

Robert J. Paek

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GREAT RIVER PARK – AMPHITHEATER

333 EAST RIVER DRIVE

TOWN CLERK
EAST HARTFORD

JULY 15, 2020

PUBLIC FORUM – POLICING IN EAST HARTFORD

PRESENT Chair Richard F. Kehoe, Vice Chair Donald Bell, Jr., Majority Leader Sebrina Wilson, Minority Leader Esther B. Clarke, Councillors Connor Martin, Angela Parkinson, Awet Tsegai and John Morrison

ABSENT Councillor Patricia Harmon (self-quarantined)

ALSO Marcia Leclerc, Mayor
PRESENT Scott Sansom, Chief of Police
Mack Hawkins, Deputy Chief of Police

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Kehoe called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. Reverend Taylor of the Agape Ministries, opened the meeting with a prayer. All attendees joined in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chair Kehoe explained that the recent police events are just the most current evidence of the systemic racism that has been in this country for centuries. The Mayor and the Town Council are holding a series of public hearings on police accountability along with the other minority disparities in health, education, housing and economic opportunity that underpin systemic racism. The goal is to determine how the community of East Hartford can do its part to address these issues. This hearing is the first of two hearings on the subject of East Hartford policing: what are we doing right, what needs to be improved. The second hearing will be virtual at 6 p.m. Wednesday, July 22nd.

Mayor Leclerc explained her philosophy of ensuring greater community interaction with the police department.

Chief Sansom provided an overview of the changes he has made to his department over the past few years including hiring more diverse police officers, training in implicit bias, reducing the negative police interactions with the public in non-law enforcement situations; learning to de-escalate potential volatile events.

Shelby Brown, Two Sunset Ridge Drive, a former Board of Education member and Town Councillor, moderated the hearing.

The following people came forward to express their views:

Matthew Lauf, 26 Driver Road; Tom, a gentleman who is part of the Ghanaian community at St. Isaac Jogues Church; Melodie Wilson, 272 Goodwin Street; Charles Botts, 131 Jessica Drive; Desiree Roberts, 1454 Silver Lane, Rachel Hernandez, 86 William Street; Bridget, 20 Woodycrest Drive; Monique Butler, a Bloomfield resident and

teacher at Anna Norris School; Kojo, 700 Burnside Avenue; Rev. Taylor, 464 Tolland Street, Harry Amadasun, 31 High Street; Tia Woods, 4 Simmons Road; Vanessa Jenkins, 26 Suffolk Drive; Jim Kate, 22 Greenhurst Drive; Bridgitte Prince, 41 Bodwell Road; and Gayle Foster, 262 Brentmoor Road.

Most of the comments indicated positive interactions recently with East Hartford police but not necessarily so in the past or in other towns. There is a need for more youth activities and more positive community interaction with police. The more police know their community and the community knows the police, the stronger the community and crime incidents are reduced. The police department needs to engage more in social media to better communicate with the community, especially the youth. Some speakers talked about the need for greater accountability for police officers who do something wrong. There was an idea to provide the community with a list of resources to call rather than the police when there is a non-law enforcement emergency. Finally, there was a call for additional hearings in places more accessible to public transportation.

Chair Kehoe thanked everyone attending and providing their input.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION By Esther Clarke
 seconded by Don Bell
 to **adjourn** (8:23 p.m.)
 Motion carried 8/0.

Attest Richard F. Kehoe
 Richard F. Kehoe *AK*
 Town Council Chair