

**Minutes of the  
TROY CITY COUNCIL  
FINANCE MEETING  
July 16, 2020  
6:00 P.M.**

Due to the COVID-19 crisis, this meeting was held remotely via videoconference.

The meeting was called to order at 6:04 p.m. by Council President Mantello.

Pledge of Allegiance

**Roll Call:** The roll being called, the following answered to their names: Council Member Ashe-McPherson, Council Member Steele, Council Member Cummings, Council Member Zalewski, Council Member McDermott, Council President Mantello, Chair. Council Member Gulli was absent.

In attendance were Mayor Patrick Madden and Corporation Counsel Richard T. Morrissey.

**Public Forum**

Written statements were submitted and are appended to these minutes.

**43. Ordinance Amending The Code Of The City Of Troy, Section 216-13, “Pool Use Fees And Operating Hours” (Council President Mantello, Council Member Gulli, Council Member Ashe-McPherson)**

Ordinance passed 6 ayes, 0 nos, 0 abstentions, 1 absence (Gulli).

**71. Resolution Establishing The Reimagine Troy Community Justice Services Work Group In Support Of The Black Lives Matter Movement (Council Member Zalewski, Council Member Steele, Council Member Cummings, Council Member McDermott)**

Resolution passed 5 ayes, 1 no (Ashe-McPherson), 0 abstentions, 1 absence (Gulli).

**Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

A video recording of this meeting is on file at the City Clerk's office.

1. Donna Roarke, North Lake Avenue
2. Justin C Cockx , 6th Ave
3. Judy Meyer, Co President and Shirley Buel, Co President, League of Women Voters of Rensselaer County
4. Gemma Halfi, Pawling Avenue
5. Raquel Velho, 4th Street
6. Sean Collins, 3rd Street
7. Michael Heaton, 5th Avenue
8. Jamie Crouse, Woodrow Ct.
9. Steve Pierce, 1st Avenue
10. Zak Guthrie, 8th Avenue
11. Hana van der Kolk, Oak St.
12. Drea Leanza, Fifth Ave
13. Andrew Lynn, 9th Street
14. David Banks, Belle Avenue
15. -Ellie Irons, 9th Street
16. Rafael Varela, Hill Street
17. Connor Armbruster, 12th Street
18. Nathan Meltz, Sausse Ave
19. Melissa Bromley, Springwood Manor
20. Abby Kinchy, Sausse Avenue
21. Elizabeth Press, Jacob Street
22. Starletta Smith, Third Avenue
23. Colie Collen, 2nd Street
24. Bob Blackmon, Ahern Avenue
25. Laura Rabinow, Madison Street
26. Amy Halloran, 10th Street
27. Dan Phiffer, 9th St
28. Caroline Nagy, 2nd Street
29. Branda Miller, 1st Avenue
30. Angela Beallor, Jacob Street
31. Rhea Drysdale, Massachusetts Avenue
32. Sarah Bowen, Sausse Ave
33. Renee Powell, NAACP Troy Branch
34. KD McTeigue, Kenosha St, Albany
35. Princeton Smith, Myrtle Avenue, Albany

I am requesting that you stand up and back up our officers. They work tirelessly to protect and serve all of its residents. Do not follow the masses and defund this police department. They need us now more than ever. I support the BLM movement . I Understand racism and bigotry exists, I do not discount its existence. I cannot ignore the increase in gun and gang violence that is rampant in our city. The officers need our support . I can't imagine how disheartening it is to work as an officer who is not feeling the support of the community.

Please take this Into consideration prior to deciding.

Thank you  
Donna Roarke  
North Lake Ave Troy

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As a business owner (3 business) in Troy NY and a property owner (3 buildings) Myself and my wife and family do NOT support any type of De-funding or funding change to the Troy Police department nor do we support any outside interference with there internal operations. Troy PD do a phenomenal job of taking care of our city especially with all they deal with. If our council members and city hall officials would step up and be present in the everyday operations of this city, for example take the time to be involved with the community and these protests walk your streets talk to your constituents first hand then I believe we would see a huge improvement on the relationship. Which in turn would create a better dialog between residents of the city and the elected officials and police officers. We also do not support being a sanctuary city, I myself immigrated here from England and have seen first had the damage done by uncontrolled immigration. There is a process and it is possible for anyone with enough drive and determination to achieve the goal of US citizenship the RIGHT way. We will be relocating all of our assets and interests to another county if these changes that are being proposed come to fruition as i believe these as a resolution will only create more devastating and disparity.

From a concerned Troy NY resident and his family.

Sincerely  
Mr Justin C Cockx  
6th Ave, Troy, NY 12182

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Our League of Women Voters of Rensselaer County would like to support the work of the Troy City Council in responding to the Black Lives Matter Movement in the upcoming resolution. We congratulate you on taking quick constructive action and wish you every success. We know that the Troy Police already has working relationships with some Troy social agencies and community groups and we trust that the new committee can build on that work.

Judy Meyer, Co President, Shirley Buel, Co President  
League of Women Voters of Rensselaer County

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My name is Gemma Halfi, and I am a resident of Troy, NY residing [on] Pawling Avenue. I am writing to support the resolution establishing the Reimagine Troy Community Justice Services Work Group In Support of the Black Lives Matter Movement.

It is my hope that this acknowledgement of the senseless murders of George Floyd and all other Black victims of senseless police brutality, including incidents here in Troy, is the first step toward creating concrete reform in our community that focuses on justice and equity for all Black, Indigenous and People of Color in the city.

Furthermore, City Council could easily propose some changes without further deliberation that would show a stronger resolution on their part, including:

- A civilian review board with subpoena power
- Make police disciplinary records publicly available (other cities in NY have moved quickly on this)
- Propose some initial divestment from TroyPD and redirection of that money to community-led projects.

Thank you for your time and consideration,  
Gemma Halfi

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My name is Raquel Velho and I am a resident of Troy on 4th Street. I write to you today regarding Resolution 71 and the formation of "The Reimagine Troy Community Justice Services Work Group". I write to express my disappointment in this council in light of the public support for the Black Lives Matter movement nationally, and Troy 4 Black Lives locally, and the council's dearth of purposeful legislation regarding systemic racism in our city.

