

Comments made to Troy City Council, re Hiring Six Additional Police Officers

May 6, 2021

by

Bob Blackmon, Board Member
Justice Center of Rensselaer County

I'll begin by saying that the Justice Center of Rensselaer County strongly supports Community Policing.

We wholeheartedly agree that police officers should get to know the community, walk the streets, stop and chat with citizens, show an interest in their welfare, and this should be done regardless of race. EVERYONE should be treated with respect!

However, we strongly object to the white supremacist attitudes of Troy police. We object to their lack of respect for people of color. We object to their verbal abuse of people of color. And, of course, we object to the police murdering Black people, as they did Edson Thevenin. We also object to the way that case has been so terribly mishandled by our racist public officials and the PBA for the past five years. As you know, that case has been plagued with cover-ups by the mayor, among others.

So, yes, we are all for community policing, something long needed in the Troy. But we do not agree that hiring additional police officers is the proper way to achieve community policing.

As we've said over and over again, we must provide and require anti-racist training of ALL our current officers. In all the comments that were made in the PRRC process, public forums, and at council meetings, virtually all speakers spoke of the need to address and abolish systemic racism in the TPD. Were you hearing, but not listening?

Not one, **not even one person**, even suggested that the answer to community policing is to hire more officers, and call them "community police." The very fact that you are considering doing that is a blatant admission that the officers already employed are not willing to practice community policing. It is an admission that the current system is a failure, and we agree!

So, forget hiring new people, train and require the existing force to behave themselves, and serve and treat all Trojans with respect and dignity, regardless of race, or the community in which they live. Fire the officers if they don't cooperate. Use that money to pay for anti-racism training. Invest it in community programs. Invest in youth programs. Fix the swimming pool that has had trees growing in it for years.

Let's have some compassionate and creative thinking, for a change.