

Date: June 18, 2020
To: acleveland@chestercity.com
From: Mary E. (Lisa) Kennedy Bell
317 Gilmore St.
Folsom, PA 19033

Attachment

Subject: Public Comment Submission for June 24 Council Meeting

Dear Mayor Kirkland:

In the wake of all that's happened since the death of George Floyd I and others are heeding the call to unite with our neighbors of this diverse city and be resolute in making a difference. It is about time. It is heartening to see on TV police officers taking a knee.

We have been residents of Ridley Township since 1998. But while living in CA we witnessed the riots in 1992. Those turbulent times opened our eyes to what can happen when police crack down on protestors. I was naive, thinking then that is what police have to do to suppress a riot. But, Rodney King was not inciting a riot in his police chase in 1991. After being pursued by police down the I-210, he was beaten after a car chase and cited for drunk driving. And afterwards all he said was "Can't we all get along?" My summer reading will include his book, *The Riot Within: My Journey from Rebellion to Redemption*.

And, that inspired me to volunteer. (I joined an organization called RAGE, an anti-graffiti group). Well, following those riots there were many opportunities for those who wanted to help repair the city. I remember walking down the street in LA, noting the damage and assessing what walls needed cleaning. And I'll always remember an older gentleman sitting on his porch in a rocking chair. I walked past and we exchanged greetings – then he thanked me for coming in to help clean up his neighborhood. I wasn't afraid anymore. But curfews followed, etc. and well... it wasn't enough.

Back in Phila. in 2010 I joined what is now called Delaware County Citizen Corps (DCCC is primarily a back up for the first responders). It's a wonderful group of volunteers led by Ed Kline – you may already know – of both medical/non-medical recruits. There have been events in Chester and other areas where tents/tables are set up to distribute pamphlets to the public on emergency preparedness techniques. But... it's not enough.

While working in Swarthmore, I took my elderly client and her sister-in-law at Christmas time to hear the Chester Children's Choir at Swarthmore College to perform. But – it's not enough.

For the last couple of years I brought these same two ladies to the Ruth Bennett Community Farm. (One of them is the mother of Maria Zissimos who is an attorney in Chester.) We all love it there. It provides us an outing with the added bonus of fresh fruits and vegetables – and a friendly staff. We look forward to that trip every week of the summer. But that's not enough either.

It makes sense to me that there must be a catalyst - something or someone - to bring people together. We need to have a reason – to reconvene more than once and with rewards, have some fun, and a purpose. It can happen. But how? I need your help in suggesting ways in which Folsom and

surrounding communities can meet. Bring some artists in to hold an outdoor painting party? Or feature some local talent such as our area's gospel singers (such as the choir and children dancers who accompanied Louise Williams last year at the baptist church in Swathmore).

The idea you have already proposed regarding the Ride Along Campaign – was ideal; one which would involve important officials in our local government and would consequently raise awareness. How's that plan going? If you see anything of value where you would possibly need my help/ or how I could contribute, please contact me. My cell phone is 484-432-5961. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Richard Bell
Lisa Kennedy Bell (retired)

P.S. Just yesterday I heard that Delco is creating a task force to reform policing in the suburbs. I thought it was proactive to finally create a Criminal Justice Task reform. Yayy!