It is clear from resolution 71 that many of our city council members see that the past months of activism throughout our nation are the result of centuries of violence and brutality towards Black people. The tone of the resolution regarding structural and systemic racism are clear demonstrations that the council, to some extent, are willing to contend with our nation's brutal history and even present. However, the resolution fails to extend this consciousness right where it is most needed: the role that our policing and criminal justice systems have played in perpetuating these cycles of violence and abuse. When 11000 people marched in our city, they weren't chanting vague chants about systemic oppression. The chants were specific: We want justice. We want justice for Dahmeek McDonald, and for Edson Thevenin. We have had enough of our racist police who have, for too long, operated without oversight, with inflated budgets, without consequence.

I understand that some form of committee and report work needs to be undertaken for compliance with Gov. Cuomo's executive order no. 203. However, it shouldn't come as a surprise if constituents are doubtful about this committee, the process of its constitution, the representativity of its members, and what will be done with the report it produces. Your compliance in establishing this committee is the barest minimum work this council can undertake. Other municipalities have already shown us that city councils are capable of doing

more on their own. Actions include, for example, making police disciplinary records publicly available.

When 11000 gathered in Troy, it wasn't a coincidence. We were rallied by Black-led grassroots organizations, and the work was locally spearheaded by Troy 4 Black Lives. You continue not to acknowledge them, or work with their clear demands at any level. Those demands did not include listening sessions, but did include a civilian review board with subpoena power, and a move towards defunding Troy PD. When will you begin to listen to these demands, and to those of us who continue to write at each meeting for you to heed them? While I urge all city council members today to vote in favor of Resolution 71, I also urge all of you, yet again, to move towards something bolder.

With kind regards,  
Raquel Velho

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My name is Sean Collins and I am a Troy resident, leaving in South Troy and a constituent of Ken Zalewski's district. I am the Treasurer for the Troy Area Labor Council, AFL-CIO, whose affiliated local unions represent over 10,000 workers in Troy and Rensselaer County. I am writing in support for Troy 4 Black Lives and the broader Movement for Black Lives and in utter disappointment that the best Troy City Council can do in this moment is resolution 71.

In the resolution, you rightly describe what happened to George Floyd as "senseless murder" and that as a result of it there is a renewed focus on "structural and systemic racism throughout our culture." What it does not say is who murdered George Floyd and how this structural and systemic racism manifests itself. It was the Minneapolis Police Department that murdered George Floyd and it is police departments across the country that perpetuate and enforce structural and systemic racism. Millions of people nationwide marched and rallied demanding that the police finally be reigned in. In Troy, the 11,000 that attend the Rally for Black Lives did so demanding justice for Edson Thevenin, Dahmeek McDonald, and other victims of our brutal police department - but they also were demanding that our police be reigned in immediately. Other cities - Rochester, Utica, New York City, Poughkeepsie, Newburgh, Hudson, Kingston to name a few - took immediate steps, including but not limited to releasing disciplinary records of police officers, cutting departmental budgets, or freezing any new hires.

Being compliant with new state law and Governor Cuomo's executive order is the bare minimum. The council can and must do more. The example set by other municipalities makes this clear. We do not need further study and we do not need more "listening forums" and town halls to discuss this further. We certainly do not need to present a report to Mayor Patrick Madden. We already know what he does when a report that implicates one of Troy's police officers: he covers it up.

11,000 people already held that listening forum. It is time that you heard them. It is time that you take action. It is time to stop kicking the can down the road and it is time to lead. In the press, Councilmember Steele said she is "listening and responding." As of yet, there is no evidence of that. Troy 4 Black Lives issued several demands and it is time this council act on them. Those

demands include a civilian police review board with teeth, that Troy stand with immigrants and against the County who collaborates with federal immigration authorities, and diverting funds away from law enforcement. If you are not acting on those demands, you are not listening. If you are not listening, what are you good for? How many more have to die and brutalized for you to actually do something of consequence and with actual impact? By all means, pass this resolution but recognize it is not enough. Thank you.

Regards,  
Sean Collins  
3rd St

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This July 16th, Troy City Council are voting on "The Reimagine Troy Community Justice Services Work Group". While the resolution finally acknowledges the senseless murder of George Floyd and systemic racism in our country, it fails to extend that acknowledgement to how it is enacted in our own city and specifically by the Troy Police Department.

Sure, this might be the "first step", and a report of some type is required by Gov. Cuomo's Executive Order no. 203. But what will it take for our city to acknowledge demands laid at their door step by Troy 4 Black Lives? They create additional uncompensated labor for our community members. Many questions remain unanswered: Will there be transparency in the nomination process? Will there be at least 60% representation in the work group of communities most affected by police violence and brutality, as we demand for the civilian review board? This committee is meant to be made up of "to be comprised of community leaders, clergy, police and public safety professionals, representatives of businesses and nonprofit organizations": are they expecting that cops should have a say in their own reform?

City council could easily propose some changes without further deliberation that would show stronger resolution on their part, including:

- A civilian review board with subpoena power.
- Make police disciplinary records publicly available (other cities in NY State have moved quickly on this).
- Propose some initial divestment from TroyPD and redirection of that money to community-led projects.

May all auspicious signs come to this environment,  
Michael  
5th Avenue, Troy NY 12180

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My name is Jamie Crouse. I have been a resident of Troy since 2009. I write to you today to express my thoughts and concerns with Resolution 71, establishing the Reimagine Troy Community Justice Services Work Group.

While this is a step in the right direction for Troy's acknowledgement of Black Lives Matter, the time for action has been upon us for some time. You have told us that this will be a slow process

and I understand that change takes time, but municipalities around the country are already enacting significant changes to their policing and Troy is too far behind the curve. How long will you make Troy's Black community wait to be acknowledged and heard? How many more months will they have to look on and wonder if their lives are important enough for a change to come. The message is clear and it comes straight from the organizers at Troy 4 Black Lives. 11,000 people filled our streets on June 7 amidst a global pandemic to show you that Black Lives Matter. Were you there? Were you watching? You acknowledge the wrongful death of George Floyd without a whisper of the wrongful death of our neighbor, Edson Thevenin.

The resolution mentions that work group members will come from a diverse section of community involvement but not racial demographics. The make-up of this group should reflect those most impacted by police violence, similar to the make-up of the Police Review Board. Your timeline also reflects what could be over 30 meetings between September and April. This work group calls on these community members to donate their time to fix their own community while you are compensated to represent ALL Troy residents.

