

Town of Bethlehem Resolution Supporting Black Lives

WHEREAS, the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Philando Castile, Stephon Clark, George Floyd, Eric Garner, Freddie Gray, Botham Jean, Atatiana Jefferson, Tamir Rice, Alton Sterling, Breonna Taylor, and countless others have drawn attention to structural and systemic racism in our country;

WHEREAS, "structural racism" is not just an expression of racial animus; rather, it is a set of consequences within society that lead to racially unequal outcomes in people's lives via the ordinary daily workings of society, caused by the accumulated history of racist oppression from slavery through Jim Crow, as well as past and continuing discrimination;

WHEREAS, Black people, immigrants and people of color have been, on countless occasions, historically marginalized, disproportionately criminalized, and targeted by excessive force and brutality by an unjust system;

WHEREAS, the Black Lives Matter movement and the COVID-19 pandemic have illuminated the current crisis, along with the socio-economic and environmental inequalities that have negatively impacted communities of color, specifically related to the lack of access to opportunities in education, housing, employment, healthcare, and every aspect of American life;

WHEREAS, the Town of Bethlehem commits to the affirmation that Black lives matter because so many Black lives and people of color have for so long been discounted, undervalued, abused, and taken from us;

WHEREAS, the Town of Bethlehem appreciates the dedicated women and men of our Police Department who work to keep our community safe. At the same time, the tremendous power of our Police Officers must be balanced with the tremendous responsibility they have. We will recommit to a shared understanding of how we treat our residents as well as visitors to our community, and this soul-searching work will be a part of our forthcoming Police Reform and Reinvention Collaborative and a priority of our Police Chief, Police Department and Town Council;

WHEREAS, the Town of Bethlehem acknowledges that we must do our part to dismantle all injustices within our community and we must not let silence render us complicit with these injustices;

WHEREAS, the Town of Bethlehem believes in individual liberties, civil rights, human rights, and voting rights;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Town of Bethlehem will advocate against racism in our community and will work actively with residents and town leaders, our town institutions, and our law enforcement and justice system to ensure that all Black, Brown and Indigenous people and all people of color have equal protection under the law;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Town of Bethlehem, through its Town Council, affirms that Black lives matter, commits to being anti-racist, and strives to be a place where people of all races are welcome and can move freely without fear or intimidation; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that the Town of Bethlehem will continue to seek solutions that foster *a better future for all*, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, disability, gender or sexual orientation so that we may truly become a society and a nation "indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

On a motion by Councilwoman Cunningham, seconded by Councilwoman Becker and approved on September 9, 2020 with the following vote:

AYES: Supervisor VanLuven, Councilmember Becker, Councilmember Coffey, Councilmember Cunningham

NOES: Councilmember Foster

ABSENT: none