

NAACP Branch Meeting May 4, 2022

6:03 pm President Dennis Powell (henceforth DP): I want to welcome everyone and thank everyone for being here. I'd like to start the meeting again with a moment of silence. I am just thinking about all our brothers and sisters and what all of us humans are going through throughout our nation during this time period.

6:04 pm DP: we will not be having a treasurer's report tonight. We had mechanical difficulties bringing it up at the Executive Committee and can't share it with the branch until we have it voted on. Additionally, please know that we post the meeting minutes on our website and we encourage anyone who might not have been able to attend the meeting to go to the website and bring themselves up to date.

6:06 pm DP: I know would like to introduce Laura Dubester

6:06 pm Laura Dubester:

Actually John Majercak is gonna introduce me

6:06 pm John Majercak: Hi everyone, I am the president for CET (Center of Eco Technology). We're excited to be here and present an award to one of your members/ We are a non profit that helps people save energy and reduce waste. CET was founded in 1976 in Pittsfield - and was run by Alan Silverstein and Laura Dubester. They were true pioneers and implemented many things that are widely accepted today such as the home energy audit and recycling in the town. They really cared deeply about the local community. We created an award in their name 12 years ago to honor individuals who are dedicated to community, economy, and environment. I'll hand it over to Laura.

6:09 pm Laura Majercak: We're gonna give the award to Al Blake.
(Laura shared words on leadership and Al's qualities. He is humble and brings people together from different organizations together)

** There were 33 participants as of 6:11 pm ***

6:13 pm Al Blake: Thank you, I am very honored to receive this award. I especially hope to continue working with communities of color so that they're not left out.

6:14 pm DP: We're proud of you and happy you received this recognition and good work. We're now going to have a presentation. We really think it's important. I'm sure that everyone has heard all this discussion about alternative policing. There was a

forum that took place and we wanted to bring it to you tonight. It was recommended by our political action committee. Kamaar will be making the introduction.

6:15 pm Kamaar: Thank you all and good evening. Unfortunately our initially scheduled forum with Maura Healy is not happening as she had to cancel. So we will be screening a re-recorded forum that happened on April 27th. It reviews public safety and initiatives that occur in the commonwealth which includes three alternatives to policing programs.

6:18 pm: Video begins

Link dropped in chat by Kamaar:

<https://www.facebook.com/OurRevolutionMA/videos/2777674092528720>

<https://ourrevolutionma.com/>

<https://www.amherstma.gov/3655/Community-Responders-for-Equity-Safety-S>

<https://www.newskudo.com/massachusetts/northampton/government/5301323-northampton-hires-director-to-set-up-community-care-department>

<https://www.cambridge-heart.org/support>

6:43 pm in chat

Alisa Costa: This —> “every 911 call is a failure of our society.” Yes, yes it is.

6:43 pm in chat

Kamaar: Aforementioned report:

<https://amherstma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/59328/LEAP-Amherst-Community-Responder-Report-Final->

6:58 pm in chat:

Darcie: Learn more about 988:

<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-suicide-hotline-988-is-set-go-live-many-states-may-not-be-ready-2022-01-14/>

7:00 pm in chat

Jane Winn: This is really interesting! I hope we can move something similar forward in the Berkshires/Pittsfield. I am so sorry that I have to attend another meeting. I look forward to seeing the recording.

7:08 pm in chat

Kamaar:

Northampton, MA Policing Review Commission

<https://northamptonma.gov/2182/Policing-Review-Commission>

7:17 pm in chat

Wendy Penner

This is fabulous thank you so much

7:17 pm in chat

Paula Consolini: very helpful!

7:17 pm in chat

Arlene and Hugh: yes, very helpful!

7:29 pm in chat

Paula Consolini:

So sorry I have to leave!! Looking forward to seeing the rest via the recording. Thank you for organizing these!

7:30 pm in chat

Darcie: There is a Berkshire Chapter of DSA as well. <https://berkshiresdsa.org/>

7:38 pm in chat

Wendy Penner: Crisis is a disaster. Thank you Earl! (responding to video)

7:54 pm

Kamaar: Thanks to everyone for their presence. Please post questions in the chat

7:55 pm

We have been involved in follow up actions after our involvement in the unofficial initiative called "Justice for Miguel." There is a response to an amendment filed by Rep Tricia Farley Bov

Amendment 87 - directed \$200,000 to Pittsfield Police for co-responder model

There isn't much transparency on its effectiveness

There were also some challenges that the PPD faced for hiring for the 2 positions.

We felt that it was important for the branch to speak on this matter

In the political action committee submitted this letter:

7:57 pm : Kamaar read letter

8:00 pm

BWe'll be sending this out to news agencies and agencies across the county
Other decision makers in key industries. We won't rely solely on the eagle

Thank you for your attention tonight.

8:01 pm

Wendy Penner: Our county is really behind. I don't want to criticize the police but we need to be highlighting these models. This call to action is great. Thank you.

(Kamaar shared his email:)

kamaart93@gmail.com

8:02 pm in chat

Arlene Kirsch: Fabulous and needed letter

8:03 pm

Kamaar: Our state has a role to play. Our state funds 80 co-responder models. Accountability has to happen across the system. We reach out to Paul Mark, Tricia, Adam Hinds. We are not comfortable with business as usual- aka the co-responder program. Reach out to our state officials.

8:04 pm

Wendy Penner: Do people want to talk about what's wrong with the co-responder model?