Please know that we are paying attention and we will not be deterred by bureaucratic delays, apathy, or silence. Caring for the lives of Troy's Black community is not political. It's human. Please do not consider this to be an either/or situation but rather an absolute must for the livelihood of ALL Trojans.

With strengthened resolve,

Jamie Crouse  
Woodrow Ct.  
Troy, NY

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My name is Steve Pierce. I am the executive director of Media Alliance in North Troy, where we operate The Sanctuary for Independent Media, the NATURE Lab urban environmental education center, WOOC 105.3 FM, and numerous other community programs.

I am writing to express my support for the Black Lives Matter Movement and the Troy City Council resolution establishing a Reimagine Troy Community Justice Services Work Group.

My life's experience, especially working in North Troy over the past 15 years, confirms that racism is marginalizing, discriminating against, and harming Black people and all people of color, and adversely affecting their opportunities for education, housing, employment, healthcare, and other necessities of civil life.

I agree with the resolution that we need to seek local solutions so that regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, disability, gender identity, or sexual orientation, we may truly become a nation "indivisible with liberty and justice for all."

The Reimagine Troy Community Justice Services Work Group is an important step in that direction. Thank you for allowing me to express my support for this initiative.

--Steve  
First Avenue

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I am writing this a couple hours after watching the Rensselaer county legislature become indignant at the idea of giving the tamest possible recognition to the Black Lives Matter movement. Those who opposed will one day find that they were undeniably on the wrong side of history. You can avoid that shame. The sense of love and community at the Troy Rally for Black Lives was awe inspiring, 11,000 people marched, keenly aware that it was a long past time for another civil rights movement. This resolution, while superior to what I'd read coming from the legislature, is still barely even a first step. But at the very least, I beg you all to take that step. There were 11,000 of us.

Also- you guys are gonna make sure those pools are safe right? like 500% safe?

Zak Guthrie  
8th Avenue

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My name is Hana van der Kolk and I am a Troy resident and taxpayer. I am writing to express my thoughts and concerns about Resolution 71, even as I urge the passing of this resolution tonight as a small step in the right direction to acknowledge Black Lives Matter.

However, the Troy Community Justice Services Work Group is too little, too late. We need to see REAL and robust change that protects the lives of Black people in our community. Troy 4 Black Lives (formerly Justice 4 Dahmeek) along with other Black-led grassroots groups organized a powerful and peaceful rally of 11,000 people on June 7th. The City of Troy has still failed to recognize this profound effort and the communities behind it. Instead, Mayor Madden claimed some kind of credit for the success of the rally with no mention of the many, many community members who made the rally happen and kept it safe.

In addition, Troy 4 Black Lives has issued specific and comprehensive demands, which have also not been recognized or addressed. The City needs to meet with and humble themselves to the guidance of these organizers. The formation of Troy Community Justice Services Work Group without acknowledgment of the work of Troy 4 Black Lives is an insult and a misstep. The work has been and is already being done. In addition, the work group proposal does not specifically state the demographic make-up of its members, which needs to reflect those most impacted by police violence, nor does it acknowledge the immense amount of work this group would require and move to compensate its members.

Other municipalities throughout New York State have already gone much further in addressing police violence and transparency, and the well-being of Black communities. This group is clearly the barest minimum the council can undertake in response to Gov. Cuomo's mandate. You can and need to go further.

Which side of this historical moment of opportunity for change will you be on? Please know that we are watching your every move right now and demand you do better. We will not go away. We will remain committed to justice for Black people in Troy. We will not stop supporting the Thevenin family and demanding the end of the cover up of his wrongful death. We will not stop demanding justice for Dahmeek MacDonald. I implore you to be courageous and bold, and to do the right thing. This is a human rights issue, not a political issue. The safety, well-being, and thriving of all Trojans is impossible without a firm commitment to action that protects and lifts up Black life. This is about ALL of us.

Sincerely,  
Hana van der Kolk  
Oak St.  
Troy, NY 12180

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I fully support the Reimagine Troy Resolution in support of the Black Lives Matter Movement (#71-1), and especially the creation of the Reimagine Troy Community Justice Services Work Group.

For way too long, people of color have been targeted by law enforcement and denied the legal and social support that has been expected and granted to the white residents of this city, state and country. The Reimagine Troy Resolution is one small step to redress those inequalities.

I expect that all members of the City Council, who represent everyone in this city, including black, brown and white people, will support this effort to start working towards justice for ALL people of Troy.

Thank you.  
Drea Leanza  
5th Avenue

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This is Andrew Lynn of the Hillside neighborhood writing to urge you to take bigger and better steps in the right direction. But first, in the hopes that this letter will be read aloud, I need to hear the members of this committee SAY HIS NAME. Say his name! Edson Thevenin. Say his name! Edson Thevenin. As we reference the murder of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor and others, we must remember that our cops murder too, and it would seem that some in power go to great lengths to cover that fact up. If you are able to sleep at night, perhaps Edson will visit you in your dreams.

I understand that there is a resolution to form a working group in support of the Black Lives Matter Movement being voted on this evening. I hope that this will pass. I also hope that the 'work' that Ken Zalewski referred to last week is comprised of more than just the formation of this group. It is very important that this be a group comprised mainly of those affected most by police violence - poor people and people of color. Please work to open the halls of government to those who may not look like yourselves in this critical moment. Which side are you on council, which side are you on?

It cannot be said enough, and indeed you should plan on hearing it until it becomes reality... there must be a police conduct review board with subpoena power, and like other cities of our scale, Troy should make public past, present and future records of police conduct such that we may hold those patrolling our city accountable with the proper context.

Lastly, I must share this anecdote. I was at Stewarts with my 8-year old daughter, and a couple EMT workers approached the store as we were exiting. They were in uniform, and happened to be African-American. "Wait..are those guys cops?" She said. "I didnt think there were black police!" she exclaimed. I explained that indeed there are a few, but not many, and that the uniforms were confusing and we talked about how it is a great example of institutional racism - a concept she speaks a lot about these days. This innocent mis-perception speaks volumes. Not much is normal right now, but apparently it is normal for kid to live in Troy for 8 years and never see a dark-skinned police officer.

Please honor black lives and attempt to find yourself on the right side of history as we make it together.

