

**Minutes of the
TROY CITY COUNCIL
FINANCE MEETING
March 25, 2021
6:00 P.M.**

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

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 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 arrived at 6:53 p.m.

In attendance were Mayor Patrick Madden, Corporation Counsel Richard T. Morrissey, and Police Chief Brian Owens.

Public Forum: The following individuals spoke regarding Resolution 27

- Abby Kinchy
- Angela Beallor
- Carolyn MacAvoy
- Carolyn Bardos
- Chel Miller
- Debra Garrett
- Irene Sorriento
- Jamie Crouse
- Jerry Ford
- Luz Márquez Benbow
- Rafael Varela
- Rhea Drysdale
- Steven Figueroa
- Sam Chiappone
- Sylva Menard
- Tasheca Medina

The following group/individuals submitted written comments regarding Resolution 27, which are appended to these minutes:

- Justice Center of Rensselaer County
- Jaimie Drozdal
- Julia Cadieux

27. Resolution Adopting Report Of The City Of Troy Police Reform And Reinvention Collaborative (Council President Mantello)

Resolution passed 7 ayes, 0 nos, 0 abstentions.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:42 p.m.

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

**Statement by the Justice Center of Rensselaer County
In Response to the Final Report to be Submitted by the City of Troy Responding to
Executive Order 203
March 25, 2021**

Last June when the governor issued Executive Order 203 we were heartened and somewhat optimistic that real change would finally come to the Troy Police Department. Now that the compliance process is coming to an end, we feel much less optimistic.

A large number of Troy citizens appeared before the Police Reform Collaborative, (or submitted in writing) heart-felt testimony, expressing their concerns about law enforcement. Many spoke about their personal experiences with the TPD. Yet we see very few of those concerns addressed in the Final Report's recommendations. Conspicuously missing, in our opinion, is a dedication to really address systemic racism, even though that was the common theme of most speakers. But we are not surprised, because our own Chief of Police has repeatedly denied that racism even exists in the TPD. We believe that meaningful change can't happen, if one fails to recognize that a problem exists.

The Justice Center of Rensselaer County made 13 recommendations:

Among other things, we recommended that a Racial Bias Audit be conducted within the TPD, and that was mostly ignored. We feel that THE most important issue is that the TPD is dominated by a culture of racism, and there is ample evidence that our belief is warranted. That evidence includes the numerous lawsuits settled and pending for racist behavior, including the death of an unarmed Black person and the current suit by a Black member of the police force.

We recommended that the newly formed Police Objective Review Board be given subpoena power, and that apparently fell on deaf ears.

We recommended that the influence of the police union be significantly minimized in TPD decisions, but that too was not deemed worthy of mentioning in the report.

Our position is not that the report is totally bad, because some of the recommendations have merit. Yet, the lack of specificity and depth around certain recommendations are troubling and cast doubt on the veracity of the process and ultimately the Report. And, they fall far short of fully addressing the issue of racism in the police department.

Let me be quick to say that the Justice Center holds the Kaleel Jamison Consulting firm in very high regard, so we are pleased that the firm will be involved in helping to make future change.

I'll close by saying that we support (actually we demand!) meaningful change in the Troy Police Department, and while the Report has some merit, we feel that it falls far short of committing the police department to the kinds of change that we have promised people of color for decades and have so consistently failed in that promise.

Statement from Jaimie Drozdal

I am not in support of the Resolution Adopting Report Of The City Of Troy Police Reform And Reinvention Collaborative (Council President Mantello) as it is currently written. The lack of mentioning Black communities is appalling.

On page 18 in the response to Issue/Recommendation #4 it is written: "When officers misbehave, the public has a right to the records of their infractions." This committee doesn't even trust Troy PD officers to behave based on its own language. The way this is written assumes officers will misbehave; there is no "if officers misbehave" written. It is written as a fact that officers misbehave; and yet you're asking for the full trust of the community.

Regarding recommendation #5: it seems shallow to say that 50% have completed a 40-hour training course and your idea of contributing to police reform and reinvention is to make the other 50% and all new officers take the course. One time course, for a life-time career dealing with persons who are emotionally distressed. This seems like a bandaid to the issue. I find it naive to think that officers can retain all of the information in a 40-hour training and use it effectively throughout their careers without any later review of the material. Not to mention all of the new research constantly coming out on mental health and what it means to mean emotionally distressed. There has to be standard, required training and re-training for police officers. Otherwise, in 5 years this same committee is going to come out with some "new" police reinvention proposal calling for re-training on this same issue. Be proactive in training instead of reactive; enforce required re-training for officers. Also, can there be a reason provided why 2 years is required for new officers to complete the training? Why must it take so long? In most jobs you can't start work until your training is complete. Why are police departments any different?