8:06 pm

Helen: Thank you. I just wanted to piggy back off of what Wendy was saying. That's a great place to have a conversation about why the community thinks that maybe thinking beyond the police is a more viable option rather than a co-responder. I'm going to assume that especially after Miguel's death- the push from city council is to allocate more dollars to the co-responder program. I think they will try to respond to the death by responding to this program. But we have the ability to come before the council and give the opinion why this may not be the most appropriate use of dollars. And you can join our political action community.

8:07 pm

Kamaar: I want to share an anecdote from a former officer. She told me that during her time on the force she once responded to a call where it was a domestic violence call- he had an ax and he began to approach her with an ax. This was prior to training for edge weapons. She chose to use a less lethal weapon- she sprayed him with pepper spray. Enough officers could disarm him without killing him. But she said later on in her career- she would have shot and killed this man.

Co responder models will not allow for de escalation techniques or other forms of intervention. It has everything to do with the training, not with who is responding with them

8:05 pm Arlene Krich in chat

Kamaar, can that letter be sent out to us? We can use parts of it to advocate.

Kamaar: Absolutely check your emails for a branch communication tomorrow!

Arlene Kirsch: Great, thank you

8:09 PM Keiana West in chat

This meeting has been really informative and energizing! How can one join a PAC meeting?

Darci in chat 8:10 pm

<https://www.naacpberkshires.org/how-we-work/>

Here's the page to access our committees info

8:11 pm DP: Helen is looking for a co-chair. Great bringing this to our attention PAC committee. I think everyone learned something that they didn't really know and that's really what we're supposed to be about. To make our community aware of what's going on around them. And try to sift through the good and the bad of it and make an informed decision. The EC unanimously approved the letter that Kamaar read.

8:12 pm

Hugh Guilderson:

(Told a story)

(regarding an officer) He has a large legal enforcement apparatus informing him. He has lots of options before he draws his gun. The question we need to know in this instance is how are these police being trained?

8:15 pm DP: that has always been the question. Unfortunately so often the response is to eliminate the threat and to them that training and those words - they only know of one way to do that. And that is to shoot center mass and that's unfortunate because many of the committee are always asking. Why couldn't he have been shot in the leg. That would definitely bring someone to the ground and eliminate the threat. Why it has to result in death - why that's the only threat elimination. Let's be perfectly clear- it seems to be the only threat based on skin color. We have seen time and time again where a white person has been pointing a gun directly at a police officer- they manage to take that individual in without shooting or tazing them- without anything. Just the day before Miguel there was a gentleman with a crossbow who had fired at the police. They worked with this man for 8 hours. A white man. But within 20 minutes on Miguel's scene he lost his life. I hate to say it so bluntly but that's the reality of what's happening here and in our country. We saw on the news the young man who was scared- an immigrant. He starts to run. Cop runs him down over a license plate. Shot point blank in the back of the head. And we all saw that video on television.

I don't know what the answer is but I know what it's not. We can't continue to see loss of life over things that are - wrong license plates on a vehicle. And air freshener hanging in the back window- that's a reason for a person to lose a life? We gotta eliminate these blue laws that were put there to give a reason to stop so that they can't say a person was being profiled

Officers planting evidence and going right to it to justify his actions. When someone stays on death row for 35 years because they refuse to admit to the crime but their moral integrity would not allow them so they sit in jail.

8:22 pm in chat

Carolyn Sibner

Malcolm Gladwell's book, "Blink", has an excellent discussion about how important it is that police be trained appropriately for them to be able to stay calm and not shoot when they get scared. I highly recommend reading it!

8:22 pm

Wendy: I agree. We have a city council that convenes after a man of color was murdered and they don't even acknowledge that a tragedy has taken place in the community like that. It's so disappointing and we have so much work to do. There's a conservatism and fear here about having these conversations. And re-envisioning public safety. Some of the social services money should be challenged toward this work. Berkshire county is behind

8:23 pm in chat

Darcie Sosa;

And city council and the mayor control the money

8:24 pm

DP: I just want to mention that we are in collab with other bipoc orgs for our Juneteenth festival on Sunday June 19th from 12 to 7 pm. We're going to be reaching out - we're combining our juneteenth and our gather-in into one event. As opposed to trying to have both events back to back. We're gonna give our graduates that furthering their education. The women of color giving circle, rope, will be giving our their scholarship and masonic masons will be giin gout theres. A day to celebrate freedom through education -

8:27 pmB any other announcements? Oh I do- I want to thank Hugh and the outreach I believe it's called the outreach committee from the First Congregational Church in Williamstown they have provided \$4,000 for unrestricted just in support of the work that we do - they believe in us and they trust us. And they want to become a community partner with the naacp in the works that we are planning to do. Recognize Hugh and that committee.

8:28 pm Kamaar in chat:

Thank you Hugh and Williamstown Congregational

8:28 pm

DP: Also I received AN email from Williams From Dr. Latisha Haynes, VP of DEI who is providing us with \$5,500 to our social justice pool. As we continue to reach out and help individuals with support with legal financing or whatever. We look forward to receiving that and again are very grateful to Williams college

Greylock will sponsor our event at the sum of \$5,000 so we're getting off to a good start. Great people in our community that are doing the real work. I can only say that it's work that unfortunately doesn't take a recess so we cannot take a recess. So we just have to try to stay ahead of us

I want to congratulate AJ and his award for the BEC of \$700,000 of the arpa fund and Shirley for rope \$500,000

8;32 pm

AJ

Go to website

8:33 pm DP : thank you for coming
Entertain motion

Darcie: first

Stewart : I so move

AJ second, adjourned

<https://berkshirebec.org/about/>

*As recorded by Marisa Massery**