Thank You for your attention  
Andrew Lynn  
9th Street  
Troy

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My name is David Banks and I reside on Belle Ave. I would like to take a moment to comment on the creation of "The Reimagine Troy Community Justice Services Work Group" in support of the Black Lives Matter Movement. I understand many people with kind hearts and good intentions want this to pass and while I would not actively stand in the way of it, I am disgusted that this is the best this council has to offer right now.

Just last week I listed some of the many known, publicized, and —in some cases— litigated acts of extra-judicial violence that the Troy Police department has been caught perpetrating. Out of respect for all of you I will assume you always forget these facts, since you would have to be indifferent to human suffering to know these things and not act swiftly.

Remember a June 2010 incident when Officers Christopher Pollay, Charles Castle, Joseph McNall and George Anderson assaulted James Foley during a needlessly violent arrest of Shakim Miller.

Remember in June 2012 when Brian Houle was beaten by Officer Kyle Jones who, according to the Troy Record, allegedly did so because Jones "disagreed with how Houle administered a Facebook page."

Remember Theodore Relf who in 2013 was the third completely innocent bystander to be bitten by one of Troy PD's canines.

Remember the Kokopellis saga and the clear, caught on tape, violence exacted on people for the

high crime of peacefully leaving a bar.

Remember that your police department —the one you oversee as elected officials— had to be investigated by the FBI in 2014 for civil rights violations.

Remember the 2015 case where officers Justin Ashe, Dominick Comitale and Martin Furciniti were charged with excessive force on John Larkins, who according to the Troy Record, "filed charges of malicious prosecution and excessive force against three officers and false arrest and false imprisonment against one of the three, said he was not happy with the settlement but felt he needed to protect himself." Again, your own constituent felt the need to take a settlement to protect himself from his own police department.

Remember Sgt. Ron Epstein and Detective John A. Comitale Jr who were allowed to retire after they were involved in a 2017 illegal search and seizure that had them charged with bribery in addition to illegally entering a property.

And in the last few years we must remember the murder of Edson Thevenin by Sgt. Randall French, the near-death experience of Dahmeek McDonald after Officer Jarrod Iler shot him in the face, and the incident just last year when one of your officers used a canine to bite a man while he was being forcibly taken into custody.

And for your own sake, remember that Troy PBA president and Council President Mantello's nephew, Nicholas Laviano told this body that he would "gladly violate" your resolutions if he disagrees with them. If you have any respect for not just yourselves but the office you hold, then please do something more than form another committee to investigate a deadly problem that is right in front of your eyes. Stop with the delays, stop with the denials, and save your constituents' lives.

David

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My name is Ellie Irons. I am a homeowner living on 9th Street in Troy. My statement today is in reference to Resolution 71, establishing the Reimagine Troy Community Justice Services Work Group.

I am glad to see the council moving to respond to Governor Cuomo's executive order no. 203, requiring police review and reform at the city level. However, I am concerned about how the work group will be formed, how quickly it will act, and how satisfactory the results will be.

Resolution 71 acknowledges the murder of George Floyd as a catalyst for the recent national uprisings for racial justice. This is a good first step in acknowledging that systemic racism and police brutality go hand-in-hand. But the resolution fails to look inward. There is no mention of the many instances that the Troy Police Department has participated in the brutalizing of Black members of our community, including Dahmeek McDonald and Edson Thevenin. As it has across the nation, police brutality and activism against it were occurring in Troy long before

George Floyd's death. This failure to identify specific events in our own local context leaves me concerned about how serious you are about real reform.

I am also concerned about the process for convening the working group members. You state that the working group will come from a diverse section of community involvement, but the resolution does not include any specific requirements about racial makeup. Our local Black-lead activist groups, like Troy 4 Black Lives, have made it clear that any civilian police review board should be made up of at least 60% representation from groups most affected by police violence. This should also apply to this working group. Black and other similarly affected people of color from our community must be prioritized. Additionally, I see that participation in the working group will be uncompensated. This is problematic. It has the potential to reinforce existing inequities in terms of who has the time, bandwidth, and privilege to set aside unpaid time to participate.

Finally, there are actions this council could take right now, without the slow, bureaucratic process of a working group. Examples from other cities include making police disciplinary records publicly available. On the subject of transparency, as mentioned prior, you could also directly address the murder of community member Edson Thevenin at the hands of Troy PD in 2016. Your silence on his murder and the subsequent coverup continues to reverberate in this moment of heightened attention to police brutality.

In closing, I am writing in solidarity with the demands of Troy 4 Black Lives. Their demands outline the vast scale of the work needed. Because Resolution 71 is one small step in that direction, I urge all council members to vote in its favor, but to do so knowing this will not satisfy our demands for justice and an end to police brutality in Troy.

Best regards,

-Ellie Irons  
9th Street, Troy

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The resolution you have written to vote on this evening is a sham, and we are tired of racism and of you politicians doing nothing about it.

Edson Thevenin was executed in our city paid with our tax dollar by a police officer and you gave the police officer a funeral with honors. We don't want to honor murderers. We want justice for Edson Thevenin, Dahmeek McDonald and every victim of police abuse.

I would like to write a positive letter to make you change your mind in the right direction: subpoena power for the board, reduce the police budget, release all disciplinary records etc.... but I have come to the conclusion that I need to ask you to resign so that you let new people with fresh ideas and energy take over the government of our city. You have failed us, you have failed the BIPOC and minorities of this city, and you don't want to have the courage to acknowledge it and change direction; and now you are further dishonoring the victims of racism with this empty toothless resolution to make you feel good.

Thank you ,  
Rafael Varela, Hill st., Troy NY 12180

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My name is Connor Armbruster and I live in Troy on 12th Street. This letter is in regards to Resolution 71, outlining the formation of "The Reimagine Troy Community Justice Services Work Group," which appears to signal the council's support of the Black Lives Matter movement nationally but falls short of the demands of Troy 4 Black Lives.