Regarding recommendation #7: Where are the numbers here? You're so proud of the arrest records of Troy PD, but there's no numbers given on diversity in the workforce as you're discussing issues in the numbers. What is the current diversity and what is the goal? Are you aiming for 50/50, are you aiming for it to represent the makeup of Troy (18% Black or African American)? Saying you hope to hire more people of diversity through recruitment is plain and simple, wrong. You don't recruit people of color, you create a place and environment that people of color want to work for. Have you thought to yourself, why don't people of color or Black individuals want to work with or for us? This attempt of creating a diversity and inclusion committee seems like an easy way to blame your lack of diversity in the future on the community.

How does this entire report fail to mention anything about Black people in Troy. I don't understand how you can talk about police reform and not mention anything about Black communities. Rather you say - bias and racism are just a difference in understanding between people with good intentions. You had 10,000+ people show up for Troy Rally for Black Lives calling for police reform; and yet this report glosses over it all.

I'd also like to add, with all due respect, everyone on this committee is probably over the age of 40 years old. You talk about bias and don't think that age bias is one of them? I would love to see people of youth on the committee to represent a different generation of Troy citizens, not just the YMCA director.

Finally, if you're going to report on 2019 actions of the Department and also talk about Trust and the Department, you cannot avoid the murder of Edson Thevenin by Troy PD. This is a HUGE break in the relationship, and to my understanding there is still a report that has not been released to the public? There has even been conflict between the Madden administration and the Troy City Council on this exact matter. When our own leaders are fighting, how can we trust anyone involved?

Work is on the way? Work should have been done. Police have been around since the 1800s like you mention in the report; and they're still getting it wrong! As someone who is in their mid-20s, learning that the same Police issues we face now were around 30+ years ago in almost identical fashion is baffling. Stop making committees and make some action. The police athletic league is ridiculous and almost insulting. The community doesn't want police. If you want to be seen as good guys be good guys.

Thank you,
Jaimie Drozdal
Troy, NY 12180

Statement from Julia Cadieux

Good evening, my name is Julia Cadieux. I am a new resident and home owner in South Troy. I chose to move from Delmar to Troy to be in a city that offered diversity, an exciting downtown, and where grass roots initiatives for change are being supported by a strong group of community leaders and activists. I am also the mother of two children and I want them to see that communities can thrive when the people take care of each other.

It was incredible to march with 11,000 people in Troy last summer for Black Lives Matter and demand racial justice for our communities. However, the response from city leaders in the wake of that mass demonstration has been shameful. Since moving here I have become aware of just how much systemic racism is embedded in the Troy Police Department and City Government. I have been educating myself on the cases of Edson Thevenin and Thaddeus Fiasion whose lives were taken by Troy PD and Dahmeek McDonald, who was injured brutally by Troy PD. These families and our communities are still waiting for justice in these cases.

So I was not expecting much from the Police Reform & Reinvention Collaborative (PRRC) Final Report. From the very beginning, Mayor Patrick Madden, Police Chief Brian Owens, and other city officials showed little genuine interest in responding thoughtfully and courageously to Executive Order 203, issued by Gov. Cuomo in June 2020. For 8 months, no committee was created. For 8 months no meetings were held. 8 months that could have been used talking to the residents of Troy about their experiences with police. 8 months they could have been listening to BIPOC and community groups like Troy 4 Black Lives, who have been making demands for racial justice for years.

Finally, in February 2021 the first meeting to address Ex.Order 203 was held. In total only 9 meetings took place. Troy residents and community groups were effectively shut out of these meetings as opportunities to make comments were limited and cumbersome. It was only through the efforts of community groups that I as a resident heard about these meetings and was told how

to make a statement. I believe the committee was hoping to do their work quickly and quietly to fulfill the requirements of the order without having to actually do the work of making meaningful change in Troy's policing.

The final document is a slap in the face to everyone who marched for Black Lives Matter in the Spring and Summer of 2020. Let's remember that Governor Cuomo issued this Executive Order in direct response to the murder of George Floyd by police officers in Minnesota. EO 203 states "Black Lives Matter". The order uses terms like "Racially-biased law enforcement" and "racial inequalities in policing". I am calling attention to this language because WORDS MATTER. Calling it like it is, matters.

Meanwhile, the Mayor's task force released its final report addressing EO 203 and somehow did so without mentioning the words "Black," "African-American," "racial" or the names of those killed anywhere! How in the world can Troy PD expect us to trust them when they can't even name the problem?

This whole process and the resulting report is a sham and a disgrace. The people of Troy deserve and demand better from leadership. First and foremost, Troy PD must publicly acknowledge racism in their own department. That acknowledgement would be a small first step in building trust with the community. I and many others will be watching closely to see what Mayor Madden and Police Chief Owens do next to take responsibility for this failure and what steps they will take now to actually reimagine and reform Troy PD.

Julia Cadieux