
  - ii. More risk for officers losing their jobs for not performing appropriately.
- r. Stephanie Wright: How do you balance of police who do and do not handle situations appropriately?
  - i. Mayor Bernard – the police make the presumption that the person is making a legitimate call for aid.
  - ii. The officer needs to have empathy/competency to address issues take seriously the need of the victim.
  - iii. Documenting incidences is important so they can tied into a larger narrative.
- s. Dennis Powell Teacher need to be fired for being racist.
- t. Christina Daignault people of color tell other people of color to not ‘make waves’
- u. Hugh Guilderson offer a take away
  - i. People of color should not have to keep explaining themselves.
  - ii. Micro aggressions are much more harmful then people are aware of. It ruins the heart and mental health of both the victims and the perpetrators.
- v. Drew Herzig – Our society has to be aware that we ask a lot of pressure on first responders to everything. Need to be mindful of that. fads
- w. Christina we need to be hyper vigilant during our presence in the parade.
- x. Dennis our present would provide support for people in the community
- y. Drew Herzig and Dennis Powell thank the people in the room and the guests.

### **Announcements**

- 14. Membership is encouraged to vote in the coming round of primary elections on September 17th.
- 15. We are in the process of planning a debate between candidates for the Mayor of Pittsfield.
- 16. WAM in partnership with Multicultural BRIDGE will be presenting PIPELINE, a play out longstanding systemic barriers facing black families.
- 17. October 18<sup>th</sup> 1pm – 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the dedication of the DuBois Homesite.

ADJOURNMENT 8:19 PM