The resolution is clear in its acknowledgement of our country's history of violence and racism, both direct and systemic, towards Black people. It seems that the council is willing to take steps to address ongoing problems in the city of Troy in response to the 11,000-strong protest that occurred here. Upon reading this legislation, however, I wondered whether the council heard the demands of those 11,000 protesters, who were clear and specific in their calls to the city government with regards to systemic racism in policing, justice, and incarceration. I'd like to list several of them here, trusting that you'll respond to them by taking bolder action than is laid out in resolution 71:

- Justice for Dahmeek McDonald and Edson Thevenin
- Establishment of a civilian review board with subpoena power and no less than 60% representation by people most impacted by violence and police violence
- A full and impartial investigation of every instance of use of deadly force by a police officer
- The appointment of the Attorney General as an independent investigator and prosecutor in all such cases
- The disentanglement of the county government with ICE
- Exploration and creation of community-based treatment alternatives to criminal justice, especially for youth, the mentally ill, and in cases involving drugs or substance abuse and sex work

I urge all city council members to vote in favor of the proposed resolution 71, however I'm most faithful that the council will quickly and decisively respond to the demands of Black-led organizations in upcoming legislation.

Sincerely,  
Connor Armbruster  
12th Street  
Troy, NY

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My name is Nathan Meltz, a citizen of Troy living on Sausse Ave. I'm writing regarding the "The Reimagine Troy Community Justice Services Work Group".

When forming this committee, I urge the city council to make sure the committee is stacked with community members most affected by police misconduct: black people. Please don't fill it with police, expecting them to reform themselves. Particularly, members of the Troy PBA have consistently shown that their priorities are not to protect and serve the citizens of Troy, but to protect and serve their own ranks from oversight, municipal or civilian.

Please redirect the police budget toward civil services. Alternative models exist, like the CAHOOTS model in Eugene Oregon, that will save money by redirecting 911 calls to mental health organizations, preventing opportunities for police violence against citizens.

Please create a civilian review board, with subpoena power.

Please make police records transparent. Our good cops have nothing to hide.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Nathan Meltz"

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To Council Person Mantello,

As Council President and in your role as minority leader for the Republican Councilpeople, I write to you to ask you to support Resolution 71, "Establishing The Reimagine Troy Community Justice Services Work Group."

While this is an imperfect response to Troy's overwhelming expression of unfair treatment of our Black community members by those sworn to protect us, it is an important first step. Councilperson Mantello, can you stand by your Black constituents right now? It's the lives of parents, partners, and children that are on the line.

Consider these words from Cinthia Thevenin, Edson Thevenin's widow, "By Friday of that week that officer received immunity and they still had not released his body. I had to watch my 4 year-old run to the door and yell 'Daddy!' every time the door opened. I had to watch my 8 year-old have break-down after break-down. One night he cried so much that I couldn't even go into his room and lie to him one more time, so I just sat in the living room and cried myself." You can find the rest of Cinthia Thevenin's account of her husband's killing by the Troy Police Department on her Facebook account.

Carmella, you have power in your role. What is your responsibility? Passing this resolution is, literally, the least you can do.

And to the entire City Council, this really does feel like the least you could do. I hope you have clear plans for ensuring this Work Group is led by and is mostly comprised of Black Trojans, who are most affected by the TPD's unequal treatment. And because Black children are born with on average one penny to every white American's dollar\*, I hope you are planning on paying the Black community members who we are reliant upon to do this work effectively. Without providing remuneration you are ensuring a "Reimagine Troy Community Justice Services Work Group" made up of those who have enough resources to donate their time to such an effort. You'll be ensuring wealthier (probably whiter) folks will have the privilege of serving and having their concerns heard.

In contrast to the proposed Work Group, the Albany Common Council has already introduced several police reform proposals. Albany proposals include legislation that would tie funding for the city's police review board to a percentage of the police department's budget and give the board enhanced powers. The Board would receive 1% of the Police Budget, or \$540,000, to fund outside investigations into allegations of excessive force or civil rights violations. Another reform would require the city police department to closely track demographic data on police stops and arrests. Another would prevent officers from switching off their body cameras without a supervisor's permission. Why is Troy so far behind?

-Melissa Bromley, 40 Springwood Manor, Troy, NY 12180

P.S. Councilperson McDermott in my last letter I requested a direct response from you and am still waiting to hear back.

\* Lowrey, Annie. "A Cheap, Race-Neutral Way to Close the Racial Wealth Gap," The Atlantic. June 29, 2020. <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/06/close-racial-wealth-gap-baby-bonds/613525/>

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My name is Abby Kinchy and I live on Sausse Avenue in Troy. I am glad to see that you will be voting to begin an effort to address systemic racism and social justice in our community. However, we don't really need a working group - we need bold and decisive actions. For example, right now you could:

- Create a civilian review board with subpoena power and full representation of our diverse city.
- Make police disciplinary records publicly available.
- Propose some initial divestment from TroyPD and redirection of that money to community-led projects.

We want justice for Dahmeek McDonald, and for Edson Thevenin. I am therefore troubled to see that you have proposed the inclusion of police officers in the proposed working group. We have seen how Troy police officers have routinely disrupted and resisted even modest attempts at accountability in this city over the last decade - including the cover-up of Mr. Thevenin's murder.

I commend your efforts to pursue reforms, but urge you to attend to the demands of Troy for Black Lives.

Sincerely,  
Abby Kinchy

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My name is Elizabeth Press. I moved back to Troy in 2015 with my partner who I gently convinced to study at RPI because I wanted to live here again. As parents of a toddler, we love our friends and community and will do all we can to fight for equality for all of us.

To that note, I am writing today to thank you for proposing Resolution 71, establishing Reimagine Troy Community Justice Services Work Group.

Resolution 71 is acknowledgement that Black lives do matter and this resolution is a step in the right direction. I wish you would follow the lead of other municipalities around the country that are already enacting significant changes. Troy is simply proposing to make a working group that will meet between September 2020 and April 2021. I would hope that this outlined timeline is a worst-case scenario and you would move much faster than this. Regardless, it is time consuming and taxing work so I urge you to compensate folks for the work that they will do to make Troy a better place to live for all of us.

Troy 4 Black Lives and the 11,000 people that showed up on June 7 amidst a global pandemic to say Black Lives Matter need a voice in this working group. We need you to hear their demands. We want a civilian review board with subpoena power. We want police disciplinary records publicly available -- Other cities in NY State have moved quickly on this. And, please propose some initial divestment from Troy PD and redirection of that money to community-led projects.

Please vote yes today. Please do not go through the words of this resolution with a fine-toothed comb and fine abstract reasons to vote no. Please do not say that this is being worked on already by the Mayor or Governor. You are your own body. We need this working group formed.

Thank you.

Elizabeth Press  
Jacob Street  
Troy, NY

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My name is Starletta Smith. I have been a resident of Troy all of my life. I have raised my family here. I have attended higher education here. I bought a house here. I started my career here. I say this to say, I love Troy. My family loves Troy, and being a black family in this community, I come with mixed feelings. I am filled with pride in my community yet feel a deep sense of shame as we ask our leaders to acknowledge Black Lives Matter. I write to you today to express my thoughts and concerns with Resolution 71, establishing the Reimagine Troy Community Justice Services Work Group.

While this is a step in the right direction for Troy's acknowledgement of Black Lives Matter, the time for action has been upon us for some time. You have told us that this will be a slow process and I understand that change takes time, but municipalities around the country are already enacting significant changes to their policing and Troy is too far behind the curve. How long will you make Troy's Black community wait to be acknowledged and heard? How many more months will we have to look on and wonder if our lives are important enough for a change to come. The message is clear and it comes straight from the organizers at Troy 4 Black Lives. 11,000 people filled our streets on June 7 amidst a global pandemic to show you that Black Lives Matter. Were you there? Were you watching? You acknowledge the wrongful death of George Floyd without a whisper of the wrongful death of our brother, Edson Thevenin.

The resolution mentions that work group members will come from a diverse section of community involvement but not racial demographics. The make-up of this group should reflect those most impacted by police violence, similar to the make-up of the Police Review Board. Your timeline also reflects what could be over 30 meetings between September and April. This work group calls on these community members to donate their time to fix our own community while you are compensated to represent ALL Troy residents.

Please know that we are paying attention and we will not be deterred by bureaucratic delays, apathy, or silence. Caring for the lives of Troy's Black community is not political. It's human. Please do not consider this to be an either/or situation but rather an absolute must for the livelihood of ALL Trojans.

With strengthened resolve,

Starletta Smith  
Third Ave.  
Troy, NY

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My name is Colie Collen and I live in South Troy. I don't have much time to write, but I want you to know that I am watching and waiting for you to step up to this moment, be on the right side of history, and act on the demands of Troy 4 Black Lives. If you care about the city you're serving, you'll do more than listen. You're faced with a special opportunity to move toward real justice here, and you have a citizenry that is disinterested in half measures.

Sincerely,  
Colie Collen  
2nd Street

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I support the resolution, however I would prefer that the first sentence read “.....George Floyd and Edson Thevenin.....” It’s like most people are in denial that Troy police murdered a man as did the police in Minneapolis. Here it was police bullets that killed an unarmed Black man. In Minneapolis it was a cop’s knee. Otherwise the cases are the same.

Nevertheless, I support the resolution and urge its passage. So many people are claiming that the Black Lives Matter movement is anti-police. It is not! I lived and worked in Mississippi in the 60s and 70s at the height of the Civil Rights Movement, and the denial of racialism here today and there at that time is sadly similar. It's past time for Troy, New York to enter the 21st century and stop being like Mississippi!

I urge passage of the resolution.

Bob Blackmon  
Ahern Avenue

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My name is Laura Rabinow and I live on Madison Street, in District 5, in South Troy.

I wrote to you ahead of the last meeting of the City Council to voice concern over inaction regarding systemic racism in our city and in our country more broadly. I write to you today regarding Resolution 71 and the formation of "The Reimagine Troy Community Justice Services Work Group." While I am glad to see you take action, I am concerned that this is not the kind of action we need and it is not the kind of action that 11,000 people came out to march in support of in our city recently.

In particular, I'm disappointed that this legislation does not appear to take up any of the needed changes that Troy 4 Black Lives and other groups have so clearly outlined. These include measures that you could put into legislation today, such as:

- (Re)Establishing a civilian review board with subpoena power.
- Making police disciplinary records publicly available (as other cities in New York have already done).
- Proposing some level of funding to be redirected from TroyPD to community-led projects.

I am also concerned, as someone who has worked in and studied public policy, about the choice of this particular type of legislation to address such a critical and urgent set of issues. There is a significant body of research on public policy processes that has demonstrated that public bodies like working groups or advisory boards which appear to offer opportunities for greater public input and involvement of stakeholders in policy process, are too often political tools that are used to delay action - tools that too often don't result in better public policy, but in policy that is less impacted by the critical moment we're in, because unlike all of you, residents don't get paid to continue to do this work. And so, delay works quite literally works against the will of the people.

I understand that some form of committee and report work needs to separately be undertaken for compliance with Gov. Cuomo's executive order no. 203, but you already know what people in Troy need and want.

Given the troubling actions of our County Legislature this week, I nonetheless urge you to pass this legislation. It is not enough, but it is important that Black residents in Troy at least know that

you stand with them in some way, and that you are able to commit to the very minimum in affirming that Black Lives Matter. And then, I urge you to continue the work and to introduce legislation that more urgently responds to the historic moment in which you find yourselves in a position of power from which to effect positive change.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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I grew up in Lansingburgh and am writing you today about Resolution 71, establishing the Reimagine Troy Community Justice Services Work Group.

Although a step in the right direction, this is only a beginning, and I'd like to see more action to truly support Troy's Black community. The organizers of Troy 4 Black Lives have clearly stated what needs to happen in our city to truly protect our residents. More than 30% of our population is non-white, and subject to dangerous policing habits.

Please turn to the Troy 4 Black Lives demands for guidance in how to address the situations at hand.

Thank you for listening to the concerns that I am expressing, and the voices of all speaking up for greater action tonight.

Sincerely,  
Amy Halloran  
Tenth Street  
Troy, New York

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I am writing to you to voice a limited, qualified support for Resolution 71, and I'll save you the trouble of saying the resolution's absurd title out loud again. Please provide transparency about the selection criteria for the work group's members. That work group's efficacy depends entirely on who you select.

I understand the position you're in. Executive order 203, called the Say Their Name Agenda has required some observable process on your part in order to receive state funding. I would like to enter into the record a quote from that executive order:

"WHEREAS, these deaths in New York State include those of Anthony Baez, Amadou Diallo, Ousmane Zango, Sean Bell, Ramarley Graham, Patrick Dorismond, Akai Gurley, and Eric Garner, amongst others, and, in other states, include Oscar Grant, Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Tamir Rice, Laquan McDonald, Walter Scott, Freddie Gray, Philando Castile, Antwon Rose Jr., Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd, amongst others,"

Now I would like to quote from your own Resolution 71.

"WHEREAS, the senseless murders of George Floyd and many other people of color ..."

I would like to remind the City Council that the executive order from the Governor is called Say Their Names. How is it that your resolution does not have the courage to do just that? Say Their Names, I think an important baby step to holding yourselves accountable to what we're talking about here.

Council members, you represent all residents of Troy, including Black friends and neighbors. Including the family of Edson Thevenin. Including Dahmeek McDonald. Are you willing to say their names?

Thank you for your consideration.  
Dan Phiffer  
Homeowner at 9th St, Troy NY.

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My name is Caroline Nagy and I am a Troy resident, living on 2nd St and a constituent of Ken Zalewski's district. I am writing in support of Troy 4 Black Lives and the broader Movement for Black Lives and in utter disappointment that the best Troy City Council can do at this moment is resolution 71.

While the resolution should be passed it is sorely inadequate to meet the necessities of the moment. It is clear that the Troy City Council does not intend to meet the demands of the 11,000 that attend the Rally for Black Lives last month. They did so demanding justice for Edson Thevenin, Dahmeek McDonald, and other victims of our brutal police department - but they also were demanding that our police be reigned in immediately. Other cities - Rochester, Utica, New York City, Poughkeepsie, Newburgh, Hudson, Kingston to name a few - took immediate steps, including but not limited to releasing disciplinary records of police officers, cutting departmental budgets, or freezing any new hires.

Being compliant with new state law and Governor Cuomo's executive order is the bare minimum. The council can and must do more. The example set by other municipalities makes this clear. We do not need further study and we do not need more "listening forums" and town halls to discuss this further.

It is time to stop kicking the can down the road and it is time to lead. Troy 4 Black Lives issued several demands and it is time this council act on them. Those demands include a civilian police review board with teeth, that Troy stand with immigrants and against the County who collaborates with federal immigration authorities, and diverting funds away from law enforcement.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,  
Caroline Nagy  
2nd St

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My name is Branda Miller and I am a resident of Lansingburgh. I have been part of the Troy community since 1991, and have worked since as a Professor at RPI. I love Troy, and the evolution it has had in the past several decades. As Troy “reimagines” our possibilities, it is essential to have a deeper, generative dialogue about the systemic racism that exists here. For this reason, I strongly urge you to take the step today regarding Resolution 71 and the formation of “The Reimagine Troy Community Justice Services Work Group”.

I write to express my disappointment in this council in light of the public support for the Black Lives Matter movement nationally, and Troy 4 Black Lives locally, and the council’s dearth of purposeful legislation regarding systemic racism in our city.

When 11000 people marched in our city, they weren’t chanting vague chants about systemic oppression. The chants were specific: We want justice. We want justice for Dahmeek McDonald, and for Edson Thevenin. We have had enough of our racist police who have, for too long, operated without oversight, with inflated budgets, without consequence. We hope that our neighborhoods, and our communities, can join together in this challenging time to reach higher, to fight inequities in Troy, and to realize the best quality of life for our great city.

11000 gathered in Troy as a peaceful affirmation that we can come together in unity. I urge all city council members today to vote in favor of Resolution 71. We all deserve this to realize the greatest future for all who live in Troy!

With hope,  
Branda Miller  
1st Avenue

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My name is Angela Beallor and I am a resident of Hillside in Troy.

I am writing regarding Resolution 71 and the formation of "The Reimagine Troy Community Justice Services Work Group." The horrific murder of George Floyd and the resulting worldwide protest movement has forced many who have been resistant to recognizing the necessity for broad systemic change to finally do so. Let us acknowledge that it was the protests that brought us here. The organizers who have been working and strategizing for a long time to push for justice and change. Unlike the County Legislature that voted to praise the police for the work of Troy 4 Black Lives and the successful June rally of 11,000+ people, let us acknowledge that it is the Black and brown organizers leading these movements in the streets and behind the scenes that have brought us here.

So you are late. But we are glad to see this resolution emerge.

What is missing in this resolution: it conveniently neglects to comment on Troy, NY and the actions of the Troy Police Department. The work of truly confronting systemic racism, white supremacy, and police violence is not convenient. It cannot please everyone. In order to truly do

this work, to truly acknowledge that Black Lives Matter, we must confront the problems present in law enforcement at all levels. And that includes addressing abuse of power by the Troy PD.

We have in our midst a committed organization who has presented very specific demands regarding racial justice in Troy. How will this working group address the demands of [Troy 4 Black Lives](#) (formerly Justice 4 Dahmeek)? These include an end police violence, the establishment of a civilian review board with subpoena power, the disentanglement of our city with ICE, and the creation of diversion programs away from criminal justice involvement to community-based treatment alternatives.

City council could easily propose some changes without further deliberation that would show stronger resolution on their part. I urge you to commit to this now, as a part of the creation of this working group. The time for these changes was yesterday:

- A civilian review board with subpoena power and majority representation of those most impacted by police violence .
- Make police disciplinary records publicly available (other cities in NY State have moved quickly on this).
- Propose some initial divestment from TroyPD and redirection of that money to community-led projects.
- Push for a thorough review of the Edson Thevenin case and the release of all reports for the public to see.

Additionally, how will the council compensate community participants? Will there be transparency in the nomination process? Will there be at least 60% representation in the work group of communities most affected by police violence and brutality, as we demand for the civilian review board? This committee is meant “to be comprised of community leaders, clergy, police and public safety professionals, representatives of businesses and nonprofit organizations”: Where is the space for our city and community to substantively address law enforcement reform? As Frederick Douglass wrote, “Power concedes nothing without demand.” I do not anticipate police involvement in this working group leading to much reform.

Angela Beallor  
Jacob Street, Troy, NY

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My name is Rhea Drysdale and I live on Massachusetts Avenue in Troy, NY.

Should I disclose my full address? This is worrisome to many. Is it a requirement to share? Mine is easily identifiable online, but with a church in Lansingburgh giving away AR-15's to the community, a congregant who is friends with many of you on Facebook that continues to digitally harass protestors, and the Troy Police Benevolent Association deleting and blocking the community from posting dissenting opinions, you can understand my hesitation in wanting to publicly state my address.

Hopefully my street will suffice and we can continue.

We're starting to get to know each other, so I'd like to call you by your first names if I may. Carmella, Jim, Kim, Sue, Anasha, Ken and Eileen, thank you for listening whether you have a choice in the matter or not. Thank you most of all for having your cameras on and giving us the respect of your face.

Mayor Madden, I hope to see more of you in the future, too.

Also, thank you, Mara for sharing our words.

On the subject of the Reimagine Troy Community Justice Services Work Group, I will keep my points brief tonight:

- I appreciate the work being done to state for the record that Black lives matter. It appears the Rensselaer County Legislature couldn't agree on the subject, so I applaud you for getting this in writing.

- The Work Group is a step forward, but I hope you understand how small it feels to those impacted by violence, mass incarceration, food deserts, redlining, discrimination, and more.

- We still need:

A civilian review board with subpoena power.

To make police disciplinary records publicly available (other cities in NY State have done this).

To propose some initial divestment from TroyPD and redirect that money to community-led projects.

Listen to the people. They have spoken. You are still not listening and acting.

Thank you,  
Rhea Drysdale

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To Council Person Mantello,

Please support Resolution 71, "Establishing The Reimagine Troy Community Justice Services Work Group."

"Justice too long delayed is justice denied." - Martin Luther King, Jr.

Please help the Troy community, and families such as the Thevenins, find justice. We need accountability from our law enforcement.

Sarah Bowen  
Sausse Ave, Troy NY 12180

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Troy City Council,

I am writing in support of the Reimagine Troy Community Justice Work Group. Working together is a step in the right direction to understanding the issues that have plagued the underserved community in Troy, NY, especially the black and brown communities.

By acknowledging that there are inequities and the mission of this group to bring leaders of the community and city officials to have a dialogue about what is happening and working toward identifying reasonable solutions is the responsible thing to do, keep the lines of communication open.

This support is by no means an indication that this is the only vehicle that will resolve the issues that the community is dealing with. The problems stem from over 100 years of oppressive laws and activities. This group coming together is one of many actions that will be a part of creating an environment that all feel respected and safe.

Listening to learn directly from those that are affected by the inequalities that trouble the community is a major step to identifying solutions to fix the problems.

Sincerely,

Renee Powell  
President  
NAACP Troy Branch

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My name is Kathryn McTeigue, I am a recent graduate of Russell Sage College at 65 1st Street in downtown Troy and have worked at arts organizations in the city over the last 5 years. I appreciate your willingness to hear my comments as a non-residential Trojan who writes to you today regarding resolution 71 and in support of Troy 4 Black Lives.

The outpouring of activism in defense of Black life across the country and in our city, where 11,000 of us came together to affirm that Black Lives Matter and to call for an end to state-sanctioned police violence, is a long-overdue shift in cultural awareness and opinion. At the confluence of so many mounting national crises -- a pandemic that disproportionately affects Black and Brown communities; massive amounts of unemployment unseen since the Great Depression; and a blatantly xenophobic federal government that protects billionaires and actively kills the poor and disenfranchised -- we are in the midst of a powerful global uprising against racism and police brutality.

It is disappointing to see that while this resolution acknowledges the Black Lives Matter movement and pledges "change", the language the council uses in this resolution once again ignores / fails to acknowledge the work of Troy 4 Black Lives or the demands they have specifically laid out before the council. It is understandable why your inclusion of police in their own reform in this resolution inspires a great deal of further mistrust and anger from your constituents while you blatantly ignore their other demands, for example: a civilian review board

with subpoena power, the releasing of police disciplinary records to the public, and divestment from Troy PD into community-led projects.

I am asking council members today, from one white person to another, to intentionally work to lift the veil of assumption that the police force -- in Troy and as it exists across the nation -- is an inherently good institution that benefits all communities equitably across the spectrums of race, gender, class, and ability. It does not. From the recent Rensselaer County Legislators meeting where a resolution that simply acknowledged the fact that Black Lives Matter was labelled "divisive" and "anti-police" shows that our representatives are severely disconnected from the lived realities of their constituents. With this in mind, I hope you understand that the instinct to protect Troy PD and other police forces in the greater Capital Region is an act of white supremacy.

You must be willing to interrogate your biases and privilege if you want to successfully address these issues and create a safer Troy for your citizens. There is no justice or safety when you declare "Black Lives Matter" in public, but continue to coddle and protect the police force that oppresses Black lives in private. White supremacists don't only wear hoods and burn crosses -- they seek positions of legislative power and then choose to wield it in oppressive ways that actively ignore the demands of their most oppressed constituents. They look like you.

We see you. We are watching and we will continue to speak out until you give Troy 4 Black Lives the acknowledgement they deserve and tangibly work with their demands. And we will continue long after.

Regards,  
Kathryn McTeigue  
Kenosha Street, Albany

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My name is Princeton Smith I am a resident of Albany, and have many friends residing in Troy. I currently live at 639 Myrtle Avenue in Albany. I am writing in response to Resolution 71, "Establishing The Reimagine Troy Community Justice Services Work Group", and ask you to think about what your aim with this work group truly is.

While Resolution 71's wording acknowledges the senseless murder of George Floyd, it chooses to ignore all of our own Troy Police Department's hand in participating in the brutalizing of Black members of our community, including Dahmeek McDonald and Edson Thevenin.

I am writing today to commend you in taking the first step towards saying that systemic racism and police brutality come hand-in-hand. But you do not yet go far enough.

It is important that as much as this committee sets aside time to listen to the voices of the community, that it also truly hears them and an accountability process is put into action. Citizens have been clamoring for tangible reform for some time now, and many of their demands are not out of bounds.

For reference, I would personally recommend looking to the list of 13 demands charted up by activist group in the area, “All Of Us”, found here: [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd-9-J4eUbweUdi2lwfT6E3oMmZyELidjj7II8UNO\\_epPjAZg/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd-9-J4eUbweUdi2lwfT6E3oMmZyELidjj7II8UNO_epPjAZg/viewform)

this document is attached to a petition, already signed by many members of our community, so interest is clear.

I am writing in continuous solidarity with the demands of Troy 4 Black Lives, whose demands this council continues to ignore. While this resolution pays initial lip-service to the work you have to do, we still remember the lynching of Edson Thevenin and the attempted murder of Dahmeek McDonald by Troy police, as well as the subsequent coverups by Mayor Madden, district attorneys, and other Troy officials.

Please redirect funding from your police and instead invest in Black Communities!

Sincerely, Princeton Smith